

Qur'anic Recitation and Phonetic Correction: The Role of Specialized Schools in Refining the Phonetic Delivery of Non-Native Arabic Learners A Case Study of Al-Arqam School for Mastery and Ijazah in Al-Qararah

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الملخص بالعربية

تتناول هذه الدراسة دور المدارس القرآنية المتخصصة، مثل مدرسة الأرقم بن الأرقم بالقرارة، في تقييم الأداء الصوتي لمتعلمي العربية من غير الناطقين بها، ولا سيما الأمازيغ في الجنوب الجزائري. تنطلق من فرضية أن تعلم تجويد القرآن الكريم وحفظه يساهم بفعالية في تصحيح مخارج الحروف وصفاتها، مما يعزز النطق السليم للغة العربية. اعتمدت الدراسة على استبيان تطبيقي حول نطق الحروف وصفاتها لدى الطالبات. أظهرت النتائج أن الحروف الشفوية (ف، ب، م، و) كانت الأسهل نطقًا، بينما شكّل حرف (الضاد) والحروف الحلقية (غ، خ) الأصعب من حيث الأداء، خاصة صفة الاستطالة. كما بيّنت أن المشاهدة عامل رئيسي في إتقان النطق، في حين أدى الاعتماد على الطباعة إلى ضعف الأداء الصوتي. خلصت الدراسة إلى ضرورة إدراج تعليم التجويد ضمن المناهج الرسمية وإنشاء مخابر لغوية متخصصة لتطوير الأداء الصوتي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التجويد ؛ الأداء الصوتي ؛ مخارج الحروف ؛ المدارس القرآنية ؛ الأمازيغ.

Abstract

This study explores the role of specialized Qur'anic schools, such as Al-Arqam ibn Al-Arqam School in Al-Qararah, in refining the phonetic performance of non-native Arabic learners, particularly the Amazigh community in southern Algeria. It hypothesizes that mastering Tajwīd and memorizing the Qur'an effectively contribute to correcting the articulation points and phonetic characteristics of Arabic letters, thereby improving pronunciation accuracy. A practical questionnaire assessed students' performance. Findings revealed that labial letters (fā, bā, mīm, wāw) were the easiest to articulate, while the letter ḍād and pharyngeal sounds (ghayn, khā') were the most challenging, especially regarding the feature of elongation (istiṭālah). The study highlighted oral transmission as vital for proper articulation, whereas reliance on printed texts weakened phonetic precision. It concludes with recommendations to integrate Tajwīd instruction into official curricula and establish specialized phonetic laboratories.

Keywords :

Tajwīd ; Phonetic performance ; Articulation points ; Qur'anic schools ; Amazigh.

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Introduction :

Historically, it is established that Arabs employed an intuitive mode of speech, whereby the phonemes naturally emanated from their respective articulation points, characterized by correct pronunciation and complete phonetic attributes. The Holy Qur'an, upon its revelation, was delivered in the vernacular, presenting its recipients with no difficulty in recitation or deficiency in articulation. Nevertheless, with the passage of time—and considering the universal scope of this religion—the embrace of monotheistic faith by a burgeoning population of new adherents, alongside Islam's geographical expansion through conquests across diverse global territories, precipitated deviations in the pronunciation of the Qur'an by non-native Arabic speakers concerning both accuracy and fluency. This situation necessitated that Islamic scholars devise a systematic discipline to safeguard the Qur'an from distortions stemming from incorrect recitation, which could potentially lead to the misinterpretation of its meanings. This endeavor ultimately culminated in the development of the science of Tajwīd and the mastery of Qur'anic recitation.

The Maghreb region represents one of the Islamic territories reached by the faith, where the Arabic language became firmly established and was subsequently mastered by a significant portion of the populace, notwithstanding the pervasive presence of various local dialects. Algeria, specifically, is one of the largest Maghrebi nations defined by this linguistic diversity. Such variation demonstrably impacts the correct usage of Classical Arabic, as numerous phonemes necessitate specific training and habituation for accurate articulation. To investigate the degree to which dialectal differences influence the articulation of Arabic letters, this research focuses on the memorization and learning of the Qur'an among the Amazigh communities residing within these Islamic regions, and is guided by the subsequent research question:

To what extent does the acquisition and mastery of Tajwīd and the memorization of the Holy Qur'an facilitate the accurate articulation and pronunciation of Arabic phonemes among non-Arabic-speaking Algerians, specifically those within the southern Amazigh communities?

Section One: The Linguistic Reality

1. The Region and the Language:

A close examination of the linguistic landscape in the Arab world generally, and in Algeria specifically, clearly indicates that Classical Arabic is not the initial language acquired by a child. Instead, the Arab child learns the colloquial dialect that predominates in the home and on the street; this observation holds true for Algerian children. Conversely, in regions where various forms of the Amazigh language are spoken, Amazigh functions as the mother tongue, replacing the Arabic dialect prevalent elsewhere. These Amazigh-speaking children do not encounter Arabic colloquial dialects until later in life, upon commencing interaction with the Arabs residing among them.¹

Ghardaïa Province represents one such region in Algeria where Amazigh populations coexist with their Arab counterparts. This area features a mixture of dialects, with inhabitants speaking both Algerian Arabic and the Mozabite Amazigh dialect.

The town of El Guerrara, situated within Ghardaïa Province, is populated by speakers of a dialect derived from the Amazigh language, known as Mozabite, whose speakers are referred to as the Banu Mazab. Historically and culturally, Amazigh dialects are known to have diffused from east to west across the region. These dialects are currently spoken in:

- Five villages in Oued Righ, surrounding Touggourt, Ouargla, and N'goussa;
- The seven villages of the M'zab Valley, where the Ibadi school (Ibadism)² of thought contributed to the preservation of the language;
- Approximately seventy small settlements in the Gourara region;
- One village in Tidikelt (in the Tit area);
- Two settlements in the Touat region specifically, Tamentit and Titaggar.³

Kamel Naït Zerad posits that the Amazigh language has been spoken for millennia throughout North Africa, extending from the Atlantic Ocean to Egypt. It is probable that, since ancient times, these were similar local dialects, though the disparities between them have intensified over time.⁴

The locally spoken dialect remains predominantly Amazigh or more precisely, Mazigh in most of these areas and across all social strata. However, it has experienced a decline in certain parts, such as Touggourt and Oued Righ, where its use is now largely confined to the elderly.

