

## Matn and Alfyaahs for teaching Arabic language in Algeria The secondary education phase as a model

### Matn et Alfyaahs pour l'enseignement de la langue arabe en Algérie: Le secondaire comme modèle

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#### Abstract

This article, entitled « Matn and Alfyaahs for teaching Arabic language in Algeria: The secondary education phase as a model » aims to systematically describe an educational phenomenon whose impact on language acquisition and grammatical rules is undeniable. This is a long-standing and ongoing requirement that necessitates the adoption of diverse methods and approaches-both traditional and modern-compatible with human capacities for memorization and comprehension, despite variations in performance and expression. These methods, taken together, aim to ensure the correctness of oral and written communication, from antiquity to the age of modern technology and software.

Highlighting the place given to grammatical systems in secondary school curricula (across all disciplines), or their absence, requires practical research tools that allow for inductive observation and objective analysis. This will enable us to assess the current situation and propose a solution that promotes the adoption of effective scientific methods for teaching grammar, whether traditional or modern.

#### Keywords:

Matn; Alfyaahs; Grammatical systems; Programs; Algerian high school.

#### Resumé

Cet article, intitulé « Matn et Alfyaahs pour l'enseignement de la langue arabe en Algérie: Le secondaire comme modèle », vise à décrire systématiquement un phénomène éducatif dont l'impact sur l'acquisition du langage et des règles grammaticales est indéniable. Il s'agit d'une exigence ancienne et persistante qui requiert l'adoption de méthodes et d'approches diverses – traditionnelles et modernes – compatibles avec les capacités humaines de mémorisation et de compréhension, malgré les variations de performance et d'expression. Ces méthodes, prises ensemble, visent à

garantir la correction de la communication orale et écrite, de l'Antiquité à l'ère des technologies et des logiciels modernes.

Mettre en lumière la place accordée aux systèmes grammaticaux dans les programmes du secondaire (toutes disciplines confondues), ou leur absence, exige des outils de recherche pratiques permettant une observation inductive et une analyse objective. Ceci nous permettra d'évaluer la situation actuelle et de proposer une solution favorisant l'adoption de méthodes scientifiques efficaces pour l'enseignement de la grammaire, qu'elles soient traditionnelles ou modernes.

### **Mots clés**

Matn; Alfyahs; Systèmes grammaticaux; Programmes; Lycée algérien.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

It is not surprising that nations and civilizations, with their diverse approaches and beliefs, witness a comprehensive development that connects a distant past with a new present. Their educational and pedagogical characteristics are linked to individuals and groups, despite the differences and variations between original and modern foundations and mechanisms. Among these characteristics are grammatical systems and prose and poetry texts (printed and digital), which contribute to teaching shari'a and language to their users and others, young and old. This is achieved through the adoption of specific methods, inherited and extraneous that do not hinder human abilities to memorize, recall, and comprehend, regardless of different levels of performance and expression. The goal is to preserve the language and acquire knowledge without falling behind, keeping pace with local and global technological and scientific developments, especially in light of the proliferation of websites. These websites offer practical educational programs that facilitate the collection, storage, and classification of oral and written resources, thus

simplifying language construction and practice according to general rules and established principles.

Based on the above, it is impossible in any way to ignore the role of one of the most famous methods of teaching grammar that has been adopted over the decades, and whose roots extend to this day, in combating the mistakes of the tongue and pen.

- Do you think it is the right and the effective one?
- To what extent can we talk about the grammar system in Algeria?
- What is the current situation in secondary education programs?

To answer these questions - by identifying the reasons and showing solutions - I prepared an intervention entitled:

**The reality of grammatical poetic systems in Algeria:** (secondary education as a model).

The pursuit of this study, with its above-mentioned requirements and questions, is inevitably subject to two things; The first one is a general comment:

The first question is about how Algerian secondary schools deal with poetic grammatical systems?

- Their systematic presence in secondary education curricula.

The second is a necessary descriptive approach for observations and real-world examinations, as well as the presentation of readings and proposals after analyzing the data and limiting them to the demands of this intervention, which includes constant and changing data at the level of the school community ( Algerian secondary school), especially with regard to the grammatical systems among the literary divisions in terms of:

- its systematic presence in secondary education programs

- its marginalization and substitution with approaches that contradict its original objectives.

## **2. Grammatical rule:**

It is important to remember that language is superior to the grammatical rule, and that the desire for the integrity of the first is a solid motivation for learning the second, provided one understands its origins in diverse texts, systems, and languages, both ancient and modern, rich and varied.

