

Assessment of the Critical Period Hypothesis among Adult Fulbe Adamawa in the Traditional Way of Learning the Glorious Quran

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Abstract

The CPH has been one of the key areas in Applied Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition (SLA). With the inconclusive debate on the matter among scholars and researchers, this paper attempts to investigate it among adult Fulbe Adamawa in the traditional way of learning the Glorious Qur'an. Data were collected using interview and reading test. Results showed that CPH was a reality. But contrary to the opinions of the mainstream researchers, the Qur'an maintains that human being denigrates mentally and physically as he grows with no specification to puberty period. Wrong methodology and CPH were identified as the barrier to nativism in learning the Qur'an among adult Fulbe Adamawa. Using L1 (Fulfulde) in teaching the Qur'an is not the best method. The study recommends the use of the best methodology which is teaching the Qur'an in the Arabic language and Arabic alphabets.

Keywords: Adult; Fulbe; Adamawa; learning; Qur'an

Introduction

The Critical Period Hypothesis, henceforth CPH, has been a field of debate in the Applied Linguistics. The proponents advance their evidence to prove its existence, while those who oppose reject it. That is not the end. Of controversy also is where the critical period

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lies: in the first language or in the second one or both? The argument permeates to when is CPH's beginning and end? Is it possible for one to achieve nativism after the passage of the period? Is the position of biological science on the issue sacrosanct or it can be challenged since it is a field of research? It is an inconclusive debate. Has Islam, as a religion, Muslims' way of life and civilization got a viewpoint on the matter? Therefore, Fulfulde Adamawa was used as a case study in assessing the CPH among matured Fulbe in the recitation of the Glorious Qur'an.

Lodhi² remarked that 2582 languages and 1382 dialects are spoken in Africa with Hausa-Fulani, Oromo/Galla and Swahili having 20 million speakers and Arabic is the most widely spread language on the continent. Shehu and Also³ opine that Fulfulde was a West-Atlantic language spoken in most of the West African Countries and six dialects were identified including Adamawa dialect. Islam has commanded the Muslims to read the Noble Qur'an the way it should be read, observing the rules of recitation, and be read as the Arabs do as there are virtues in so doing.

The Qira'at (the Canonical Readings of the Qur'an)

The Qur'an was revealed in the dialect of the Quraysh, but towards the close of the Prophet's life people from different Arabian tribes accepted Islam in large numbers. It was found that they could not pronounce certain words in the dialect of the Quraysh being habituated from childhood to their own dialects. It was then the Prophet (SAW) allowed and taught them to pronounce a word according to their own peculiar dialect because words in other dialects convey the same sense. This is an admission that Arabic dialects are all lumped under the big umbrella of Arabic language. A good example is what is reported from Umar Bin al-Khattab. Umar heard Hisham Bin Hakim reciting Surah al-Furqan not in the dialect he was taught by the noble Prophet (SAW). He then seized him by the collar and dragged him to the Prophet (SAW). The Prophet (SAW) approved the recitation of both Umar and Hisham

² Lodhi, Abdulaziz Y, "The Language Situation in Africa Today," *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 2, no. 1 (1993), 79-86.

³ Shehu, Ahmadu and Muhammed Sale Also, "Hausa and French Loanwords in Adamawa Fulfulde: A Question of Intelligibility," (Paper presented at the 1st International Conference on Hausa Studies in the 21st Century, Bayero University 2017), 240-251.

and said that the Qur’an was revealed in seven different Ahruf (dialects) Bukhari. Volume 6, Book 61, Number 569

Below are the names of the distinguished reciters and their promoters.

Table 1: The Seven Reciters, their Cities and Prominent Promoters

Reciter	City	Year of Death	1 st Promoter	Year of Death	2 nd Promoter	Year of Death
Naafi'	Madinah	169 AH	Qaalun	220AH	Warsh	197AH
Ibn Kathir	Makkah	120AH	Al-Bazzi	250AH	Qunbul	291AH
Ibn 'Amir	Damascus	118AH	Hisham	245AH	Ibn Dhakwaan	242AH
Abu 'Amr	Basrah	154AH	Al-Duuri	246AH	Al-Suusi	261AH
'Asim	Kufah	128AH	Shu'bah	193AH	Hafs	180AH
Hamza	Kufah	156AH	Khalaf	229AH	Khallaad	220AH
Al-Kisaa'i	Kufah	189AH	Abul-Haarith	240AH	Al-Duuri	246AH

However, the reading among some Fulbe Adamawa has been characterized by the mother tongue influence, henceforth L1, either due to age of second language acquisition, henceforth L2, or wrong teaching methodology. Ostovar-Namaghi and Norouzi⁴, to establish the relevance of L1 in teaching an L2, opine that teachers could use it meaningfully to give a sense of belonging to learners and to polish their comprehension when L2 fails. The situation needs to be addressed using research.