In contrast, Ghardaïa Province the subject of this study is considered one of the Amazigh regions that has best maintained its local language. The dialect is spoken by nearly all segments of society, from children to the elderly. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that a considerable number of Arabic and Arabized terms are present within the Mozabite Amazigh vocabulary of El Guerrara specifically, a result of extensive linguistic interaction.

2. Language in Independent Schools and Qur'anic Institutions:

The region's primary strategy for upholding Islamic principles centers on fostering the younger generation's memorization of the Holy Qur'an. Consequently, the establishment of numerous independent schools has played a pivotal role in preserving the Arabic language. Despite the fact that the region's inhabitants do not employ Arabic in their daily discourse, its function as the language of their devotional acts and religious ceremonies bestows upon it a distinct spiritual reverence. Moreover, this region is recognized as one of the Algerian localities most dedicated to religious practice.

Nevertheless, the traditional methodology utilized for Qur'anic memorization in the region, characteristic of most Algerian cities, frequently falls short of ensuring the memorizer achieves mastery of recitation or the rules of Tajwīd. Critically, this conventional approach often neglects the precise articulation points (makhārij al-ḥurūf) and phonetic characteristics (ṣifāt al-ḥurūf) of the letters. The principal objective of Qur'anic memorization has historically been the safeguarding of the faith, rather than linguistic proficiency in Arabic. This emphasis

has consequently led to deficiencies in the practice of Tajwīd, despite its foundational importance in maintaining the integrity of the Book of Allah.

Scholarly consensus affirms the obligatory nature of Tajwīd, asserting that "knowledge of its principles constitutes a collective duty (*farḍ kifāyah*), whereas its practical application during recitation is an individual obligation (*farḍ 'ayn*) incumbent upon every reciter. Non-adherence to the rules of recitation is therefore deemed a transgression. Tajwīd is thus mandatory, and an obligation is an act rewarded upon performance and penalized upon omission. This obligatory status is substantiated by evidence from the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and unanimous scholarly agreement. As Allah Almighty commands:

*{‘And recite the Qur’an with measured recitation’} [al-Muzzammil: 4].*⁵

LIT: {wrtil alquran tirtila} [almuzamil: 4]

3. Arabic Sounds and the Emergence of the Science of Tajwīd:

It is historically known that the pronunciation of letters and sounds is closely related to the emergence of the science of Tajwīd. Although the early generations received the Qur'an directly from the mouth of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) through continuous transmission, the passage of time had its impact on the precision of its pronunciation. It is also believed that the spread of printing played a role in this; the widespread availability of written Muṣḥafs had a clear effect on the lack of mastery in letter pronunciation, considering that language is more accurately acquired through oral transmission.

Before addressing the relationship between Arabic sounds and the emergence of Tajwīd, we pause at the meaning of "sound." Arabic dictionaries state: "al-ṣawt (sound) is tone; well known; masculine (...) it is said: ṣāta, yaṣūtu, and yaṣātu ṣawtan, and aṣāta, and ṣawwata bihi: all mean 'he called.' It is said: ṣawwata, yaṣawwitu taṣwītan – he is muṣawwit – meaning he called out to someone and summoned him."⁶

Sound, in its general sense, is a natural phenomenon whose effects we perceive before understanding its essence. Phoneticians have proven through irrefutable experiments that every audible sound requires the existence of a vibrating body, although such vibrations may not always be visible to the eye. They have also proven that the vibrations of a sound source travel through a gaseous, liquid, or solid medium until they reach the human ear.⁷

As for human sound, which is the subject of our study, it originates from vibrations whose source is the human larynx. When air is pushed from the lungs, it passes through the larynx, creating vibrations that, once emitted from the mouth or nose, travel through the external air as waves until they reach the ear. The auditory nerve then transmits the sound to the brain, where the area responsible for sound interprets it into meaning.

All languages of the world, as is known, are composed of a set of sounds that, when combined, form words and sentences through which humans express their intentions. Arabic is one of the human languages that was honored by the revelation of the Qur'an in it. Through its connection to the Holy Qur'an, the need arose for linguistic Qur'anic studies, including phonetic studies and the science of Tajwīd.

Scholars agree that the most significant research concerned with the study of linguistic sound was carried out by the Indians, the Greeks, and the Arabs. Each of these civilizations classified the sounds of their language according to the place of articulation or phonetic articulation points. Early Arabic phonetic studies were based on the direct and personal observations of scholars, grounded in the credibility and prestige of Arab-Islamic thought. Among them emerged scholars who succeeded in building bridges of communication through their research efforts, in service of the language of the Divine Revelation.⁸ This eventually led to the emergence of what came to be known as the science of Tajwīd, in which treatises and foundational texts were compiled.

Dr. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥājj Ṣāliḥ holds the view that the first area of focus for Arab linguists was the systematic study of the Qur’anic text from a linguistic perspective by thoroughly analyzing it and establishing certain linguistic rules. These rules would benefit non-native speakers of Arabic by enabling them to reach the level of eloquent speakers in terms of proper speech and comprehension of what they hear and read in this language, which is the language of the Qur’an. Their dedication to linguistic research reached the point where the objective became purely scientific, as soon as they began attempting to explain all linguistic phenomena particular to Arabic.