Therefore, to depart from this aim is considered a prolongation that distracts the learner from the desired goal, since this learning is not an end in itself, but a means of refining one's oral and written expression. (Al-Khalifa., 1996). Perhaps it is the reluctance to learn these grammatical rules, regardless of language level, for various, sometimes trivial, reasons, that has led to the proliferation of attempts at simplification, disseminated by numerous pioneers, both Arab and non-Arab. Some quickly adopted this approach, while others hesitated, driven by "good intentions," or perhaps by a desire to stray from the straight and narrow for other purposes, such as denigrating the Arabic language. (Al-Hamad, 2005). As for the recent attempts to reform the education system in Algeria, following a colonial policy of sabotage aimed at erasing Arab identity, these reforms encompassed all aspects of the educational process, including grammatical content, textbooks, and so on. The objective was to facilitate the acquisition of language and other skills in a manner adapted to different levels of education, avoiding tedious repetition and confusing conciseness, so as not to lead to corruption in education and a deterioration in academic achievement. (Khalidun, 2007)

- Has reform, then, been reformed?
- And what role do grammatical systems and the Alfiyyahs occupy within this framework?

### **3. The foundations of poetic grammatical systems:**

The formation of the systems of grammar continued since its inception without interruption, but it was slow at various times after the second century of migration, which witnessed the preparation of grammatical systems that did not receive its due share of fame, such as those attributed to ibn Ahmed al-Farahidi, and later ones that were overlooked during a period of "about three centuries and more, either due to loss, neglect or lack of interest on account of their limited scope, away from taking into account" their scientific and educational value, or perhaps because of their existence in several periods," until the emergence of a group of systems and grammatical Alfiyyahs at the hands of the ibn Malik , Siouti and the ibn Moati... There is a lot of interest among the students and they are still there. (Al-Farahidi, 1995).

Regardless of the multitude of poetic and prosaic grammatical systems, and the diversity of their purposes and richness, they converge over time. This constitutes a fundamental condition for description, induction, and recommendation in pedagogical research and studies concerning curricula and teaching methods, both compulsory and optional, in all their classical and exploratory aspects. In this context, it is impossible to ignore the importance of memorization, even if opinions advocating its reduction and exclusion exist, especially since creativity does not arise from nothing.

### **4. The realistic role of grammatical poetic systems:**

#### 4.1 Systems and texts of Quranic schools (zawiyas/mosques)

Given the diversity of materials and systems (linguistic, jurisprudential, scientific, etc.) within Quranic schools and other educational institutions, it is not surprising that the number of commentaries and abridgments increases daily and annually, under the pretext of their appeal and ease of use for both young and old. So where does the deficiency truly reside, in excessive elaboration or in undue concision?

The prose texts and poetic systems of Quranic schools -whether long or short-share a general principle: memorization from the outset.

Therefore, we believe that denying its usefulness is tantamount to denying knowledge itself, since memorization is an indispensable scientific method. It is worth noting that memorizing prose and poetic structures without understanding, applying, or practicing them is like carrying books without reading them, without benefiting from them, or without learning their lessons.

It can also be argued that acquiring skills requires constant practice and repetition before mastery is achieved, particularly for language skills that demand extensive memorization. This is evident in the study circles of mosques, zawiyas, and kattatibs, as well as among those who have followed their approach and been influenced by them within Quranic schools, where one observes:

- Commentator (teacher/professor/sheikh).
- Educational poems, prose texts.
- Students/teachers.

In order to consolidate the Islamic principles and linguistic absolutes that contribute to the graduation of a higher body linguistically and scientifically, where

we see each year the superiority of the memorizers of the Quran - students of Quranic schools - in elementary, middle, high school, and university, as they attain the foremost ranks and the highest distinctions, rightly and truly so.

Memorization is a crucial stage through which an individual's various mental and intellectual abilities are utilized, stimulating, activating, and enhancing performance, particularly in developing their linguistic skills and acquiring linguistic talents, after gaining a vast linguistic repertoire derived from what they have memorized.

It should be noted that those who memorize the Holy Quran and the Prophetic Hadiths in zawiyas , kattatibs, and other similar settings are later able to memorize texts, poems, and proverbs, along with studying commentaries, according to similar programs that do not neglect understanding and practice to the point of enabling the student to hold gatherings, deliver sermons, and lead prayers. Among the texts memorized in these circles are Al-Ajrummyah and Ibn Malik's Al- Alfiyyah, unlike compulsory education programs. The former serves as an introduction and stimulant, while the latter provides the essential linguistic and scientific knowledge.