The study had the following research questions:

- i. How does the age of the learner affect the reading of the Glorious Qur’an among Fulbe of Adamawa State?
- ii. Are there any other factors that affect the reading of the Glorious Qur’an among Fulbe of Adamawa State?

⁴ Ostovar-Namaghi Seyyed, Ali and Shabnam Norouzi, “First Language Use in Teaching a Foreign Language: Theoretical Perspectives and Emprical Findings,” *US-China Foreign Language* 13, (2015), 615-622.

Literature Review

As Chiswick and Miller⁵ defined Critical Period as “a sharp decline in learning outcomes with age”. According to Tavakoli⁶ is a genetic calendar of learning a language easily whether L1 or L2 and the ability deters with the passage of the period.

Human being denigrates mentally and physically as he grows. Many things which he used to do he cannot do them now. The power of the brain diminishes as the remaining sensory organs are dying. He is gradually reduced mentally and physically. Experience has confirmed that and has made it axiom. It is no doubt that physiology is one of the factors responsible for error in reading.

There is a greater degree of interaction between L1 and L2 in adult L2 phonology learners but is insignificant in the case of younger L2 phonology learners. It is arguable among specialists whether age of the learner of an L2 affects his proficiency in the L2. Many theories and hypotheses were advanced by the proponents and the opponents that children are better than adults particularly in the areas of phonetics and phonology. Experiments were conducted to uphold or reject the hypotheses. But Baker et-al 2008,”maintain that according to the “interaction hypothesis” (IH), the older the L2 learner, the less likely the learner is able to establish new vowel categories needed for accurate L2 vowel production and perception because, with age, L1 vowel categories become more likely to perceptually encompass neighboring L2 vowels”.

Discourse on CPH using qualitative and quantitative methods of research opposing or supporting it inundated the cloud: Johnson and Newport⁷, Amayreh⁸, Chiswick and Miller⁹ and Vanhove¹⁰. However, the pioneer writer on the Critical Period was Lenneberg

⁵ Chiswick, Barry R. and Paul Washington Miller, “A Test of the Critical Period Hypothesis for Language Learning,” *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 29, no. 1 (2008), 16-29.

⁶ Tavakoli, Hossein, *A Dictionary of Language Acquisition: A Comprehensive Overview of Key Terms in First and Second Language Acquisition* (Tehran: Rahnama Press, 2012), 95.

⁷ Johnson, Jacqueline S. and Elissa L. Newport, “Critical Period Effects in Second Language Learning: The Influence of Maturational State on the Acquisition of English as a Second Language,” *Cognitive Psychology* 21 (1989), 60-69.

⁸ Amayreh, Mousa M., “Completion of the Consonant Inventory of Arabic,” *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research* 46 (2003). 517-529.

⁹ Barry R. and Miller, “A Test of the Critical Period Hypothesis for Language Learning,” 16-29.

¹⁰ Vanhove J., “The Critical Period Hypothesis in Second Language Acquisition: A Statistical Critique and a Reanalysis,” *Plos One* 9, no. 7 (2013), e102922.

who wrote in his book entitled: “Biological Foundations of Language” which was published in 1967 in New York, USA, that “language of the mother, or language of the immediate environment or first language, as the name may apply, could only be learnt correctly and successfully from early infancy to puberty period”.¹¹ His concentration was only on L1. Deductively, Johnson and Newport¹² argued that if the situation were to be applied to L2 acquisition young learners of L2 stand a better chance to acquire an L2 than adults as the former have not exceeded the Critical Period.

Although language mastery is seen as the birthright of all normal children, adults differ conspicuously in their ultimate level of attainment and linguistic competence is seldom attested to. According to Birdsong¹³ CPH postulates that there is fewer development period in which it is possible to acquire a language, be it L1 or L2 to normal native like levels. Similar opinion was held by Bhela¹⁴.

Tran¹⁵ championed the idea that there is a critical period which ends at age nine. Lenneberg¹⁶ promoted the idea by stating that the ability to learn a language naturally by only being exposed to the language ends with puberty and one cannot learn foreign languages without being taught and learnt “through a conscious and labored effort” as the plasticity and or elasticity of the brain expires with maturational factors. Ellis¹⁷, Major¹⁸, Saville-Troike and Barto¹⁹,

¹¹ Lenneberg, Eric Heinz, “The Biological Foundations of Language,” *Hospital Practice* 2, no. 12 (1967), 59-67.

¹² Jacqueline S. and Newport, “Critical Period Effects in Second Language Learning: The Influence of Maturational State on the Acquisition of English as a Second Language,” 60-69.

¹³ Birdsong, David, ed. *Second Language Acquisition and The Critical Period Hypothesis* (London: Routledge, 1999), 82-105.

