

Review Article

The Role of Arabic Language in Understanding the Teaching of Islam with Particular Reference to the Glorious Qur'an

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Abstract: There is no any suspicion that the Arabic language was extremely useful as a medium for the Glorious Qur'an and for communicating Allah's final message to the pre-Islamic Arabs of the seventh century and nowadays in general. The Qur'an also presented Arab Sages with a greater benchmark of articulacy fineness and set modern and more severe standards for classical configuration for consequential generations of Arab Sages. Therefore, this paper aims to elucidate the position of Arabic language in comprehending the teaching of Islam and Glorious Qur'an in particular. The paper highlights the essential of Arabic language in Islam, Characteristics and advantages of Arabic language, the paper also specifically explore the role played by Arabic language in understanding Qur'an, Hadith and Fiqh (Jurisprudence) among others.

Keywords: Arabic language Teaching of Islam, Glorious Qur'an, Prophet' Sunnah and Jurisprudence.

INTRODUCTION

Arabic language as defined by the owner of *Jami' Al-Duroos Al-Arabiya* is all the words Arabs use to identify their items, and all the words which were conveyed to us. It was camouflaged or shielded by the Glorious *Qur'an*, Sunnah of the Prophet, and the Arabs' essay or exposition and poetry¹. Such connotation is based on what Ibn Jinni has revealed in his book *The Characteristics (Al Khasa'es)* that language "is sounds through which each people express themselves"

The Glorious Qur'an was revealed by Allah to his messenger in Arabic, as stated in the Qur'an clearly where He says:

And indeed, we know that they (polytheists and pagan) say: It is only a human being who teaches him. The tongue of the man they refer to is foreign, while this (that is Qur'an) is a clear Arabic tongue.²

Also in another verse Allah says:

Verily, we have made it a Qur'an in Arabic that you may be able to understand (its meanings and admonitions)³.

Therefore, the relationship between Arabic and Islamic sciences is very strong, especially that the sources of such sciences are in Arabic. The Arabic language plays an essential role in the comprehension of the Islamic sciences especially the Glorious Qur'an since Arabic here is considered as an auxiliary science.

¹ M. Al-Ghaliyeni, *Jami' Al-Duroos Al-Arabiya* (28th ed.). Publisher: Saida, Beirut, (1993), P. 33.

² Qur'an, 16: 103.

³ Qur'an: 43: 1-3.

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As a result of the emergence of Islam religion, many people became enthusiastic in studying Arabic in order to understand the Islamic religion itself, especially the Glorious Qur'an, as the utterance of Allah. For a long time, the Arabs had mixed with non-Arabs and moreover, after many wars, especially during the reign of Caliph Umar b. al-Khattab (R.A), the language was infiltrated by the usage of those more familiar with the foreign languages a phenomenon which is known as al-Lahan (اللجن).

At the beginning, these errors in the Arabic language could be reserved but as time elapse and depart; they became more widespread and difficult to control. It became bad when the blunders betide and appear in the recitation of the Glorious Qur'an. Therefore the Muslim Sages instituted an effort to sketch a techniques and method for learning Arabic in order to maintain the Arabic language in its original form. This method is known as *ilm al-nahu*. The knowledge or this method is very vital because it can rectify recitation to avoid giving different meanings. Thus, the scholars have studied the Qur'an for guidelines to outline the Arabic grammar. This then made the Qur'an one of the most significant sources of *ilm al-Nahu* (Arabic syntax).

IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING ARABIC LANGUAGE

Importance of learning Arabic:

The Glorious Qur'an is the last word of Allah Almighty, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and more than 1400 years old. It is the language in which the Glorious Qur'an was revealed. It is the language which Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) - the last of the Prophets - spoke. It is, therefore, the language in which that preserved his sacred traditions. Thus, the two basic sources of Islam, the Glorious Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, are available in the Arabic language⁴.

The only reason of this is that the Arabic language is the language of our religion. The Qur'an was revealed in Arabic Allah says:

“Indeed, We have made it an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand”⁵.

The Glorious Qur'an came to us in Arabic language; the *Sunnah* of our Prophet (peace be upon him) came to us in Arabic language as well. Both of these Islamic sources are Arabic in their wording, in their idioms, and in their meanings. Because of this, Scholars have concurred that accurate comprehending of the Qur'an texts can only be grasp in conformance with the dictates of the Arabic language as comprehended by the Arabs at the time of revelation the Qur'an⁶.

Reading the Qur'an and reciting the *Qur'an* in Arabic are promised to be rewarded with multitudinous earthly and celestial blessings.

The original Arabic text of the *Qur'an* has been preserved from the time of its revelation. Of course, translations have been done into various languages, but all are based on the original Arabic text that has not changed in many centuries⁷. In order to fully understand the magnificent words of their Lord, Muslims make every attempt to learn and understand the rich and poetic Arabic language in its classic form.

