STYLISTIC MARKERS OF AUTHENTICITY IN ḤADĪTH TEXTS: AN INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK BRIDGING ʿILM AL-ḤADĪTH AND LITERARY STYLISTICS

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Abstract
This article proposes an integrative framework that bridges classical ʿilm al-ḥadīth and modern literary stylistics to reassess internal markers of authenticity in prophetic discourse. While traditional hadith scholarship has emphasized isnād (chain of transmission) and transmitter reliability, this study shifts analytical focus to the matn (text), exploring its rhetorical structure, semantic density, and narrative coherence. By drawing upon classical Arabic rhetoric and contemporary stylistic theory, the framework highlights how internal linguistic and discursive features can function as epistemic cues for textual integrity. This conceptual approach neither replaces nor overrides classical methodologies; rather, it enriches them by incorporating tools from literary linguistics, discourse analysis, and digital humanities. The model invites interdisciplinary engagement and offers new directions for theorizing hadith authentication at the intersection of tradition, textuality, and modern scholarship.

Keywords: *Hadith Authenticity, Stylistic Analysis, Arabic Rhetoric, Narrative Coherence, Textual Criticism*

INTRODUCTION

This study introduces an integrative methodological framework that brings together classical ʿilm al-ḥadīth and modern stylistic analysis to evaluate internal markers of authenticity embedded within prophetic discourse. The ḥadīth corpus, comprising the sayings, actions, and tacit approvals of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, occupies a central position in Islamic intellectual tradition: not only as a legal and theological source, but also as a repository of literary eloquence and orality. While traditional scholarship has long relied on *isnād* scrutiny and doctrinal conformity to assess authenticity, this study shifts analytical attention to the stylistic and rhetorical features of the *matn*. These include semantic coherence, metaphorical density, and rhetorical conciseness which considered features often regarded as hallmarks of prophetic eloquence and, potentially, as epistemic signals embedded within the text itself.

Given this authority, the authenticity of *ḥadīth* has long invited rigorous scrutiny. Classical scholars developed a sophisticated evaluative apparatus, chiefly the sciences of *isnād* (chain verification) and *matn* (textual) analysis, to determine reliability. However, thematic inconsistency, lexical irregularity, or rhetorical incongruity within the *matn* can erode confidence in a narration's origin. Çamur, for instance, demonstrates how subtle distortions, whether through omission, embellishment, or interpretive drift, may undermine both the factual and rhetorical integrity of a *ḥadīth* [1]. In such cases, the *matn* becomes a site of critical interrogation, demanding both linguistic precision and literary sensitivity.

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[1] Çamur, F. Y. (2022). Güvenilir ravi 'güvenilmez' rivayet: Bir Ṣaḥīḥu'l-Buḫārī rivayetindeki meçhul bedevi kadın kıssasının olgusal gerçekliği üzerine. Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi, 63(2), 557–605. https://doi.org/10.33227/auifd.1091108

Building on insights from both classical *ḥadīth* scholarship and contemporary stylistic theory, this article contends that stylistic markers embedded in the prophetic corpus such as metaphor, ellipsis, antithesis, and rhythmic parallelism function as internal indicators of authenticity. These are not superficial literary embellishments, but communicative, mnemonic, and didactic devices rooted in an oral-literate tradition. Al Aqad et al. emphasize the educational compression of prophetic speech, where *tashbīh* (simile), *istiʿārah* (metaphor), and *kināyah* (allusion) condense complex ethical meanings into compact verbal formulations[2]. Similarly, Hassanein highlights the syntagmatic role of rhetorical opposition (*al-muqābala*) in reinforcing textual coherence and interpretive depth within the *matn*[3].

By foregrounding these stylistic cues, this study proposes an integrative approach that complements traditional *ḥadīth* criticism with modern tools from stylistics, discourse analysis, and literary linguistics. Rather than displacing the classical paradigm, it seeks to deepen it: tracing how form functions as evidence, and how eloquence may mark authenticity. Ultimately, this project positions stylistic analysis as a bridge between orality and codification, between scholarly rigor and literary nuance, contributing to a more holistic understanding of how *ḥadīth* texts convey authority, meaning, and truth.

The following sections present this methodological synthesis, drawing on case studies to illustrate the diagnostic potential of stylistic analysis.