¹⁴ Bhela, Baljit, “Native Language Interference in Learning a Second Language: Exploratory Case Studies of Native Language Interference with Target Language Usage,” *International Education Journal* 1, no. 1 (1999), 22-31.

¹⁵ Tran Hoang-Thu, “The Critical Period and Second Language Acquisition,” *ERIC*, 2009, 1-17.

¹⁶ Lenneberg, “The Biological Foundations of Language,” 59-67.

¹⁷ Ellis, Nick C., “Selective Attention and Transfer Phenomena in L2 Acquisition: Contingency, Cue Competition, Salience, Interference, Overshadowing, Blocking, and Perceptual Learning,” *Applied Linguistics*, 27, no. 2 (2006), 164-194.

¹⁸ Major, Roy. C. *Foreign Accent: The Ontogeny and Phylogeny of Second Language Phonology* (Mahwah, New Jersey : Lawrence Earlbaum Associates, 2001), 9.

¹⁹ Saville-Troike, Muriel and Karen Barto, *Introducing Second Language Acquisition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 107-109.

Meisel²⁰, Tavakoli²¹ and Spada and Lightbown²² all discuss the Critical Period Hypothesis in their separate literatures. Lenneberg also claimed that one cannot erase his or her foreign accent easily after pubescent ages. Since then, the CPH has been supported by many respectable scholars and researchers, but it is hard to find a consensus about the exact time of the CPH. But generally, the period ranges from birth to puberty with different versions of suggesting different onsets and offsets for it.

Although debatable as it may among experts, biologists in their effort to prove the existence of the CPH in human beings as mentioned by Major²³ and Tavakol²⁴ noted that there are CPs in many animals to learn specific traits such as bird song, nest building, food gathering, hunting and courting. If the period passes without learning them, then they cannot get them as other native species members do. They argue that if other animals have CPs for many of their most important behaviors, it stands to reason well that human beings must also have one especially for the trait that is crucial for their existence: language. The theory can, therefore, be used for this study as it aims at investigating the inability of some Fulani people especially adults to read the Qur'an like native speakers, if learning begins after puberty age.

Methodology

The study entitled: "Critical Period Hypothesis, Reality or Hoax? An Assessment of the Hypothesis among Fulbe Adamawa in the Reading of the Glorious Qur'an" is a case study in qualitative research method. We chose case study because the phenomenon under study was intrinsically bounded²⁵. Case study can be identified by its features of focusing on a situation, event, program or phenomenon (particularistic), thick description of the

²⁰ Meisel Jurgen M., *First and Second Language Acquisition: Parallels and Differences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 50

²¹ Hossien, *A Dictionary of Language Acquisition*, 95

²² Spada Nina and Patsy M Lightbown, "Second Language Acquisition," In *An Introduction to Applied Linguistics* (London: Routledge, 2010), 104-106.

²³ Major Roy C., *Foreign Accent*, 9.

²⁴ Tavakoli, *A Dictionary of Language Acquisition*, 9.

²⁵ Merriam Sharan B., *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (USA: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 44-48.

phenomenon under study (descriptive) and illuminates the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study (heuristic).²⁶

Research Paradigm

In any qualitative research, there is a need for a framework to know how philosophy fits into the study. Therefore, a paradigm is a form of practice and belief that guides an inquiry within a discipline by providing processes and direction in which a study is achieved. For this study, the researcher adopts the interpretive paradigm (Constructivism) to achieve the stated objectives of the study. Through interpretive perspective a better understanding of the issue and its intricacies is achieved as against a mere generalization of the whole population.²⁷

Research Design

Various definitions on research are advanced. In spite the variance, the notion of inquiring into or studying in a methodical style bounds them together. Doing research to inform our decisions and to determine the next line of action is part of our daily life.²⁸ Therefore, the outcome of a scientific study is determined by the research design and method, which are also determined by the purpose of the study. This implies that to achieve successful research work within any scientific discipline, the choice of appropriate research design is very important. Research design is comprised of the research process which includes data gathering, data analysis, and the final report writing.²⁹

The study entitled: "Critical Period Hypothesis: Reality or Hoax? An Assessment of the Hypothesis among Adult Fulbe Adamawa in the Traditional Way of Learning the Glorious Qur'an" is, therefore, a case study in qualitative research method.

²⁶ Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 44-48.

²⁷ Creswell, John W., William E. Hanson, Vicki L. Clark Plano and Alejandro Morales, "Qualitative Research Designs: Selection and Implementation," *The Counseling Psychologist* 35, no. 2 (2007), 236-264.

²⁸ Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 3.

²⁹ Creswell, J. W., *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approach* (Singapore: Sage Publication, 2014), 236-264.