#### **4.2 Secondary schools dispense with grammatical poetic systems:**

The development of the curriculum in Algerian secondary education is part of the broader context of education at all levels, in terms of programs, methods, and resources. (National Curriculum Committee, Directorate of Secondary Education, (January 2025/March 2026)). This field study, which examines secondary school curricula and programs, reveals a complete absence of grammatical and poetic systems and memorized prose texts within the curricula approved by the Ministry, as it is the case at all other levels, from compulsory middle school to higher education.

For example, the grammar curriculum for students in the literary divisions and the time allocated to it in the Algerian secondary education system can be examined at various levels, particularly with regard to accompanying materials.

This clearly highlights the disorganized, even arbitrary, transitions between lessons. Furthermore, the method of delivering grammar lessons is inherently competency-based, and its modern approach, which attempts to move beyond the objectives-based pedagogy, has both advantages and disadvantages.

Anyone who carefully examines the content, time allocated, and presentation requirements imposed by educational institutions will undoubtedly find it impossible to teach and memorize grammar through simplified prose texts and poetic verses. This stems from the adoption of modern educational approaches that are, in many respects, uneducational, yet we believe they cannot dispense with memorization and rote learning, regardless of their underlying principles. Therefore, the rejection of these classical tools serves ulterior motives.

Would anyone want to incorporate these tools into the secondary school curriculum in a systematic way?

It is worth noting that the teaching of Arabic grammar, as defined in the Algerian secondary school curriculum (which spans three academic years for first, second, and third-year students), neglects the use of many resources, such as didactic prose texts and poems, despite their direct and long-term benefits.

It is undeniable that when we meet individuals who have memorized these texts among those participating in study circles at mosques and Quranic schools, we observe their clear distinction and evident superiority over their peers who are completely unfamiliar with them, whether in terms of titles, authors, structure, or content. They do not use them as practical scientific tools and methodologies.

The commitment of many students and researchers ,who attend study circles in mosques and elsewhere ,to memorizing prose texts and poems on grammar, and gradually studying their commentaries according to the guidance they receive, has instilled in them self-confidence, fluency, and a desire to deepen their knowledge. All of this is essential for acquiring knowledge effectively and facilitating learning methods that require diligent practice. Memorization is a means, while correct application is the ultimate goal, and this can only be achieved through two processes: selecting knowledge and acquiring it. This is exactly like a doctor's inability to diagnose a condition or perform surgery without considering their prior knowledge, experience, and practice.

Despite the absence of a specific methodology for memorizing prose and poetry related to grammatical rules in secondary school curricula, many students, regardless of their specialization, sought it out in libraries, reading rooms, and outside the school walls. This was due to its clear and desirable linguistic and academic impact, and was pursued individually and collectively through study circles in corners, books, mosques, and Quranic schools. These circles are led by a skilled interpreter who dictates a simplified explanation after the students recite a chapter from the memorized text. The interpreter then listens to each student individually to correct errors and reinforce accurate memorization of all forms of prose and poetic grammatical rules through repetition.

It can be said that this methodology contributes to facilitating the learning and teaching of grammar rules, with the aim of preserving the language of the Holy Quran from error.

## **5. Analysis and critique**

Educational programs and methodologies share a general principle: teaching and understanding. However, their methods vary and require continuous updates that take into account the spatial and temporal context, available support, and different levels of comprehension. This is clearly evident among some advocates of simplifying grammar instruction, given the diversity of objectives and abilities.

This has led to the emergence of numerous concise educational books, references, and treatises for beginners, both old and new, such as the "Al-Ajrumiyya" and "Al-Alfiyya." Nevertheless, some specialists in grammar education consider these works dry and difficult; their excessive brevity is detrimental, and their verbosity off-putting and tedious. Therefore, Rifa'a al-Tahtawi authored a treatise on grammar entitled "Al-Tuhfa al-Maktabiyya li-Taqrīb al-Lughah al-'Arabiyya" (The Library Masterpiece for Simplifying the Arabic Language), based on the "Al-Ajrumiyya text." In this work, he limited himself to chapters addressing the basic rules of grammar, which he presented in a style suitable for learners and a clear method of grammatical presentation. The work comprised fifteen chapters, marking the beginning of a new era in educational works. (Sulaiti, 2002).