BRIDGING METHODOLOGIES: FROM 'ILM HADITH TO LITERARY STYLISTICS

The study of stylistic markers in *ḥadīth* authenticity adopts an interdisciplinary lens that bridges classical *ʿilm al-ḥadīth* (the science of prophetic traditions) with modern developments in stylistics and linguistic theory. While traditional methodologies emphasize *isnād* (chain of transmission) and *matn* (text) authentication that has been grounded in transmitter evaluation (*ʿilm al-rijāl*), doctrinal conformity, and textual cross-verification[4], modern stylistics shifts the analytical gaze toward the internal architecture of language: rhetorical design, semantic density, and textual coherence.

Rashwan repositions early *ḥadīth* within the orbit of oral literature, arguing that Islamic literary criticism preserved not only the semantic content but also the performative and mnemonic qualities of transmitted speech[5]. This perspective converges with modern stylistic analysis, which interrogates how textual features, such as parallelism, ellipsis, antithesis, and rhythm to function communicatively within a predominantly oral context. Similarly, Al Aqad et al. demonstrate that devices like *tashbīh* (simile), *istiʿārah* (metaphor), and *kināyah* (indirect expression) operate as compact mediums for theological meaning and rhetorical precision[6]. These features are hallmarks of prophetic eloquence, often referred to as *jawāmiʿ al-kalim*.

This study positions stylistic analysis not as a substitute for traditional methods, but as a complementary diagnostic tool. The aim is not to displace *ʿilm al-ḥadīth*, but to extend its analytical scope by incorporating internal, stylistic criteria. Where *isnād* functions as an external validator, rhetorical structure may serve as an internal indicator of authenticity. This integrative approach enhances the granularity of *matn* evaluation and helps identify subtle features that signal textual integrity or reveal signs of fabrication.

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[2] Al Aqad, M. H., Hussin, M., Rifa'In @ Mohd Rifain, S., & Yoyo. (2025). Figures of speech in the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad: An analysis of *Tashbīh*, *Isti'ārah*, and *Kināyah*. *Southeastern Philippines Journal of Research and Development*. *https://doi.org/10.53899/spjrd.v30i1.862*

[3] Hassanein, H. (2018). Discourse functions of opposition in Classical Arabic: The case in Ḥadīth Genre. *Lingua*, 202 , 225–240. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2017.11.002

[4] Azmi, A. M., Al-Qabbany, A. O., & Hussain, A. (2019). Computational and natural language processing-based studies of hadith literature: A survey. *Artificial Intelligence Review*, 52 (3), 1713–1753. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10462-018-9646-1

[5] Rashwan, H. (2024). Hadith as oral literature through early Islamic literary criticism. *Studia Islamica*. https://doi.org/10.1163/1958379X-bja10048

[6] Al Aqad et al., "Figures of Speech in the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad."

Table 1: Comparative Approaches to *Ḥadīth* Authentication

Dimension	Traditional ʿIlm al-*Ḥadīth*	Modern Stylistics & Linguistics
Epistemic Focus	Sanad and *matn* authentication via transmitter reliability	Textual coherence, linguistic patterning, rhetorical structure
Methodology	*ʿIlm al-rijāl*, *isnād* continuity, doctrinal conformity	Discourse and narrative analysis, semantic mapping
Mode of Transmission	Oral memorization and communal verification	Codified corpora, machine-readable annotation
Language Norms	Classical Arabic orality and *balāghah*	Conciseness, metaphor, ellipsis, stylometry
Authority Structure	Scholarly consensus, sanad-based hierarchy	Analytical reproducibility, probabilistic evaluation
Examples	*Fatḥ al-Bārī, Sharḥ Muslim*	NLP-based corpus studies, metaphor analysis

The modern stylistic model integrates computational tools and linguistic analysis to evaluate *ḥadīth* authenticity through internal criteria such as narrative coherence, lexical density, and rhetorical structure. One key technique in this model is stylometric analysis, which involves the statistical examination of linguistic features to identify authorship patterns and distinguish between authentic traditions and later interpolations. For example, stylometric tools can identify recurring phrases or vocabulary associated with prophetic speech, such as antithetical constructions, elliptical formulations, and rhythmic parallelism. These markers reinforce the credibility of authentic traditions while flagging anomalies in contested reports.

In addition to stylometric analysis, Natural Language Processing (NLP) offers powerful tools for detecting stylistic patterns in large *ḥadīth* corpora. NLP techniques can analyze rhetorical devices, metaphorical language, and ellipses with precision. For instance, dependency parsing, a technique within NLP, can highlight instances of ellipsis, such as omitted elements in phrases like "*The believer is patient,*" where "*in adversity*" is implied. Additionally, NLP algorithms can calculate semantic similarity between different versions of the same *ḥadīth*, providing quantitative measures of thematic coherence or divergence[7]. Together, these computational tools enhance the granularity of stylistic analysis and complement traditional methodologies.