Case Study

We chose case study because the phenomenon under study was intrinsically bounded³⁰, which is an exhaustive account of a person, incidence, condition, community, or training. It includes thorough, or in-depth account, study or inquiry into the affected person or body. It investigates well, analytically and rationally to examine a social unit like a specific person, a household, a social group, an organization and a system as a whole or an analysis of a bounded theory.³¹

Case study can be identified by its features of focusing on a situation, event, program or phenomenon (particularistic), thick description of the phenomenon under study (descriptive) and illuminates the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study (heuristic)³² Case study accepts any instrument of data collection or data analysis from testing to interviewing and others.³³

Participants

There were nine informants for the Interview whom were selected using snowball sampling and purposive. Two of the informants were Traditional Allo Qur'anic School Teachers (TAQST), four were Fulbe Modern School Teachers (FMST), one was an Educated Fullo Preacher (EFP), one was an Educated Fullo (EF) and the other one was an Educated Fullo Imam (EFI).

The other informants for the Reading Test were divided into two. There were seven native Fulbe students of Islamic Studies Department, Federal College of Education, Yola. There were also twenty-two teachers of traditional Allo Qur'anic school.

Sampling Technique

Ahmad³⁴ demonstrates that in qualitative method the sampling is purposive in order to target certain informants whose ideas are capable of providing rich data regarding the issue under study which would come from variety of data gathering tools (reading test and interview in this research) considered useful to and capable in

³⁰ Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 3.

³¹ Creswell, *Research Design*, 236-264.

³² Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 3.

³³ Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 3.

³⁴ Ahmad, Ismail, *Doing Qualitative Research for Beginners* (Singapore: Partridge Publishing Company, 2017), 31.

expressing the targeted phenomenon, and in return would satisfy the belief about the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

We chose homogenous sampling³⁵ because it is a type of qualitative sampling in which the members have a mutual quality as participants in the study must be literate to read the glorious Qur'an either Warsh or Hafs narration (Riwayah). So, they all possess a mutual attribute.

Sampling Size

The sampling in qualitative research is concerned with the quality of the information gathered, just as the name implies. In this study, therefore, the number of participants was not pre-determined but was hinged on the adequate data elicited from the participants exhausting all the research questions. In determining the sample size of this study, the theory of saturation in qualitative research was considered. In the end, with nine participants we were able to reach saturation as no new idea on the topic was forth coming from the informants.

Reading Test

As per the "Reading Test", a passage comprising chapters: Al-Fatiha (01), Al-A'laa (87), Al-Shams (91), Al-Duha (93), Al-Sharh (94), and Al-Zilzilah (99) was provided. The chapters were selected because they were regularly read, and they contained all the letters that are difficult for Adamawa Fulani to read correctly in the Qur'an either because they are absent in the L1 or because of similarity of some letters to others so, the shibboleth could discern easily.

Quotations were made from Mushaful Madinah, an electronic Qur'an, for the Hafs Riwayah to test NCE III students' reading as they were taught in Hafs narration. They read aloud for a successful recording. But in the case of the Imams the reading was recorded while they led in prayers in the Mosques. For the other two groups, copies of the Qur'an in Warsh Riwayah were used to test their reading. In addition, female research assistant "who was trained in the data collection process and understood the domain well enough

³⁵ Fraenkel, Jack R., Norman E. Wallen and Helen H. Hyun, *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education* (New York: Mc Graw Hill Education, 2019), 391.

to ensure collection deep, relevant data”, Bacon-Shone³⁶ was engaged. So, she entered the houses of the selected female Qur’anic teachers and did the recording.

Imam Warsh

His name was Uthman ibn Sa’id ibn Abdullah ibn Amr ibn Sulaiman ibn Ibrahim, popularly known as Warsh. He was born in the year 110 A.H in Egypt. He went to Imam Nafi’u to study and graduated in the year 155 A.H. He was fair-blue and white in complexion, huge and short. His teacher Nafi’u was the one who nicknamed him Warsh. Warsham is the name of a white bird. Imam Nafi’u used to beckon him by saying, “come, oh you Warsham; recite, oh you Warsham; where is Warsham?” Warsh used to wear short clothes and when walking his white legs uncovered. The word Warsham was later contracted and became Warsh. He was fond of the nickname because, he said, it was given to him by his teacher. He became a leader of his time in Qur’anic recitation with a melodious voice and Arabic science. He died in the year 197 in Egypt at the age of 87 A.H.

Hafs

He was known as Abu Umar, Hafs ibn Sulayman ibn Al-Mughirah Al-Asadi, alias Al-Bazzaz the businessman of cloth. He was born in the year 90 A.H. A stepson of Asim, he was a Qari’ (reader) of great reputation who was endowed with a retentive memory. He died in the year 180 A.H at the age of 90.

Recording Gadgets

The instrument used by the researcher in the study to record the participants’ oral reading and the interview was Sony ICD-PX440 4GB MP3 series PX digital voice IC recorder. It had 32 GB additional memory. It was easy to use and had file transfer capability to PC/Mac, it had memory card expansion slot (micro SD/M2).