The questions we address here are inevitably based on direct observation:

- Is it possible to dispense with didactic prose texts and poems in teaching Arabic grammar?
- To what extent can the current secondary school curriculum be modified?

Direct observation of Algerian secondary schools, as well as other official educational institutions-after reviewing the curriculum content and interviewing teachers-revealed a pressing educational need for easily understandable and memorizable didactic prose texts to facilitate the learning of Arabic grammar. This is

crucial for maintaining the accuracy of spoken and written Arabic, especially given the prevalence of apathy, some students' dependence on teachers, weak memorization, creativity, and critical thinking skills, the widespread belief in the difficulty of grammar, the inability of regulatory bodies to develop appropriate curricula and teaching materials, and other factors.

Everything presented regarding secondary education programs and curricula in Algeria differs from the reality of prose texts and poetic grammatical systems in non-compulsory education. This latter system has remained faithful to the traditions of the early sheikhs and teachers who inherited and transmitted the foundations of learning and teaching, which include:

(memorization, recitation, explanation, comprehension, practice, creativity, etc.).

Consequently, the effectiveness of these scientific grammatical mechanisms increases with their optimal use and decreases with the prevalence of excuses that justify complexity, unfamiliarity, and difficulty... excuses that aim to deny the value of memorized grammatical texts (prose and poetry) in the name of preserving the integrity of the language acquisition process.

However difficult and complex the processes of memorizing prose and poetry may seem, the importance of repetition and practice is evident in mastering the language, correcting errors, and adapting texts wisely, drawing on both tradition and creativity.

In fact, the goal of memorizing texts and grammatical systems is to avoid slips of the tongue, not merely to recite texts memorized by heart.

## **6. Final conclusions**

After presenting the key elements of this article according to the requirements of this scientific study, I arrived at several observations and conclusions that necessitate further research and the application of practical scientific methodologies based on description, statistics, and comparison. We note the spatial and temporal overlap of research communities, despite the significant differences between educational institutions in terms of structures, programs, levels, and affiliations.

The identified elements are presented below:

- Intensify the efforts of researchers and specialists in teaching Arabic and related fields to facilitate data collection, statistical analysis, and direct observation of the reality of Algerian secondary schools and other educational institutions at various levels. It should be noted that secondary schools represent a crucial transitional stage in students' educational journey, and their success undoubtedly contributes to academic success and higher education, attracting diverse intellectual perspectives, some valid and others not.
- Benefit from the experiences of traditional religious schools (zawiyas), Quranic schools (kattatibs), and other religious institutions that contributed to building a generation eloquent and confident in their expression.
- Re-evaluate educational programs and modern teaching methods, and integrate easily memorized prose texts and poetic memorizations that incorporate Arabic grammar rules into the modern educational system, according to scientific standards.
- Allocate sufficient time for memorization, recall, comprehension, and application.

- Continuously monitor the progress and linguistic and academic levels of secondary school students in all disciplines and fields, especially language, and provide regular individual and group assessments.
- Allow teachers to use traditional memorization methods in their teaching, as needed.
- Prose texts for educational purposes are just as important as grammatical poetry in terms of their usefulness; however, poetry is sometimes easier to memorize. Therefore, learners' temperaments and aptitudes should be taken into account when assigning them memorization tasks involving prose and poetry.
- Encourage individual and group initiatives that continue to use the method of memorizing, understanding, and explaining prose texts and grammatical poetry for educational purposes as a valuable scientific and pedagogical approach, whether through creation or study.
- Transitioning the learner from memorizing the easy, simple, and uncomplicated to other less easy things, through a gradual, motivating, and sound educational approach that requires quality learning and encourages further pursuit of knowledge, which requires a sound language.
- The need to recognize the role of reception and repetition, memorization and practice, in developing language skills (listening comprehension, speaking, reading comprehension, and writing) and correct pronunciation, particularly in Arabic.
- The importance of what is preserved in the communication process, because the sender inevitably draws from his environment and speaks and writes in a certain style, which is often a mixture of tradition and creativity.

Despite all that has been said, the subject of this article remains complex and requires in-depth field studies, rich in results and recommendations, which stem from the reality of pedagogical texts in easy-to-memorize prose and educational poetic grammatical systems in Algerian secondary schools and elsewhere, depending on whether they are used properly or not.

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