To contextualize this study within a broader methodological framework, Table 1 contrasts the epistemic priorities of classical and modern approaches. This study, however, does not adopt either paradigm in isolation. Instead, it advances a blended framework, articulated in Table 2, which synthesizes the transmission-centered rigor of *ʿilm al-ḥadīth* with the interpretive precision of modern stylistics. The result is a multi-dimensional model of authentication that integrates textual integrity with rhetorical and semantic discernment.

Table 2: Blended Methodology Matrix: Synthesizing Traditional and Modern Tools

Key Area	Traditional Model	Modern Stylistic Model	Integrated Approach
Textual Transmission	Oral verification (*mutawātir, āḥād*)	Stylometric profiling, textual variants	Stylistic clustering across *matn* variants
Language Features	*Balāghah, jawāmiʿ al-kalim*, intertextuality	Metaphor, ellipsis, antithesis	Rhetorical markers as internal validators

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[7] Çamur, "Güvenilir ravi 'güvenilmez' rivayet," 568.

Authenticity Criteria	*Isnād* scrutiny, doctrinal consistency	Narrative coherence, lexical density	Multi-dimensional triangulation (*isnād* + *matn* + style)
Analytic Tools	*Kutub al-rijāl*	Dependency grammar, corpus methods	Expert analysis + computational validation
Interpretive Framework	Legal/ethical commentary (*sharḥ*)	Literary-pragmatic reading	Interpretive stratification (semantic to stylistic)
Technology Integration	Manuscript collation	NLP, stylometric markup	Annotated corpora with expert oversight

Orality and Codification in *Ḥadīth*

To further contextualize the stylistic framework developed in this study, it is essential to consider the historical shift from oral transmission to written codification, a pivotal axis in evaluating *ḥadīth* authenticity. In its earliest phases, *ḥadīth* circulated through performative, memorized recitations characterized by rhythmic flow, ellipsis, and concise expression. These features were optimized for oral retention and collective transmission. As these traditions were gradually inscribed into codices such as the *Ṣaḥīḥ* collections of *al-Bukhārī* and *Muslim*, they underwent processes of textual stabilization, redaction, and intertextual alignment.

This transition between orality and writing accounts for much of the stylistic diversity and narrative variation observed across *matn* variants. It also justifies the relevance of stylistic analysis: oral-derived features like metaphor, rhythmic balance, and elliptical phrasing often persist even after textual fixation, offering internal markers that help trace the likely authenticity or artificiality of a tradition.

As Rashwan suggests, recognizing the *ḥadīth* as a genre shaped by oral aesthetics and literary criticism enables scholars to evaluate textual features not just as semantic carriers[8], but as stylistic residues of a performative origin.
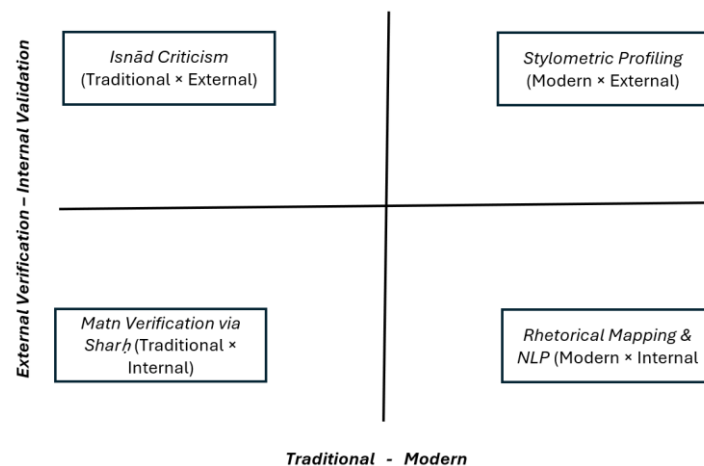
Figure 1: Epistemic Quadrant of *Ḥadīth* Stylistic Authentication Methods

This quadrant model as shown in Figure 1 maps the epistemic interface between classical ʿ*ilm al-ḥadīth* and modern stylistic analysis. The horizontal axis contrasts external verification (e.g., *isnād* scrutiny, transmitter reliability) with internal textual diagnostics (e.g., rhetorical structure, linguistic coherence). The vertical axis charts interpretive orientation, moving from oral-performative origins to codified textual analysis. The resulting framework visualizes a fourfold typology of methodological emphasis,

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[8] Rashwan, "Hadith as Oral Literature through Early Islamic Literary Criticism."

underscoring the potential for an integrative approach that bridges *isnād*-based tradition with literary and computational stylistics in assessing prophetic authenticity.