³⁶ Bacon-Shone, John, *Introduction to Quantitative Research Methods* (Hong Kong: Graduate School, The University of Hong Kong, 2013), 17.

Recording Places

To achieve maximum quality of recording, participants' readings were recorded in the language laboratory of Federal College of Education, Yola. It was a quiet environment and well furnished. As for the Imams, the Mosques were used as the recording environment since during prayer everyone is commanded to keep quiet and listen attentively to the reading of the Imam and there were enough loudspeakers to make the recording qualitative. Male and female Qur'anic teachers had their own in secluded places at their traditional schools.

Semi Structured Informal Interview

Although each interview is an entity, they all have overlapping attributes. In this study, We chose to use informal interview being the commonest type in qualitative research and it gives the most natural type of situation for the collection of data.

Since interview is a conversation with a purpose, we ensured the naturality and conduciveness of the setting to enable gather a firsthand data within the context of the participants.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are imperative in qualitative research to ensure confidence, protect image and guard against impropriety capable of jeopardizing the result as mentioned by Creswell.³⁷ In the light of the above participants were assigned codes instead of using their real names as shown below.

- i. Participants are consulted and informed of the mission of the research. They are told that they do not need to sign any form and are free to quit at will Protection of the lives of the participants during the data collection is guaranteed so, it involves no risk and are also fully made to understand the nature of the research and have indicated their willingness to participate in the study. They are also told that

³⁷ Creswell, *Research Design*, 78.

participation is voluntary so, are at liberty to decline from the study at any time wished. In the same vein, they are assured that the data gathered will be treated anonymously and with all confidentiality throughout.

- ii. The researcher is conscious of the cultural, religious, and gender issues peculiar to the people under study.
- iii. Teachers' consent to interview their children is also sought.
- iv. The researcher made participant to feel at home so, were free to talk.
- v. The participants were treated equally: none was given a preferential or special treatment unless what the research required. For instance, female Qur'anic teachers were met in their homes after the consent of their husbands was obtained.
- vi. The researcher explained the purpose for which the data would be used.
- vii. He ensured that he did not give leading questions to the participants to avoid bias in the result.
- viii. Participants were rewarded after interview for their time and energy utilized.
- ix. The researcher confined himself to the questions in the interview only.
- x. The researcher was objective in reporting.

Anonymity

During the interview, the following codes were deliberately used to hide the identity of the informants:

TAQSP stands for Traditional Allo Qur'anic School Teacher

MSFT stands for Modern School Fullo Teacher

EFP stands for Educated Fullo Preacher

EFI stands for Educated Fullo Imam

EF stands for Educated Fullo.

On the other hand, the participants in the reading test were coded as follows:

TAQSTRT stands for Traditional Allo Qur'anic School
Teacher Reading Test

TAQSP stands for Traditional Allo Qur'anic School
Pupil

To further maintain anonymity, registration numbers of the NCE III students were used instead of their names.

- i. 20160327
- ii. 20160359
- iii. 20160326
- iv. 20160244
- v. 20160363
- vi. 20160316
- vii. 20160369

Findings

This study investigated the CPH using interview to elicit information from the participants on whether maturity changes the ability to be a native-like speaker? On the other hand, the Glorious Qur'an should be read like the Arab native speakers do as enshrined. Does that mean there is a divine simplification of the language of the Qur'an for anyone who intends to learn it irrespective of his tribe?

Our investigation showed that problem of proficiency in L2: Arabic/ Qur'an started right from the onset since teachers the Qur'an in Fulfulde not in Arabic. Arabic alphabets which are used to form words in Arabic and the Qur'an, among Fulbe Adamawa, were Fulanized carelessly. In support of this, EFI says:

There was a problem from the take-off. The way we learnt, there was no difference between ز ، ذ and ج All the letters were pronounced as letter "ج" That was how we learnt. (EFP)

There is a greater degree of interaction between L1 and L2 in adult L2 phonology learners but is insignificant in the case of younger L2 phonology learners as suggested by "Interaction hypothesis".

In the interview we conducted, none of the informants was below forty years. Their ages ranged from forty to seventy. Having fluency like the native speaker in L2, reading the Qur'an in this context, is tasking unless it was learnt at tender age when the L1 could be wield by the teacher to ameliorate the difficulty. MSFT4 observed that: "Even now, if I am reading, I am careful and restraint before I pronounce certain clusters correctly. For example, in Suratush Shams: إذْأَنْبَعَثْ أَشْقَهَا

We can conclude, based on his admission that adult L2 phonology learners find it difficult to read like native speakers. It is generally upheld that ability to speak a second language like a native speaker diminishes with the onset of maturity. Children master any language quickly and easily because they do not have the fear of committing error in the second language which deter fluency. Unlike a matured who feels conscious guiltiness if he makes error during the second language learning. That behavior of his deters fluency in the second language.