Main Characteristics of Arabic Language

It offers a perfect pattern of the roots of words. No language other than Arabic constitutes a perfect and composite mechanism of elementary words. The Arabic language boasts of the maximum capacity with regard to the exposure of human feelings, emotions, thoughts, and expressions. Exceptionally expressive intellectual connotations are present in Arabic. Linguistic diversity and depth of Arabic. Another most important characteristic of the Arabic language is it comprises a varied exhaustiveness of all the main languages⁸.

Advantages of Arabic as a Qur'an Language

Since the Qur'an is the last Book of Almighty Allah that has ever descended on humankind for the aim of eternal guidance, it is feasible to go in a language to offer deepness, multiplicity, and authority to such a text destined to last to eternity⁹. Some major advantages of using Arabic as the mother tongue of the Glorious *Qur'an* can include:

The depth of the language platform:

⁴ www.learnreligion.com/arabic-languages-in-islam-2004035.

⁵ Qur'an, 43: 3.

⁶ Ibid, P. 34.

⁷ www.learnreligion.com/arabic-languages-in-islam-2004035. Op. Cit.

⁸ C. Anwar, The Arabic Language: Its role in history Minnesota, 1969, Chapter 4, P. 53.

⁹ Ibid, P. 53.

This was coupled with the fact that Arabic was the most advanced and deepest lingual platform of these times (and even today) that can sustain the spread of an eternal message presented by the Glorious Qur'an.

Easy to understand:

This made the *Qur'an* easy to understand and understand for the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his revered companions, which allowed to spread the message of Islam all over the world.

The eloquence of the *Qur'an*:

Remember, this is not an ordinary book, it is the pure word of Allah and it must be as unique, eloquent and different as it is. The poetic depth of Arabic offers to the words of Allah the eloquence which would not be possible in any other language¹⁰.

If someone wishes to search for Islamic education and he is not a native speaker of Arabic, he needs to specialize on the language and acquire a concrete and sound understanding of it. This will capacitate him to understand the meanings being pointed out by the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. Once he is arrayed with this ability, he will be able to extract what the Qur'an and *Sunnah* impose of him and snub away from what these two sources prohibit him¹¹.

The Glorious Qur'an and Prophetic *Sunnah* came to us in Arabic language, these two are the primary sources of Islam that lead scholars to consider mastering Arabic language is an imperative and postulate to learn and understand Islam accurately.

Relationship between Arabic language and the Glorious Qur'an

If we lack the knowledge of Arabic language how are we going to comprehend the commandments and prohibitions indicated by our creator in the Glorious Qur'an?

Hassan Al-Bassri one day he was interrogated, "What is your perception of the people who learn the Arabic language?" he replied, "it is good for them; learning the language of their Prophet". Meaning that, it is very nice for them because they learnt the language of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and language of the Glorious Qur'an.

Shaykhul Islam, Ibn Taimiyyah¹² has reported to have said "Interpreting the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* goals at understanding the objectives of Allah and his messenger from each revelation. How can that be actualized?

Comprehending the Arabic language, with which we have been delivered and knowing the words' definition help us to comprehend the meaning of Allah's words. The misguidance of the people of Bida'h (innovation) is mainly for this reason; they attribute to the words of Allah and his apostle what they claim is authentic, but is not".

Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyyah said, "this is because religion is made of sayings and actions, comprehending Arabic language is the way to understand the sayings and understanding the *Shari'ah* and is the way to cognize the jurisprudence of actions¹³".

Also in another word, Al-Zarkashi said, those who are not experts in the Arabic language and its sciences have no right to translate any verse from the Glorious Qur'an, because the word may have two meanings or more than two meanings and they may know only one meaning.

Moreso, Malik said, "If I meet someone who is not proficient in the Arabic language and dares to interpret Qur'an I shall sequester him in exemplary chastisement¹⁴".

Also Al-Zamakhshari was reported to have said in his book, Al-Mufassal, and Abu Ubaid in "Fada'el Al-Qur'an" quoted Abu Bakr Al-Seddiq's saying "to determine the *I'rab* (syntax) of an ayah is favorable to me over memorizing an ayah", because understanding the syntax helps in understanding the meaning and the Qur'an revealed for reflection and implementation¹⁵.

¹⁰ Ibid, P.54.

¹¹ F. A. Shah, Arabic Language Methods and their effects on the scholars' Differences in Understanding the Qur'an and Hadith Texts, Al-Bayan, Journal of Qur'an Hadith Studies, Volume 1. Issue 1, (2016), P. 22.

¹² A. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqteda' Al-Serat Al-Mustaqeem fe Mukhalafet As'hab Al-Jahim* (2nd ed.). Al-Sunna Al-Muhammadiyah Library: Cairo, (1369), P. 964.

¹³ A. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Fatawa Ibn Taimiyyah*. King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Glorious Qur'an: Medina, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 1995, P. 964.