Building upon this methodological synthesis, the following section examines concrete stylistic features within *ḥadīth* texts that function as internal indicators of authenticity.

STYLISTIC FEATURES AS INDICATORS OF AUTHENTICITY

In the field of *ḥadīth* studies, stylistic features embedded within the *matn* (text) offer a subtle yet potent dimension for evaluating authenticity. These markers, often overlooked in *isnād*-focused analyses, provide internal cues about the origin, integrity, and communicative intent of prophetic traditions. When assessed systematically, they complement classical authentication tools by uncovering rhetorical, structural, and pragmatic features consistent with the Prophet's eloquence (*jawāmiʿ al-kalim*) and the sociolinguistic context of early Islam.

A. Semantic Coherence Across Narrative Variants

One of the foundational indicators of authenticity is narrative consistency across multiple transmissions. In the classical paradigm, thematic and lexical coherence in *matn* transmission is considered a key criterion of reliability, particularly when reported by diverse yet credible *isnād* chains. Modern stylistic theory reinforces this by analyzing semantic stability across versions to detect underlying coherence. As Çamur illustrates, minor lexical shifts that preserve narrative structure often signal authentic transmission, while radical contradictions in setting, characters, or implied meaning may reveal interpolations or fabrication[9].

Such analysis requires attention not only to surface lexical similarities but also to deeper discourse features: narrative logic, temporal alignment, and thematic cohesion. A *ḥadīth* that exhibits rhetorical symmetry and character consistency across narrators strengthens its historical plausibility. Conversely, narrative dissonance may indicate evolution through oral adaptation or later redactional layering.

B. Figurative Strategies in Prophetic Eloquence

The deployment of rhetorical devices like simile (*tashbīh*), metaphor (*istiʿārah*), and indirect expression (*kināyah*), is a recognized indicator of prophetic speech. From the lens of *ʿilm al-ḥadīth*, such stylistic precision aligns with the Prophet's reputation for concise depth and persuasive clarity. Contemporary stylistics reframes this as a study of expressive density and affective resonance.

Al Aqad et al. emphasize that the strategic presence of metaphor in *ḥadīth* functions as both a didactic and mnemonic device[10]. Take, for instance, the hadith: "*The world is the believer's dungeon and the unbeliever's paradise.*" This metaphor compresses eschatological wisdom into a single, memorable image. Its effectiveness lies not only in theological content but in its stylistic construction, a vivid, antithetical pairing that reinforces binary moral cosmology. The integration of such tropes suggests intentional rhetorical design, enhancing claims of authenticity rooted in eloquent prophetic communication.

C. Prophetic Brevity: Semantic Compression and Clarity

A defining stylistic feature of authentic *ḥadīth* is *jawāmiʿ al-kalim*, the Prophet's remarkable ability to convey expansive meaning through concise expression. This principle reflects both the aesthetic ideals of classical Arabic rhetoric, and the mnemonic demands of oral transmission in early Islamic culture. From a contemporary perspective, such brevity also exemplifies semantic efficiency, a feature increasingly recognized as a marker of stylometric distinctiveness.

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[9] Çamur, F. Y. (2022). *op.cit*.

[10] Al Aqad et al., "Figures of Speech in the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad."

Machsun (2023) highlights how the Prophet occasionally employed rare or newly coined expressions (*gharāba*h and *kalimāt mubtakirah*) to achieve precision and rhetorical impact[11]. These lexical innovations were not idiosyncratic anomalies, but deliberate, semantically charged choices aimed at doctrinal clarity. Their consistent recurrence across authenticated reports suggests a distinctive stylistic imprint, one that can be modeled computationally and interpreted hermeneutically to distinguish genuine traditions from verbose or stylistically inconsistent fabrications.

D. Elliptical Expression as a Stylistic Marker of Authenticity

Elliptical expression (*ījāz bi al-ḥadhf*) or the deliberate omission of elements that can be inferred from context, is a recognized feature of both Qurʾānic and prophetic discourse. In the oral culture of early Islam, where brevity supported memorization and rhetorical impact, such omissions were not flaws but intentional strategies grounded in shared semantic and cultural understanding. Their presence in *ḥadīth* texts serves as a valuable internal marker, offering insight into both the mode of transmission and the audience's inferential competence.