He further adds that there is a form of accuracy related specifically to pronunciation, which is entirely independent of syntactic structure. A correct utterance, from both perspectives, is defined by scholars as that which is part of the speech of the Arabs that is, what has been heard from them, established in their usage, and conforms to the patterns of their speech.⁹

At the forefront of Arab scholars who focused on phonetics is Sībawayh (Abū Bishr ‘Amr ibn ‘Uthmān ibn Qanbar, d. 180 AH), who is considered a pioneer in Arabic phonetic studies. His work in this field forms the foundation for most of the phonetic studies that came after him. Sībawayh represents the Khalilian school, with only minor differences. Al-Khalīl (d. 175 AH) was the one who addressed phonetics clearly, although he did not refer to phonetics as a distinct science or allocate a chapter or section to it in the introduction of Kitāb al-‘Ayn. Instead, phonetic information was presented without identifying the specific science to which it belonged.¹⁰

Many researchers agree that Ibn Jinnī was the first to designate the study of Arabic sounds as a science. His book *Sirr Ṣinā‘at al-I‘rāb* is considered the first independent book authored in this field, as the Arabs did not previously have a dedicated book on phonetics. This work compiled earlier phonetic studies that began with al-Khalīl and his student Sībawayh.¹¹ Subsequent studies continued under the field of Tajwīd, and poets composed didactic texts to preserve and transmit this science in an accessible form to students, such as al-Jazariyyah, al-Shāṭibiyyah, al-Durar al-Lawāmi‘, and others.¹²

Ibn al-Jazarī says in the introduction of al-Jazariyyah, as an example:

It is an obligation upon them, firmly established,

Before beginning [recitation], that they first learn

The articulation points of the letters and their attributes,

So that they may speak in the most eloquent of tongues.¹³

*LIT: wamin alwajib ealayhimu, wajb muqrr,
qabl albad' [baltilawati], 'an yataealamuu awlaan
makharij alhuruf wasifatiha,
liatakalamuu bi'ablagh al'alsinati.*

Ibn al-Jazarī clearly connects the necessity of knowing the articulation points and characteristics of the letters to the ability to speak both Classical Arabic and the Qur'an correctly.

It is also appropriate that we pause to consider the concept of the science of Tajwīd. Linguistically, Tajwīd signifies "enhancement" (improvement). Technically, it is the discipline whose subject is the investigation of the rules governing Qur'anic recitation and the correct pronunciation of its words by granting each letter its due (in terms of essential characteristics) and what it merits (in terms of consequential rulings arising from those characteristics). Its objective is to protect the tongue from error during the recitation of the Holy Qur'an.¹⁴

As for the science of Qirā'āt (Qur'anic Readings), it constitutes the knowledge of the methods of performing the recitation of the Qur'an and the variations therein, which are attributed to their respective transmitters. Its subject matter is the words of the Qur'an, wherein it examines aspects such as lengthening, shortening, and elision.¹⁵

In order to scrutinize the degree to which correct articulation of Arabic letters is achieved in Qur'anic schools, the subsequent two sections will present a survey-based study focusing on articulation points and phonetic characteristics.

Section Two: The Phonetic Performance of Articulation Points

1. Al-Arqam ibn Abi Al-Arqam School and the Study Sample:

Al-Arqam School is a newly established Qur'anic institution, accredited by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments. Consistent with many institutions in the Maghreb region, it employs the Warsh 'an Nāfi' recitation method through al-Azraq for Tajwīd instruction. The school is overseen by Omar Bousaada, a professor of Qirā'āt at the Manar Institute in the capital. The institution primarily focuses on teaching Tajwīd through the mastery of correct recitation and memorization.

The school's enrollment comprises: 14 female students in the Ijāzah (certification) section, 35 female students in the recitation mastery section and 91 female students in the recitation correction section.

The educational process is supervised by 13 female instructors, who are either certified or in the process of obtaining Ijāzah.

For the purpose of this study, the sample was drawn from the recitation mastery section due to its integration of both theoretical and practical study components.

In the questionnaire, the Arabic letters were categorized into three groups:

- Easy to acquire,
- Difficult to acquire,
- Moderately difficult to acquire.

The questionnaire was administered to the students, and 30 completed responses were collected.

It is important to note that the participants include a diverse group of women, consisting of those who had previously discontinued formal education and others currently employed in the teaching profession. This distribution confirms that the study sample does not consist of young school students still engaged in general education.

2. Articulation Points of the Letters

The human being does not possess a specific organ dedicated solely to speech. What we refer to as the organs of speech have acquired this function at a later stage in human development. Their primary function is the preservation of life: the lungs transfer oxygen to the blood; the vocal cords help prevent foreign bodies rejected by the lungs from entering the airway leading to them; and the tongue pushes food around inside the mouth to allow for proper chewing.¹⁶

However, social necessity, combined with human intelligence, created a secondary function for this vital system: the function of linguistic articulation. The wisdom of the Creator Glorified and Exalted be He has decreed that certain organs in the human body have dual functions: one biological and the other physiological or human-specific. For example, the biological function of the mouth is swallowing, while its human function is speech.¹⁷

It should also be noted that the views of early scholars varied regarding the articulation points (makhārij) of Arabic letters. According to Ibn al-Jazarī, the nāẓim, and a group of verified scholars, the correct number is seventeen articulation points a view supported by testing. However, many grammarians and reciters stated that they are sixteen, excluding the oral cavity (al-jawf), which includes the letters of elongation and softness (ḥurūf al-madd wa-līn). Others said they are fourteen, omitting the articulation points of the nūn, lām, and rā', considering them to share a single articulation point.¹⁸

Given that the madd letters have non-specific articulation points,¹⁹ they do not present a significant challenge in pronunciation. Therefore, this study has avoided addressing them and has limited itself to the sixteen confirmed articulation points. We then added to this the contrasting phonetic characteristics (ṣifāt muḍāddah), as well as the feature of elongation (istiṭālah), due to the necessity of addressing it in the context of accurate pronunciation.

a. Pharyngeal letters (Ḥurūf al-Ḥalq):

The pharynx (al-ḥalq) constitutes a cavity delimited inferiorly by the larynx (Phonetic cords) and superiorly by the oral cavity, specifically at the juncture of the root of the tongue and the velum (upper palate). The pharynx encompasses three distinct articulation points (makhārij) for six phonemes: /ʔ/ (hamzah), /h/ (hā'), /ʕ/ ('ayn), /ħ/ (ḥā'), /ɣ/ (ghayn), and /x/ (khā').²⁰