Some of the informants admitted that fluency could not be attained after maturity, perhaps accrediting it to the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) others opined that they were able to refine their reading after maturity and after coming to towns to meet skilled readers. To them, they were taught by teachers whose L1 influenced the L2 (Arabic/Qur'an).

The study also revealed how some modern innovations in the formal teaching and learning set-up could be applied to improve the Traditional Allo Qur'anic School System generally. It was also revealed that the environment, being Fulfulde dominated, had

impact on the phonology of the Qur'an and that necessitated error: evident or hidden.

The existence of difference proves difficulty of pronouncing certain Arabic/Qur'anic letters to Fulbe Adamawa. So, the informants mentioned twelve difficult Arabic/Qur'anic letters to Fulbe Adamawa as:

ث، خ، ذ، ز، ش، ص، ض، ط، ظ، ع، غ، ق .

For the purpose of this research, we analyzed all the letters and their implications. In the case of the first letter, it is one of the three tongue letters which is produced between the tip of the tongue, the upper surface of the tongue and the roots of the two upper central incisors. And it has five qualities of whispering, weakness, lowness, opening and restraint according to Tajweed scholars. Fulfulde language has no such letter. Instead, they substitute it with letter "S" which is present in their native language [L1]. There is error in the pronunciation. However, the error is hidden as it does not change the meaning in all the places it appears.

The second letter is one of the throat letters which is produced from the outermost part of the throat. It has qualities of whispering, weakness, elevation, opening and restraint according to Tajweed scholars. The error committed in the substitution is evident as it changes the meaning of some words altogether. For instance, the word *خلق* means "He created". On the other hand, if it is substituted with *حلق* changes the meaning entirely to mean "He barbed". The letters also differ in qualities of elevation in the former, and lowness in the latter.

The third, fourth and ninth letters cannot be pronounced correctly by the native Adamawa Fulbe. They are all pronounced as letter "J". The trio differ in the qualities of lowness, in the first one, whistling, in the second one and elevation and closing in the case of the last one.

The fifth letter is substituted with letter "Ch" a cluster letter in Hausa language, a language from which Fulfulde borrowed as argued by Abubakar (1991) as also expressed by MSFT4:

Like letter ذ, you hardly find a Fulani man pronouncing it correctly. Then letter: ش. He either pronounces it as either “Ch” or “Sh”.

The sixth letter is pronounced wrongly either. It is denied her qualities of elevation and closing. Denying a letter of her any quality is an error according to Tajweed scholars. It is substituted with letter “S” which has distinct attributes with the correct letter.

The seventh letter is substituted with letter “B” by the Fulbe Adamawa. It is not present in the Fullo L1. Even among the Arabs, it is the most difficult letter in pronunciation as mentioned by some Tajweed scholars in their books. It has attributes of audibility, weakness, elevation, closing, restraint and elongation. Letter ض is produced from one or both edges of the tongue along with the upper back molars.

The eight letter is among the difficult Arabic/Qur’anic letters to Fulbe Adamawa as expressed by the informants. It is denied her quality of elevation and is localized to give a sound of cluster of letters “D” in the L1 and ط in the L2

Letters tenth and eleventh are among the throat letters in Arabic. One is produced from the middle part of the throat and other is produced from the outermost part of the throat.

The first has qualities of audibility, moderation, lowness, opening and restraint. While the other has qualities of audibility, weakness, elevation, opening and restraint. Both are not found in the L1. The second is substituted with a cluster letter in the L1 “Ng”.

The last in the letters mentioned is ق and it has qualities of audibility, strength, elevation, opening, restraint and vibration.

Finally, one evident thing is Fulfulde has no elevation as a quality among the qualities of its letters. Therefore, any letter in the L2 (Arabic/Qur’an) with a quality of elevation may be difficult to pronounce correctly and letters that are not found in the L1.

Reasons for the Difficulty in Pronouncing the Letters Correctly

The aim of research in any field is to identify a problem and provide solution to the identified problem. In this study, the informants were

asked to mention if there were any reason for the difficulty. Some of them said it is because of the difference of the L1 (Fulfulde) and the L2 (Arabic/Qur'an), some observed that it is because of the non-existence of the L2 letters in the L1. Others opined that lack of knowledge of Tajweed is responsible for the difficulty in correct pronunciation. Others said wrong method of teaching is a factor.

There was lack of exposure to other Qur'anic sciences, like Tajweed which polishes the reading.

It revealed from the "Reading Test" and the "Interview" conducted that there were difficult Arabic alphabets in the reading of the Qur'an to Fulbe Adamawa partly for the absence of such letters in the L1. So, they resorted to the L1 phonological rules and substitution of letters although the substituted and the substituting alphabets might differ in qualities which invariably created error, evident or hidden, in the reading of the Qur'an.