Hassanein, in his analysis of Qurʾānic ellipsis, emphasizes its dependence on pragmatic inference and contextual saturation[12]. Applied to *ḥadīth*, this suggests that a stylistically elliptical narration, when firmly rooted in early Arabic idiom and situational awareness, reflects both rhetorical mastery and historical embeddedness. The presence of contextually appropriate elliptical expression thus strengthens a tradition's textual authenticity, particularly when its omissions align with the inferential norms of early Muslim audiences.

CASE STUDIES

This section presents two illustrative case studies that apply stylistic analysis to assess the authenticity of *ḥadīth* texts. Drawing on rhetorical features, narrative structures, and *isnād* integrity, these examples demonstrate how stylistic markers serve as internal indicators of credibility, either reinforcing or complicating traditional evaluations.

Case Study 1: The World as Prison and Paradise

The *ḥadīth* "The world is the believer's prison and the disbeliever's paradise" exemplifies the Prophetic mode of *jawāmiʿ al-kalim*, concise yet profound expression. Its rhetorical symmetry, eschatological focus, and coherent transmission contribute to its credibility. These key stylistic features are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Stylistic Analysis of the *Ḥadīth* "The World is the Believer's Prison and the Disbeliever's Paradise

Text of the *ḥadīth*:	عن أبي هريرة قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ((الدنيا سجن المؤمن وجنة الكافر))
Transliteration	*ʿAn Abī Hurayrah, qāla: qāla Rasūl Allāh ﷺ: al-dunyā sijn al-muʾmin wa-jannat al-kāfir*
Translation	The world is the believer's prison and the disbeliever's paradise.
Source	Sahih Muslim, *ḥadīth* 2956; al-Tirmidhī, *ḥadīth* 2324; al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmiʿ*, no. 7612.

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[11] Machsun, M. A. F. (2023). *Linguistic complexity in ḥadīth: An examination of the role and origins of 'al-kalimāt al-mubtakirah' in ḥadīth. Jurnal Studi Ilmu-ilmu al-Qurʾan dan Hadis*, 24(2). https://doi.org/10.14421/qvh.v24i2.4634
[12] Hassanein, "Discourse Functions of Opposition," 231.

This *ḥadīth* exemplifies the Prophetic command of *jawāmiʿ al-kalim*, concise expression that conveys profound theological and ethical significance. The strategic use of binary oppositions, such as prison versus paradise, believer versus disbeliever, draws upon the classical Arabic rhetorical device of *al-muqābala* (antithesis), enhancing semantic intensity through balanced structural contrast. Beyond its rhetorical symmetry, the narration articulates a distinctly eschatological worldview, one that reconfigures moral valuation by elevating spiritual steadfastness over material comfort. Its transmission through multiple authentic chains of narration reinforces its credibility, while the text's stylistic precision and rhythmic cadence strengthen its pedagogical impact. Taken together, these features position the *ḥadīth* as an instructive example of how internal textual elements, including rhetorical architecture, semantic compression, and thematic coherence, function as integral markers of authenticity within the Prophetic corpus.

The following stylistic elements further illuminate how this *ḥadīth* operates at the intersection of rhetorical beauty and epistemic authority:

- Metaphorical Dualism: The metaphor of "prison" (*sijn*) and "paradise" (*jannah*) reflects the contrastive worldviews of the believer and the disbeliever. It condenses an eschatological truth into an affective, memorable binary, hallmarks of prophetic eloquence.
- Antithetical Structure: The rhetorical juxtaposition like "believer vs. disbeliever," "prison vs. paradise" deploys classical Arabic structures of *al-muqābala* (antithesis), a known stylistic device in Qurʾanic and Prophetic discourse.
- Narrative Consistency: As Çakır notes, this hadith is transmitted through multiple authentic *isnāds* (e.g., *Abū Hurayrah*, *Ibn Masʿūd*), with variations in expression but strong thematic coherence[13]. The stability of the core metaphor across narrators bolsters its authenticity.

This *ḥadīth* reflects the essence of *jawāmiʿ al-kalim*, where brevity serves meaning. Its theological depth and stylistic clarity reinforce its plausibility as a genuine Prophetic statement.