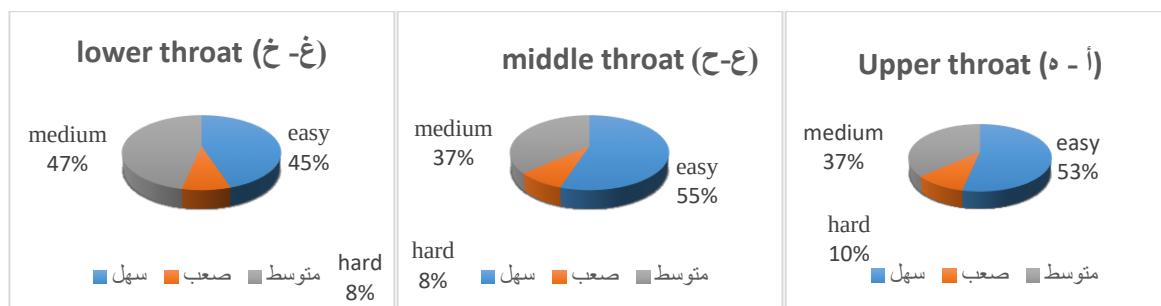
As stated in al-Jazariyyah:

LIT : Thumma li-aqṣā al-ḥalq hamzun hā',

Thumma li-wasaṭihi fa- 'aynun hā',

*Adnāhu ghaynun khā'uhā...*²¹

Following the collection and subsequent analysis of questionnaire data pertaining to student performance in the articulation and Tajwīd (elocution) of these specific phonemes, the ensuing relative findings were obtained:



Observations:

The results indicate that the ease of acquisition is maximally prevalent for the phonemes originating from the deepest (aqṣā) and middle (wasat) regions of the pharynx, with their combined performance percentages surpassing fifty percent of the total responses. Conversely, the rate of moderate acquisition shows an increase concerning the phonemes articulated at the lowest (adnā) part of the pharynx, specifically ghayn and khā'. Notably, the measure of difficulty reported does not surpass 10% for any of the pharyngeal articulation points.

Focusing on the individual phonemes, the moderate acquisition category exhibited the highest frequency for: /ع/ ('ayn): 15 responses /غ/ (ghayn): 17 responses

This outcome suggests that the student population within the institution encounters relative difficulty in the correct pronunciation of these two specific phonemes when compared to the remaining ḥurūf al-ḥalq.

b. Tongue Letters (Ḥurūf al-Lisān):

The tongue is a soft muscular organ that moves in various directions, allowing it to play a major role in the articulation of most letters. It is called lisān (tongue) because it is the primary organ through which speech and language are expressed; hence the expression lisān qawm, meaning "the language of a people."

The tongue has ten specific articulation points for eighteen letters:²²

- The back of the tongue raised toward what corresponds to it in the upper soft palate produces qāf (ق); when lowered, it produces kāf (ك). These are called the uvular (lahawīyy) letters.

- The middle of the tongue, together with what lies opposite it in the upper palate, produces jīm (ج), shīn (ش), and yā' (ي) (non-elongated). These are called shajarī letters because they emerge from the “root” (shajar) of the tongue.
- The side of the tongue, together with the upper molars whether on the right, left, or both produces the ḍād (ض).
- Between the sides of the tongue and what corresponds to them in the upper gums after the ḍād emerges the lām (ل).²³

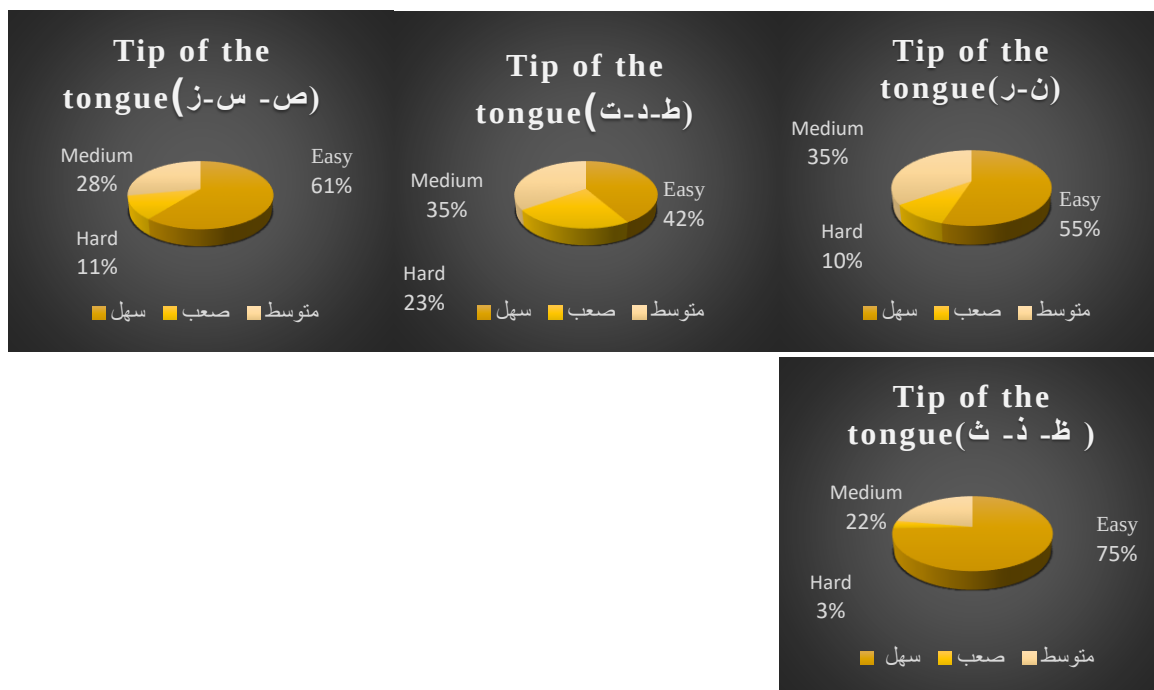


Observations:

It was noted that the highest levels of ease in articulation were recorded for letters from the back and middle of the tongue (ق, ك, ج, ش, ي). Meanwhile, the percentages for the lateral articulation points (ḍād and lām) were close, due to the general difficulty in pronouncing the ḍād among most students. Specifically, the number of responses indicating difficulty for ḍād was: 15 – difficult, 11 – moderately difficult. And for lām: 3 – difficult, 8 – moderately difficult.