Table 2: A Table Showing the Original Letters and the Substituted Ones Due to L1 Influence

S/No.	Original Letter in the Reading	The Substituted Letter	Error Type as Ruled by Tajweed Scholars
1	ث	س	Evident Error
2	ح	ه	Evident Error
3	خ	ح	Evident Error
4	ذ	ج	Evident Error
5	ز	ج	Evident Error
6	ش	Ch	Evident Error
7	ص	س	Evident Error
8	ض	ب	Evident Error
9	ط	ط	Hidden Error
10	ظ	ج	Evident Error
11	ع	ا	Evident Error
12	غ	Ng	Hidden Error
13	ق	ك	Hidden Error

It is deducible, therefore, that interference of L1 in L2 learning is one of the factors for error in reading and speaking an L2. Shekhzadeh and Gheichi (2011) argued that mother-tongue interference is not the only source of error in L2 learning and that understanding the sources of errors in reading and writing in L2 by an L1 learner is crucial to the teachers as well as the learners as it equips the duo with the ability to recognize them and foresee the critical interlingual and intralingual aspects which contribute to learners' erroneous linguistic behavior and to deal with their errors effectively and efficiently.

In the interview we conducted, different factors were advanced by the informants as responsible for non-native like reading of the Qur'an among Fulbe Adamawa which were: difference between the L1 and the L2 (TAQST 1, EFI, MSFT 4), teacher's wrong pronunciation (TAQST 2, MSFT 1, EFP and EF), interference of the L1 (MSFT 2), lack of Tajweed (MSFT 3 and EF) lack of knowledge of Arabic (MSFT 2)

TAQST 1: Because of the language difference.
Nothing else

TAQST 2: The issue, sometimes, is from the teacher. He cannot read them correctly.

MSFT 1: You know, it is the inability to pronounce some words. You know, the Glorious Qur'an was in Arabic language. You know, in my L1 there are some certain sounds that you cannot pronounce them well in the L2, that is Arabic I am referring to. As a result of the inability to pronounce such words correctly, you find it difficult to learn Qur'an with Tajweed

MSFT 2: interference of my Fulfulde native language with the Arabic language. Some sounds of the Arabic alphabets do not exist in my language and it is not easy to avoid the interference sometimes. Also, lack of knowledge of the Arabic language is also a hindrance.

MSFT 3: There was generally lack of Tajweed.

EFP: They were taught in that manner by their teachers, they cannot differentiate them in pronunciation.

EFI: Because they are not present in the mother tongue.

EF: If the teacher did not have the knowledge of Tajweed, he would continue to teach in the erroneous way

MSFT 4: All these letters that cannot be pronounced correctly are not found in the Fulfulde language. Hence the difficulty.

Whether it is called a development the errors committed to learn an L2 or a setback, interference of L1 on L2 does not produce the desired sound in L2. At face value, it is assumed that because the languages differ. However, this may not be the only reason. Many factors may be attributable as expressed by the informants. Our main concern in this study is whether the problem is remedial since it has to do with reading the Qur'an as an act of Ibadah (worship) in Islam? Informants interviewed expressed divergent opinions on the issue. MSFT1 who was a linguist concluded that the problem is universal which he described as "deficiency to pronounce some words in an L2". He gave examples in his sayings:

Let me give you an example: "sh" sound, I know there must be "sh" sound in Arabic. We find it difficult to pronounce it in Fulfulde. A Fullo native speaker will pronounce it as "ch". We have "dh" sound (in Arabic). We find it difficult either. Usually we replace it with "J" sound. And there are some "r" sounds (thickened). MSFT1

To remedy the difficulty in pronouncing some letters, some informants opined that there should be correct oral teaching of the letters by a skilled teacher that masters the science of Tajweed.

Discussion

Human being denigrates mentally and physically as he grows. Many things which he used to do he cannot do them now. The power of the brain diminishes as the remaining sensory organs are dying. He is gradually reduced mentally and physically. Experience has confirmed that and has made it axiom. There are some Qur'anic verses and sound traditions of the noble Prophet that prove that. Indeed, Allah has spoken the truth where he said:

وَمَنْ نُعَمِّرْهُ نُنَكِّسْهُ فِي الْخَلْقِ أَفَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ

Translation: And he whom We grant long life, We reverse him in creation. Will they not then understand.

Yasin: 68

This is like the verse:

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ ضَعْفٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ضَعْفٍ قُوَّةً
ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ ضَعْفًا وَشَيْبَةً يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ
الْعَلِيمُ الْقَدِيرُ

Translation: Allah is He Who created you in (a state of) weakness, then gave you strength after weakness, then after strength gave weakness and gray hair. He creates what He wills. And it is He Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Powerful.

Al-Rum: 54

And Allah says:

وَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُرَدُّ إِلَىٰ أَرْدَلِ الْعُمْرِ لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ مِنْ بَعْدِ عِلْمٍ
شَيْئًا

Translation: And among you there is he who is brought back to the miserable old age, so that he knows nothing after having known.