Case Study 2: The Unknown Bedouin Woman

This *ḥadīth* exemplifies the Prophetic use of analogical reasoning (*qiyās*) embedded within a succinct dialogic exchange. Rather than providing a direct legal verdict, the Prophet ﷺ reframes the ethical question through a counter-question, guiding the interlocutor toward a moral conclusion. The narration achieves brevity, semantic density, and didactic clarity, elements that collectively underscore its stylistic and epistemic weight. Table 4 summarizes the core features that make this narration a model of stylistic conciseness and spiritual authority.

Table 4: Stylistic Analysis of the *Ḥadīth* "The Unknown Bedouin Woman"

Text of the *ḥadīth*:	جاء رجلٌ إلى النبيِّ ﷺ فقال: إنَّ أختي نذرتْ أن تحجَّ، وإنَّها ماتت، فقال: أرأيتَ لو كان عليها دَيْنٌ أكنتَ قاضيَه؟ قال: نعم، قال: فاللهُ تبارك وتعالى أحقُّ بالوفاءِ
Transliteration	*Jāʾa rajulun ilā al-nabī ﷺ fa-qāla: inna ukhtī nadharat an taḥujj, wa-innahā mātat, fa-qāla: araʾayta law kāna ʿalayhā dayn, akunta qāḍiyah? Qāla: naʿam. Qāla: fa-Allāh tabāraka wa-taʿālā aḥaqqu bi-l-wafāʾ.*
Translation	A man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: "My sister vowed to perform ḥajj, but she passed away." The Prophet ﷺ asked, "If she had a debt,

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	would you repay it?" The man replied, "Yes." The Prophet ﷺ said, "Then Allah is more deserving of being repaid."
Source	Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *ḥadīth* 6699; Musnad Aḥmad, vol. 5, p. 79.

This *ḥadīth* showcases the Prophetic method of analogical reasoning (*qiyās*) within a highly compressed dialogic structure. The Prophet ﷺ responds to a moral query not by issuing a direct ruling, but through an analogical counter-question: if the deceased had left behind a financial debt, would you feel obligated to settle it? This analogy reframes the *nadhr* (vow) as a form of moral indebtedness, shifting the focus from legal obligation to ethical fulfilment. The rhetorical form is elliptical yet authoritative, employing minimal words to convey maximum legal and spiritual clarity. Its authenticity is supported by a sound isnād and variant corroborations in both *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Musnad Aḥmad*. As such, the narration exemplifies how Prophetic speech integrates brevity, analogical logic, and theological depth to instruct believers in matters of moral continuity after death.

The following stylistic features further highlight the *ḥadīth's* function as a model of concise legal-spiritual guidance:

- Analogical Dialogue: The use of a counter-question ("Would you repay a debt?") functions as a pedagogical device, transforming legal instruction into participatory moral reasoning.
- Elliptical Clarity: The final declaration in "*Allah is more deserving of being repaid*" leaves the analogy implicit, yet unmistakably persuasive, demonstrating Prophetic precision in ethical instruction.
- Thematic Integration: The narration binds two concepts, which are financial debt and unfulfilled vows into a unified ethical framework, illustrating the continuity of responsibility beyond physical life.

This *ḥadīth* reflects the unique Prophetic capacity to articulate complex ethical rulings through sparse yet semantically charged discourse. It operates as a compelling instance of how brevity, analogy, and moral reasoning converge as stylistic markers of authenticity.

By comparing this narration with more canonical *ḥadīth*, such as the report of *Abū Qatādah* concerning Bedouin interactions, Çamur highlights notable thematic parallels alongside a discernible decline in stylistic integrity[14]. These case studies collectively demonstrate how internal textual features can serve as critical indicators in assessing *ḥadīth* authenticity. The contrast between canonical and non-canonical reports underscores the value of stylistic scrutiny, especially with regard to metaphor, narrative structure, and rhetorical conciseness. Key insights from the comparative analysis are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Comparative Analysis of Stylistic Markers in Canonical vs. Non-Canonical *Ḥadīth* Narratives

Stylistic Marker	Case Study 1	Case Study 2
Metaphor & Antithesis	Clear, vivid, theologically coherent	Present but inconsistently applied
Narrative Structure	Coherent across *isnād*s, minimal variance	Unverified additions, questionable narrative framing
Linguistic compression	Highly compact, evocative (*jawāmiʿ al-kalim*)	Verbose, speculative, lacks Prophetic compression
Stylistic Coherence	Strong alignment with known Prophetic idiom	Stylistic dissonance with canonical hadiths

Together, these findings affirm the utility of rhetorical, linguistic, and narrative analysis in triangulating textual authenticity. By treating stylistic markers not as ornamental flourishes but as epistemic cues,

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[14] Çamur, "Güvenilir ravi 'güvenilmez' rivayet," 601.

scholars can meaningfully complement traditional *isnād*-based methodologies with literary and semantic discernment.

METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES AND EPISTEMIC TENSIONS

While stylistic analysis enriches the toolkit for assessing *ḥadīth* authenticity, its application is fraught with interpretive, contextual, and methodological challenges. This section interrogates the epistemic tensions and practical constraints that arise when classical prophetic discourse is subjected to modern stylistic scrutiny.

A. Subjectivity in Rhetorical Interpretation

Rhetorical devices such as *tashbīh* (simile), *istiʿārah* (metaphor), and *kināyah* (indirect expression) are semantically dense and culturally embedded. Their interpretation often depends on an exegete's familiarity with classical Arabic norms, shared presuppositions, and interpretive frameworks. However, this semantic richness also invites variability. As Al Aqad et al. note, figurative expressions in *ḥadīth* generate different responses across exegetical schools, historical periods, and linguistic backgrounds[15].

For instance, Çakır's analysis of the *hadith*, "*The world is the believer's dungeon and the unbeliever's paradise*", reveals how metaphor may simultaneously express eschatological inversion, ascetic ethics, and socio-political critique[16]. Yet, such polyvalence also complicates assessments of authenticity: divergent stylistic readings may either strengthen or weaken the claim of prophetic origin, depending on the evaluator's framework. This underscores the need for standardised, interdisciplinary criteria to mitigate subjective bias in rhetorical interpretation.

B. Cultural-Historical Constraints on Stylistic Readability

Stylistic coherence cannot be evaluated in isolation from the cultural-linguistic ecosystem in which *ḥadīth* emerged. As Rashwan reminds us, early *ḥadīth* circulated as oral-performative texts, reliant on shared cultural memory, mnemonic patterns, and rhetorical conciseness. Devices like *iḍmār* (ellipsis) and *Ījāz bi al-Ḥadhf* (entanglement) presupposed contextual awareness, a knowledge that modern readers may no longer possess[17].

Such historical drift affects the semantic accessibility of stylistic cues. For instance, *gharīb* (foreign) lexical items as highlighted by Machsun may have carried precise connotations in 7th-century Arabia but now register as semantically unstable or contextually indeterminate[18]. As a result, the interpretive clarity of these features diminishes over time, challenging the consistent application of stylistic criteria across generations.

C. Theoretical Incommensurability Between Classical Texts and Modern Linguistics

A more structural challenge lies in the ontological distance between classical Arabic texts and modern linguistic paradigms. While methods such as dependency grammar and cognitive stylistics offer valuable analytical framework, they are designed around post-Enlightenment conceptions of syntax, discourse, and cognition[19]. Applying such frameworks to premodern texts risks methodological anachronism.

For example, the Qur'anic and *ḥadīth* principle of *jawāmiʿ al-kalim*, sayings that are both concise and semantically expansive, resists easy mapping onto Western models of linguistic efficiency. What

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[15] Al Aqad et al., "Figures of Speech in the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad."
[16] Çakır, "Metaphorical Interpretation of the Tradition," 71.
[17] Rashwan, "Hadith as Oral Literature through Early Islamic Literary Criticism."
[18] Machsun, "Linguistic Complexity in ḥadīth."
[19] Hassanein, "Discourse Functions of Opposition"; Alzaidi et al., "Persuasion Strategies in the Prophetic Ḥadīth."

modern stylometry may label as 'minimalism' might, in fact, be a culturally normative mode of hyper-condensed theological speech.

Furthermore, computational techniques such as NLP, although increasingly sophisticated, still struggle with metaphor detection, semantic drift, and contextual ambiguity. As Azmi et al. and El Marouani et al. observe, even state-of-the-art systems lack the pragmalinguistic sensitivity required for accurate hadith parsing[20]. This technological limitation reinforces the indispensable role of human expertise in triangulating classical and computational insights.
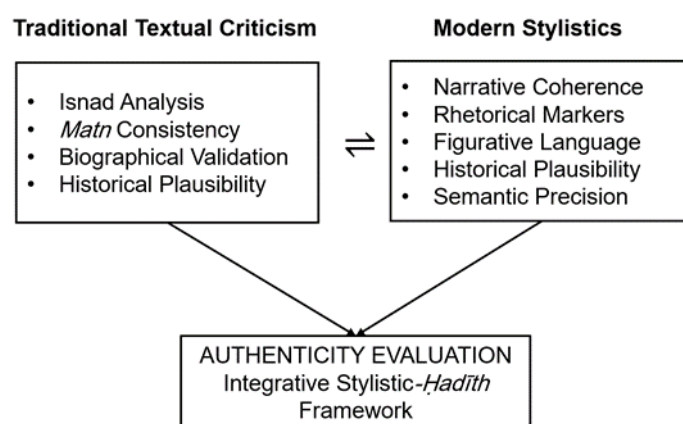
Figure 2: Bridging Epistemologies in *Ḥadīth* Evaluation