This indicates that ḍād is the most difficult Arabic letter to pronounce, compared to all others. Early scholars agreed on the complexity of its articulation. Ibn al-Jazarī noted that even in his time, few people articulated the ḍād correctly. He warned against pronouncing it as a blend with zā' or dāl, or making it a velarized lām, or giving it a zāy-like quality all of which, he said, are incorrect.²⁴

- The tip of the tongue and the upper hard palate or just above the roots of the upper incisors produce the nūn (ن). Slight deviation from the nūn's articulation point yields the rā' (ر), which is slightly deeper into the tongue than the nūn.
- The tip of the tongue and the roots of the upper incisors produce dāl (د), tā' (ت), and ṭā' (ط), known as the nita'iyah letters.
- Between the tip of the tongue and the upper and lower incisors, with a slight expansion (Infitāḥ) between the jaws, emerge the zāy (ز), sīn (س), and šād (ص). These are known as the asliyya letters, as they come from the very edge of the tongue.²⁵
- The surface of the tongue tip and the edges of the upper incisors produce thā' (ث), dhāl (ذ), and zā' (ظ), known as lithawiyah letters, due to their close proximity to the gums (litha) of the upper incisors.²⁶



Observations:

It was noted that in most of these articulation zones, the percentage of ease of acquisition exceeded half. An exception was found with the letters *ṭā'*, *dāl*, and *tā'*, where a relative balance was observed among the ease, difficulty, and moderate acquisition levels.

This variation is due to the gradual difficulty in pronouncing the elevated *ṭā'*, which frequently overlaps with *tā'*. Additionally, the *tā'* is often accompanied by a whistling (*ṣafīr*) sound, which many Tajwīd learners struggle to eliminate. This sound is characteristic of the whistling letters yet *tā'* is not one of them, which makes its correct articulation more challenging for learners.

c. Labial Letters (Ḥurūf al-Shafatayn):

The lips possess two articulation points:

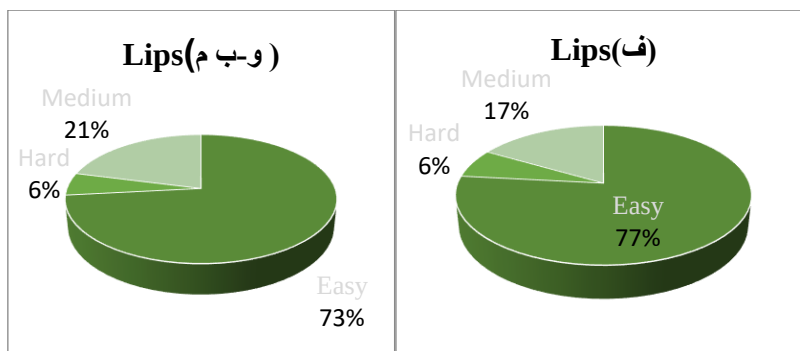
The first originates from the inner surface of the lower lip in contact with the edges of the upper incisors, producing the phoneme *fā'* (ف). The second arises from the approximation of both lips together, which produces *bā'* (ب), *mīm* (م), and *wāw* (و) (non-elongated). *Bā'* and *mīm* are articulated through the complete closure of the lips, whereas *wāw* is articulated with the lips open. These are collectively termed the labial letters (*al-ḥuruf al-shafawīyyah*).

Ibn Barrī articulated this description as follows:²⁷

The fā' is from the inner lower lip and the tip of the upper front teeth.

*The mīm and bā' are from between the two lips,
and the wāw as well, but with slight contact.*²⁸

LIT: "Wa-l-fā' u min bāṭni as-suflā ash-shafatayni,
Wa-ṭarafī al-'ulyā min ath-thanayyatayn,
Wa-l-mīm min baynihimā wa-l-bā',
Wa-l-wāw lākin abḥā iltiqā'."



Observations :

As depicted in the relative chart, and in comparison to previously discussed articulation points, the labial letters are among the easiest to articulate. The difficulty percentage for both articulation points does not exceed 6%.

The phonemes fā' (ف), with 23 responses, and bā' (ب), with 25 responses, recorded the highest frequency of "easy acquisition" cases.

This outcome is likely attributable to their proximity to the oral cavity expansion (Infitāḥ) and the visibility of the labial movements, which facilitates observation by learners.

Chapter Three: Phonetic Performance of Letter Characteristics (Ṣifat al-Ḥuruf)

Phonetic characteristics (ṣifat) are the plural of ṣifah, which in Arabic linguistically signifies "that which defines something in terms of meaning." Technically, it refers to an incidental feature that accompanies the pronunciation of a letter at its point of articulation, such as voicing (jahr), softness (rakhawah), and the like.

The main function of these characteristics is to distinguish letters that share the same point of articulation. Without these features, letters that emerge from the same place would be indistinguishable. For instance, the letter ṭā' (ط), if not for its features of elevation (isti'āl a'), compression (iṭbaq), and voicing (jahr), would be identical to tā' (ت), since they share the same point of articulation. Additionally, these characteristics enhance the auditory quality of a letter and help in identifying its strength or weakness.²⁹

1. The Characteristics of Voicing (Jahr) and Whispering (Hams):

These two characteristics are opposites if one is present in a letter, the other is necessarily absent.

Sībawayh defined them as follows:

"A voiced (majhu'r) letter is one whose articulation is accompanied by a strong reliance (on the point of articulation), which prevents the breath from flowing until the reliance is completed and sound flows instead. This is the case for voiced letters articulated in the throat and mouth.

A whispered (mahmuṣ) letter, however, is one with weakened reliance at its articulation point, such that the breath flows with it. This can be recognized when you pronounce the letter while allowing the breath to flow with it something not possible with voiced letters."³⁰

A close analysis of the terms “strengthened reliance” (for jahr) and “weakened reliance” (for hams) reveals the essential difference between the two:

The mechanism of voicing (jahr) involves pressure and full closure at the point of articulation, producing a strong, audible sound from the mouth.