Al-Hajj: 5

يُخِرَ تَعَالَى عَنِ ابْنِ آدَمَ أَنَّهُ كَلِمَا طَالَ عَمْرُهُ رَدَّ إِلَى الضَّعْفِ
بَعْدَ الْقُوَّةِ وَالْعِجْزِ بَعْدَ النِّشَاطِ. {وَمَنْ نُعَمِّرْهُ نُنَكِّسْهُ فِي
الْخَلْقِ} أَي نَحْوَلْ خَلْقَتَهُ مِنَ الْقُوَّةِ إِلَى الضَّعْفِ، وَمَنِ الْفَهْمِ
إِلَى الْبَلْهِ وَشَبَّهَ ذَلِكَ كَمَا قَالَ تَعَالَى: {ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِ
قُوَّةٍ ضَعْفًا وَشَيْبَةً} (الروم: 54) تفسير ابن جزى

Translation: Allah, the Almighty, is talking about human being that whenever he increases in age is returned to weakness after having strength and disability after ability as He said: "whomever We give life, We decrease him in ability. In commenting on the verse, Ibn Juzay said "It means: We turn his creation from strength to weakness, from understanding to dullness and the like, as Allah says in another place": "Then after strength gave weakness and gray hair"

وفي صحيح البخاري ومسلم عن أنس بن مالك قال:
كانت ناقة للنبي صلى الله عليه وسلم تسمى العضباء؛
وكانت لا تسبق؛ فجاء أعرابي على قعود فسبقها،
فاشدد ذلك على المسلمين؛ وقالوا: سبقت العضباء!
فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: "إن حقا على الله
ألا يرفع شيئا من الدنيا إلا وضعه"

Translation: Anas bin Malik reported that the Prophet had a she camel called Al-'Adba which could not be excelled in a race. (Humaid, a sub-narrator said, "Or could hardly be excelled.") Once a bedouin came riding a camel below six years of age which surpasses it (i.e. Al-'Adba) in the race. The Muslims felt it so much that the Prophet noticed their distress. He then said, "It is Allah's

Law that He brings down whatever rises high in the world."

From the religious point of view, one's capability diminishes with old age as we can see from the texts above. Similarly, the Prophet was asked why did he grow grey hair? He said lessons of Surah Hud and her sisters were responsible. The point I am trying to make here is aging reduces understanding and other abilities.

Therefore, the Qur'an and the Hadith prove the existence of the Critical Period but in a unique way because in spite the criticality the Qur'an has a divine miracle to be learnt and read correctly even after maturity if the learner is taught using the correct methodology. This is done to miraculously preserve the Qur'an in writing and reading.

The study is a contributor to identifying some of the difficult Arabic/Qur'anic letters to Fulbe Adamawa to pronounce correctly either due to age, L1 or other related factors identified above and the role of Tajweed or the right methodology of teaching in ameliorating the frequency of the error in reading the Qur'an.

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ

Translation: And indeed, We have made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember; then is there any that will remember.

Al-Qamar: 17

Recommendations

Using L1 (Fulfulde) in teaching the Qur'an is not the best method. The study is therefore recommending the best methodology which is teaching the Qur'an in the Arabic language and Arabic alphabets.

Language teachers and those who master the science of Tajweed should be organizing seminars and workshops for the Allo Traditional Qur'anic School teachers in collaboration with relevant government agencies, traditional leaders, Islamic scholars with a view to improving the standard of reading the Qur'an.

Muslim researchers should explore more areas with a view to extending the frontiers of knowledge. There is paucity of literature on the reading of the Glorious Qur'an and the role of L1 in many

African Muslim dominated languages. This includes the areas of phonology and morphology.

The universality of the Qur'anic Message is divinely made known by Allah. Therefore, every Muslim is a stake holder in imparting and preserving it. No one should sit on the fence. In this way, occurrence of error occasioned by the CPH and other intertwined factors will be minimized as many Muslims will learn the Glorious Qur'an the reading of which is divinely simplified by Allah.

Conclusion

Although the CPH has established the difficulty to nativism by adult learners. However, the non-Arab learner of the Glorious Qur'an of whatever age will find it less tasking for the miraculous simplification of the reading particularly if it is taught by a skilled teacher because it is Allah's speech and the reading of which is made simple as confirmed by the Qur'an itself. This can be conspicuously seen in the International Qur'anic Recitation Competitions organized for the Muslims. A non-Arab Muslim may compete and emerge as the best Qur'anic reciter of the competition excelling the competitors whose L1 is Arabic. But if they were to converse in Arabic outside the Qur'anic recitation, the L1 shibboleth of the non-Arab Muslim competitor could easily discern because no miracle in the mere or normal Arabic language spoken.

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