¹⁴ Ibid, P. 4.

¹⁵ Ibid, P. 4.

Relationship between Arabic Language and the Prophet's *Sunnah*

The Prophet's *Sunnah* is the second source of Islamic law after Qur'an, which one cannot execute anything good acceptable in Islam without using the *Sunnah* and it comes to us in Arabic, so if we want capture it very well we must learn Arabic language in order to understand it accurately. Therefore, knowing the Arabic language is mandatory for studying Hadith. Ibn Al-Salah was reported to have said, "A learner or student of Hadith must have adequate and ample knowledge of the Arabic language and grammar that rescues him the squash of misuse and mutilation". Al-Khateeb quoted Shu'bah's saying "One who seeks to learn the Hadith without knowledge of the Arabic language is similar to one who wears a burnoose without having a head". He also quoted Hammad bin Salama's saying where he said "One who seeks to learn Hadith without cognizant of grammar is like a jackass carrying a feedbag with no food in it"¹⁶.

In the preamble of his book *Tahdhib al-Kamal fi asma' al-rijal*, Al-Mizzi said "He who wishes to study our book must possess a good knowledge of the Arabic language grammar and syntax"¹⁷.

Relationship between Arabic Language and *Aqidah*

Deficiency in the Arabic Language and its sciences has caused the misguidance or beguile of multifarious jurisprudence seekers to the right way. Ibn Jinni said, "Most of those who forfeited their way amongst the Scholars of *Shari'ah* and deviated from the right concept fall into because of their weakness in this magnanimous and notable language that is Arabic language through which all mankind is discourse, affected them and demoralize their patience"¹⁸.

Relationship between Arabic Language and Jurisprudence

A real jurist must know the Arabic language very articulated. This is the reason why Umar bn Al-Khattab (R.A) sent to Abu Musa Al-Ash'ary he should "Comprehend the *Sunnah* and study the Arabic language and the grammar of the Qur'an for it is Arabic". Umar's command comprises two things: heartening and encouraging the people to the study of Arabic language and to the study of Islamic *Shari'ah*¹⁹.

Ibn Taymiyyah elucidated on the Umar's admonishing: he said the reason why Umar gave this advice to the people is "because religion of Islam is made of two things that is sayings and actions, therefore, Understanding Arabic is the way to understand the sayings and understanding the *Sunnah* illuminates the jurisprudence of the actions"²⁰.

In another word Imam Al-Shafi'i also said, "When you speak of something, you know it by meaning without clarifying the term. You can also understand an indication, and that is the most sophisticated part of the language, because the experts understand it and the ignorant ones don't. One thing may have many names and one name can have many meanings"²¹.

Meaning that one must master the language very well if he wants to understand and clarify the words from that language, therefore one must master the Arabic language if he want speak something in the Qur'an, Hadith, Jurisprudence and other Islamic sciences.

Let me give an example on one thing having different names in the Glorious Qur'an for instance, the woman's dowry which was called with different names "*Ajr, Sadaq and Mahr*". Furthermore in Ahkam Al-Qur'an, Al-Shafi'i gave an example on the words that have several meanings; the word "*Ummah*". In Surah al-Zukhruf- verse 23, the word *Ummah* was used to mean religion "We found our fathers upon a religion"; in Surah Yusuf-verse 45, the same word means time "and remembered after a time"; and in An-Nahl-verse 120, it meant leader "Abraham was a [comprehensive] leader"²².

CONCLUSION

The Arabic language has without doubt served as a very effective medium for the communication of the message of Islam, and as the Prophet's strongest argument against the challenges of his articulate and eloquent contemporaries. It has also served as a means for preserving the cultural and religious heritage of Arabic-speaking and Muslim peoples. In this sense, the Arabic language has been extremely useful to the religion of Islam. However, in its role as the language of the Qur'an, Arabic has benefited enormously.

¹⁶ A. Y. Al-Mizzi, *Tahtheeb Alkamal Fe Asmaa Alregal* (2nd ed.). Beirut, (1980), P, 591.

¹⁷ Ibid, P. 591.

¹⁸ Ibn Jinni. *Al-khasa'es* (4th ed.). General Egyptian Book Organization, (2010), P. 245.

¹⁹ Al-Amedy. *Elehkam Fe Osol Alahkam*. Almktab Aleslamy, Beirut, (2010), P. 426.

²⁰ Ibid, P. 426.

²¹ Ibid, P. 427.

²² Al-Bayhaqi. *Ahkaam Alqoraan*. Almktab Aleslamy, Beirut, (1994), P. 187.

It is, however, the conclusion of this paper that the Arabic language underwent drastic changes in its structure, content, and status due to its association with Islam and the Qur'an, changes that the language would not have undergone had it not been for the new role it acquired in its bond with Islam and the Qur'an.

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