In contrast, whispering (hams) allows the breath to flow freely, indicating a lack of strong closure, which results in a weak, whispered sound.

There are ten whispered (mahmuṣ) letters, summarized by Ibn al-Jazarī in the phrase:

"Faḥthahu shakhsun sakata"

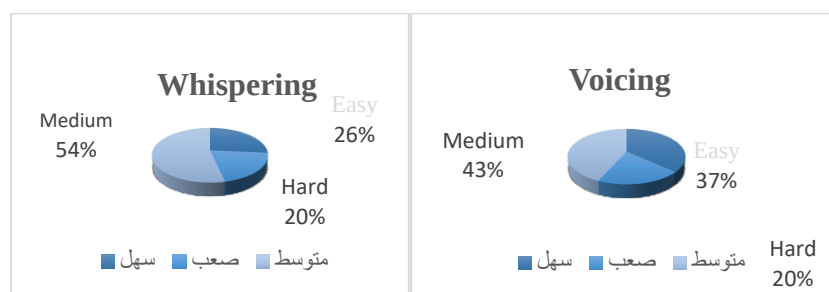
All other Arabic letters are considered voiced (majh uṣṣ).³¹

Ibn Barrī states:

"Whispering (hams) occurs in ten letters, summarized in the phrase 'ḥatha shakhsuhu sakata' In all others, voicing is present..."³²

LIT : *"alhams yaqae fi easharat 'ahrufa, tulkhs fi eibara "hadha shakhsuh saqtata".*

wafi sayir alhurufi, yakun aljahr mwjwdan..."



Observations:

According to the survey results on the ease or difficulty of articulating these two features:

The percentage of moderate acquisition (average performance) exceeded half for both whispered and voiced letters.

The overall difficulty for both characteristics hovered around 20%, indicating a moderate level of challenge in their articulation.

2. The Characteristics of Strength (Shiddah), Softness (Rikhaṭwah), and Intermediate (Tawassuṭ):

Among the opposing phonetic characteristics derived from the Arabic letters are strength (shiddah) and softness (rikha'wah), with an intermediate state (tawassuṭ) situated between them.

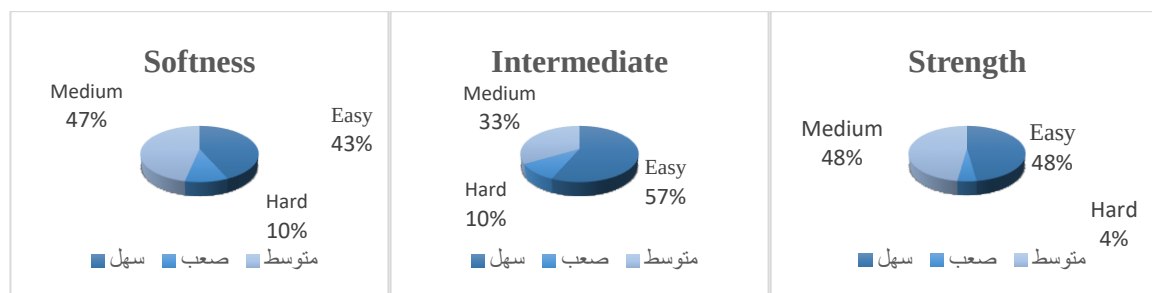
Ibn Duraid commented on this as follows:

“The soft letters (al-ḥuruṭ ar-rakhwah) include: ha' (هـ), ḥa' (ح), ka' (ك), kha' (خ), si'n (س), shi'n (ش), 'ayn (ع), ghayn (غ), ṣa'd (ص), ḍa'd (ض), za' (ظ), dha'l (ذ), tha' (ث), fa' (ف), and za'y (ز); they are termed ‘soft’ because they relax and flow through the vocal tract. The strong letters (al-ḥuruṭ ash-shaḍīdah) include: ṭa' (ط), shi'n (ش), ji'm (ج), and others that can be tightly articulated when pronounced.”³³

It is stated in “al-Durar al-Lawāmi’”:

“And in the rest [of the letters] are found voicing and strength, In 'Ajdatu quṭbuka'—eight strong letters.”³⁴

LIT: "wufi sayir alhuruf jahr waquatun, fi "'ajadt qutbak" - thamaniat 'ahruf qawiatin."



Observations:

- The percentage of ease was equal for both strong (shadiḍah) and intermediate (mutawassīṭah) letters.
- The difficulty rate for strong letters did not exceed 4%, while it rose slightly to 10% for intermediate letters, and was similar for soft letters.
- For soft letters, the performance was almost evenly split between ease and intermediate acquisition.
- The general observation is that both intermediate and soft letters tend to be more difficult to articulate correctly compared to strong letters.

3. The Characteristics of Elevation (Isti'lā') and Lowness (Infisāl)

Infisāl also referred to as Istifāl is defined as the lowness of the tongue away from the upper palate during the articulation of a letter, causing the sound to descend toward the floor of the mouth. Hence, the letters bearing this trait are called “low” (mustafulah) or “weakened” letters.

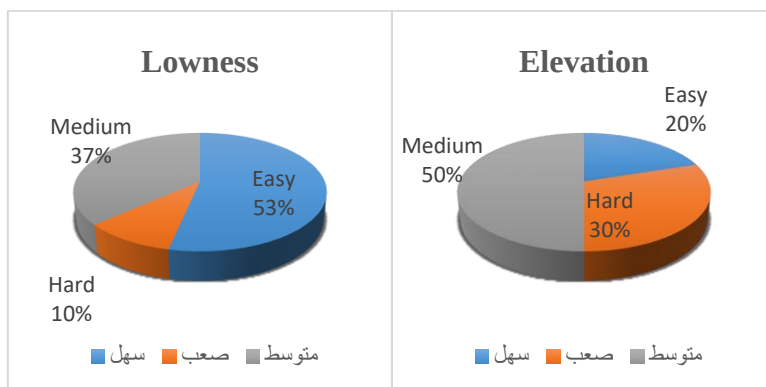
In contrast, Isti'lā' refers to the elevation (Isti'lā') of the tongue toward the upper palate during articulation, thereby causing the sound to rise.