This diagram visualizes the epistemic interface between classical and contemporary paradigms in *ḥadīth* authentication. On the left, traditional textual criticism centres on *isnād* analysis, *matn* consistency, biographical validation, and historical plausibility. These are external mechanisms that establish transmission integrity. On the right, modern stylistics foregrounds narrative coherence, rhetorical markers, figurative language, and linguistic precision, which operate as internal features that reflect textual artistry and communicative intent. The bidirectional arrow (⇌) signifies their potential for integrative synthesis rather than epistemic hierarchy. The convergence of both streams culminates in a hybrid evaluative model: the Integrative Stylistic-*Ḥadīth* Framework, which triangulates authenticity by aligning *isnād*-based verification with rhetorical and linguistic analysis.

Building on this visualization, the discussion elaborates the distinct but potentially integrative logic that underlines classical and modern paradigms. While traditional *ʿilm al-ḥadīth* prioritizes external verification and historical plausibility, modern approaches foreground internal coherence, rhetorical texture, and linguistic precision. Although differing in ontology and methodology, these paradigms are not mutually exclusive. When critically synthesized, they enable a multidimensional model of hadith evaluation, one that honours textual tradition while incorporating analytical innovation.

Nonetheless, tensions remain unresolved in interpretive subjectivity, temporal-semantic instability, and the theoretical gap between orality and algorithmic modelling. These factors pose ongoing challenges for any integrated approach. While stylistic analysis offers promising tools for deepening our understanding of *ḥadīth* texts, its application to premodern discourse must be guided by methodological sensitivity and epistemological awareness. Recognizing the historical embeddedness of rhetorical forms and the limits of modern linguistic abstractions is essential to avoid misreadings or reductive analyses. Bridging classical and computational paradigms requires not only technical precision but also critical reflexivity in how we model, interpret, and validate sacred texts.

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[20] Azmi et al., "Computational and Natural Language Processing-Based Studies of Hadith Literature"; El Marouani et al., "Incorporation of Linguistic Features in Machine Translation Evaluation of Arabic."

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the role of stylistic markers in *ḥadīth* authentication, positioning them as significant internal indicators that complement classical methods of verification. By focusing on rhetorical features such as *tashbīh* (simile), *istiʿārah* (metaphor), *kināyah* (indirect expression), and *ījāz bi al-ḥadhf* (elliptical expression), the research demonstrates how linguistic structure and discursive elegance function not merely as literary devices but as epistemic signals embedded in the prophetic tradition. These features, particularly in the form of *jawāmiʿ al-kalim*, encode theological precision within compact and memorable formulations, thereby reinforcing both the transmissibility and the credibility of *ḥadīth* texts.

This stylistic approach does not operate in isolation but in dialogue with established frameworks of *ʿilm al-ḥadīth*, especially those that prioritize *isnād* integrity and doctrinal coherence. Drawing upon premodern literary criticism, oral transmission dynamics, and modern tools such as discourse analysis and semantic profiling, the study demonstrates the compatibility of classical and contemporary methodologies. The resulting hybrid framework expands the scope of *ḥadīth* criticism to include both external and internal dimensions of textual reliability.

The findings suggest that rhetorical sophistication, narrative balance, and linguistic precision are not incidental literary touches but may serve as diagnostic features of authenticity. For example, the presence of elliptical phrasing or metaphorical condition, especially when consistently embedded across variant transmissions, offers clues about the discursive environment in which a tradition emerged and was preserved.

Nonetheless, the study acknowledges the methodological challenges of applying modern linguistic theory to classical oral texts. The early *ḥadīth* tradition functioned within a performative, memory-reliant culture in which rhetorical strategies were contextually grounded and semantically dense. As such, any analysis of stylistic authenticity must be approached with interpretive humility, textual sensitivity, and epistemological awareness.

In sum, this framework offers not merely a set of tools, but a paradigm for interdisciplinary collaboration between traditional Islamic sciences and contemporary humanistic inquiry.

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