As stated:

"Lowness (Istifāl) applies to all letters except the group:

'Qaṣ khaṣ ḍaghaṭ'—those are the elevated (musta'liyah) letters."

LIT : "qasu khasu daghat" - wahi alhuruf almarfuea (almustaeliatu).



Observations:

The rate of difficulty in pronouncing elevated (musta'liyah) letters is significantly higher than that of low (mustafulah) letters, as clearly shown in the percentage results. The ease of articulation for emphatic letters (Isti'lā') drops to 20%, indicating that pronouncing emphatic letters is notably more difficult than low ones.

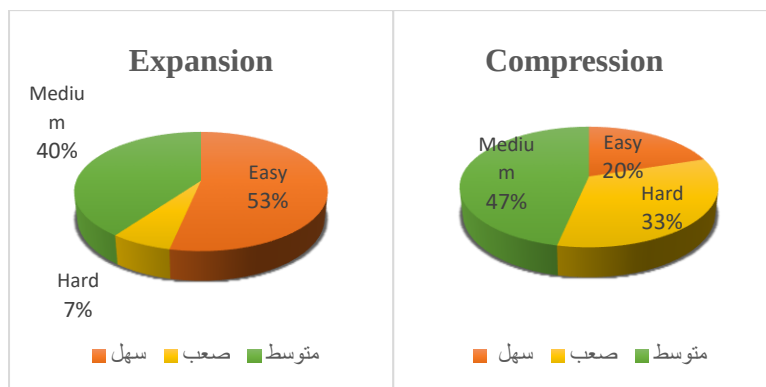
This difficulty can be attributed to the dominant local dialect of the study participants, which tends to favor linguistic lowness over elevation. Isti'lā', on the other hand, requires tongue concavity and upward movement, a feature that poses a pronunciation challenge for many of the learners in the region.

4. The Characteristics of Compression (Iṭbāq) and Expansion (Infitāḥ)

The Arabic language incorporates a group of sounds that produce a heavy auditory impression, termed emphatic sounds, in contrast to others that are perceived as light or softened. For instance, when articulating the sound ṭā' (ط), it is perceived as heavier than its counterpart tā' (ت). Consequently, ṭā' is characterized as emphatic, while tā' is described as softened. This emphatic quality arises from a distinct articulatory posture that linguists have meticulously observed and detailed. They noted that in Iṭbāq (compression), the tongue presses against the upper palate, creating a concave shape—with the front of the tongue producing softened sounds, and the rear of the tongue being responsible for the emphatic sounds.³⁵

As Ibn al-Jazarī articulated: "Ṣād, ḍād, ṭā', and ḏā' are emphatic and exhibit Iṭbāq..."³⁶

LIT : "alsidi waldaad waltaa' walzaa' mushddt wtuzhr altatbiqu..."

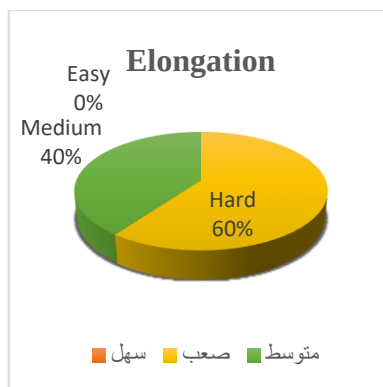


Observations:

In the case of Iṭbāq, the previously noted trend concerning other features is repeated: the level of difficulty is higher compared to Infitāḥ (expansion). Specifically: the difficulty in Iṭbāq reached 33%, whereas in Infitāḥ, it was only 7%. The ease of articulation for Iṭbāq was low, at 20%, while for Infitāḥ, it exceeded half of the responses.

5. Elongation (Istiṭālah)

Linguistically, Istiṭālah is defined as extension. In phonetic terminology, it denotes the extension of the sound from the initial to the terminal point of the side of the tongue, as previously explicated within the description of the articulation point of the letter ḍād (ض). The letter is described as possessing Istiṭālah because its point of articulation and its acoustic quality are extended, reaching as far as the articulation point of the letter lām (ل). This characteristic is distinctive, possesses no counterpart, and is exclusively assigned to the phoneme ḍād (ض).



Observations

The percentage data clearly indicates a complete absence of articulatory ease in Istiṭālah. Consistent with earlier observations, a higher proportion of respondents reported difficulty with the pronunciation of the letter ḍād, which strongly suggests that it presents a substantial articulatory challenge for numerous learners.

This outcome is posited to stem from the temporal and practical distance from the correct, classical Arabic pronunciation. Indeed, linguistic foreignisation (istiṭājām) is highly probable in this context, given that Arabic is acquired solely within formal educational settings.

Conclusion

This applied research paper yields the following findings:

- Free schools in the region are crucial for Arabic language preservation, despite observed shortcomings in the articulation and specific characteristics of numerous phonemes.
 - The establishment of a school specializing in Tajwīd science has stimulated a renewed interest in accurate and precise recitation.
- The majority of phonemes and their articulation features are generally easy to pronounce and acquire. Exceptions primarily involve certain challenging letters, specifically the pharyngeal sounds, notably {ghayn} {غ} and {khā} {خ}.
- The letter {ḍād} {ض} presents the highest degree of difficulty among all Arabic letters, with the accompanying trait of (istitālah) (lengthening) being particularly arduous to master.
- Labial letters {fā} {ف} {bā} {ب} {mīm} {م}, {wāw} {و} are the easiest to articulate among all phonemes.
- Regarding articulation features, difficulty is chiefly associated with the emphatic traits of (istitālah) (lengthening) and {ibāq} (compression). This is attributable to the prevailing tendency toward phonetic ease and lightness within the local dialect.
- The teaching and learning of the Arabic language do not present significant challenges within the region, potentially due to the substantial overlap and similarities between the Amazigh and Arabic languages.
- Oral transmission plays a vital role in the correct acquisition of Arabic phonemes, whereas reliance on printed materials has contributed to a demonstrable decline in mastering correct Arabic pronunciation and Tajweed.
 - The recitation of the Qur'an with Tajwīd significantly and practically enhances the learning of accurate articulation and phoneme characteristics, owing to its inherent oral, face-to-face mode of transmission.

Recommendations

This study proposes several recommendations:

- The accurate learning of Arabic phonemes and their features requires considerable attention due to the noted decline in their mastery both locally and nationally.
- The inclusion of tajwīd instruction within official school curricula is imperative.
- It is necessary to establish specialized language laboratories dedicated to tajwīd instruction within both Qur'anic schools and public schools.
- Similar applied studies employing either comparative or analytical methodologies should be conducted in other provinces of the country to assess the general level of mastery in Arabic phoneme articulation and traits.

Footnotes :

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- ³ Al-Hajj Salih, A. R. (2012). Discourse and communication in the theory of position and use. National Institution for Printing Arts. (In Arabic)
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- ⁵ Muhammad ibn Musa al-Sharwini al-Jarari, Recitation of the Holy Qur'an According to the Narration of Warsh from Nafi' Using the Azraq Method, Dar al-Huda, Ain Mlila, Algiers, 2012, p. 22.
- ⁶ Ibn Manzur, Muhammad ibn Makram ibn Ali Abu al-Fadl Jamal al-Din, Lisan al-Arab, entry: Sound
- ⁷ Ibrahim Anis, Linguistic Sounds, Nahdet Misr Press, 1st ed., Egypt, 1st ed., p. 5
- ⁸ Muhammad Boulkhout, The Ancient Phonetic Study among the Indians, Greeks, and Arabs, Al-Umda Journal of Linguistics and Discourse Analysis, University of Jijel, Vol. 3, No. 2, Algeria, 2019, p. 262.
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- ¹⁰ Jamal Shalabab, Ammar bin Lakrish, The Phonetic Lesson According to Sibawayh and Its Position in Modern Linguistics, Annals of Literature and Languages, University of Mohamed Boudiaf, M'Sila, Issue 9, Vol. 1, Algeria, p. 272.
- ¹¹ Mohamed Belkacem, The Phonetic Lesson and Its Terminology Through the Introduction to the Secret of the Art of Syntax by Ibn Jinni, Al-Athar Magazine, University of Ouargla, Algeria, Issue 4, May 2000, p. 273.
- ¹² See: Al-Sharwini, *tajwīd* of the Holy Qur'an, p. 82.
- ¹³ Ibn Al-Jazari, Muhammad bin Ali bin Yusuf, The Text of Al-Jazariyyah, entitled The Al-Jazariyyah Introduction to What the Reader of the Qur'an Must Know, Edited and Corrected by Muhammad Tamim Al-Za'bi, 1st ed., db, dt., p. 1.
- ¹⁴ Touzinat Al-Maliki, Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad Al-Tilimsani, A Restriction on the Reading of Imam Nafi' from the Narrations of Qalun and Warsh, ed. Abu Bakr Belkacem Daif Al-Jaza'iri, Dar Ibn Hazm, 1st ed., Beirut, 1430-200 CE, p. 23.
- ¹⁵ Amani bint Muhammad Ashour, The Shining Principles of Readings, Madar Al-Watan Publishing, 3rd ed., Beirut, 1432-2011 CE, p. 45.
- ¹⁶ Ahmed Mukhtar Omar, A Study of Linguistic Phonetics, Alam Al-Kutub, 1st ed., Cairo, 1997, 1418 AH, pp. 99-100.
- ¹⁷ Bertil Malmberg, Phonology, translated and studied by Abd al-Sabour Shahin, Maktaba al-Shabab, 1st ed., 1st ed., 2nd ed., p. 37.
- ¹⁸ See: Mahmud Muhammad Abd al-Mun'im al-Abd, Al-Rawdah al-Nadiyyah Sharh Matn al-Jazariyyah, Al-Azhar Library for Heritage, 1st ed., Cairo, 1422 AH - 2001 AD, p. 155.
- ¹⁹ See: Omar bin Ahmed Bousada, Al-Shamel fi al-Tajweed, Alfa Publications, 2nd ed., Algiers, 2013, p. 17.
- ²⁰ Bousada, Al-Shamel fi al-Tajweed, p. 23.
- ²¹ Ibn al-Jazari, Al-Muqaddimah al-Jazariyyah, p. 3.
- ²² See: Bousada, *ibid.*, p. 25.
- ²³ See: Muhammad Nabhan ibn Husayn al-Masri, Al-Istabraq in the Narration of Imam Warsh on the authority of Nafi' via al-Shatibiyyah, DD, DB, DT, DT, pp. 54-55.
- ²⁴ Yusuf al-Khalifa Abu Bakr, The Sounds of the Qur'an: How to Learn and Teach Them, Islamic Thought Library, 3rd ed., Khartoum, 1392-1973, p. 71.
- ²⁵ See: Muhammad Nabhan, Al-Istabraq, pp. 55-56.
- ²⁶ See: Muhammad Nabhan, Al-Istabraq, p. 56.
- ²⁷ Muhammad al-Nabhan, the same reference, p. 56.
- ²⁸ al-Marghani, The Rising Stars, p. 406.
- ²⁹ See, al-Sharwini al-Jarari, Recitation of the Holy Qur'an, p. 31.
- ³⁰ Sibawayh, Abu Bishr Amr ibn Uthman ibn Qanbar, The Book, ed. Abd al-Salam Harun, 3rd ed., Al-Khanji Library, Cairo, 1988, vol. 4, p. 434.
- ³¹ See, Al-Sharwīnī al-Jarārī, the same reference, p. 31.
- ³² Al-Marghānī, The Rising Stars, p. 411.
- ³³ Ibn Duraid Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn al-Husayn, Jamharat al-Lughah, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Vol. 1, p. 46.
- ³⁴ al-Marghani, the same reference, p. 411.
- ³⁵ Bertil Malmberg, Phonetics, p. 115.
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