

The Quran and the Development of Arabic Linguistics

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Abstract: Profoundly influenced by the sacred text of the holy Quran, the knowledge of Arabic grammar emerged in the second half of the first century after Hijra. The reasons behind such a development might be traced in the spread of a phenomenon called Lahn (or errors in speech) in eloquent Arabic, the accuracy in reading, and text comprehension. The central role of the holy Quran in the instruction of this knowledge and the development of Arabic grammar is known to everyone; nevertheless, this paper is an attempt to find plausible answers to the question whether the emergence of Arabic grammar and linguistics was a consequence of the need to read the holy Quran accurately or (as it is often referred to) was it an effort to prevent accent cultivation and speaking errors. The results of the study do not limit the predisposing causes for the development of Arabic language to non-Arabic accent syndrome prevention.

Keywords: Quran, Arabic grammar, Lahn (errors of speech), emergence, instruction

1. Introduction

The holy Quran is the excellent source of ideas and the fertile ground for the Islamic sciences. Evidently, the development in Arabic linguistics, which studies Arabic scientifically, owes a lot to the words of God in the Quran. Arabic grammar was first introduced by the end of the first century after *Hijra*. Many factors were involved in the introduction of such linguistic and grammatical knowledge. Although majority of resources maintain that linguistic errors and errors of speech paved the way for the introduction of Arabic grammar, the present research was an attempt to study Arabic grammar in the light of the holy Quran.

The language of any nation is an integral part of the identity of that nation represented in the culture, customs, norms and traditions of that nation. Arabic language was spoken in the Arabic peninsula prior to the introduction of Islam. Some sources have declared that there has been one common language amongst the Arabs which has happened quite unexpectedly and naturally (Bateni 15, Sameraee, 9). Later on with the introduction of the holy Quran a more eloquent language has been recognized as being formal, though there were a lot of different accents among the Arab tribes. But due to some reasonable factors, the language of the Quraysh tribe was considered as the only common language among the Arabs on account of the following reason:

- Islamic, religious, doctrine considerations: demonstration of people in Mecca centuries before the introduction of the holy Quran and the emergence of Islam and *Hajj* pilgrimage (Hejazi, 34, Abdultawab, 20, Zeif, 11, Allameh, 15, Tantawi, 10, Ghazi Zahed, 11).
- Literal considerations: meetings and centers like Okkaz bazaar were usually held in Qurayshi language and accent. Poets, prayers and noted speakers used this accent for the expression of their thoughts and ideas wafi, 106, Zeif, 12, Allameh, 15, Tantawi, 10).
- Political conditions: based on some diverse sources, political conditions were being considered as fundamental parameters affecting the approval of this choice. Mustafa Sadegh Al Razi believes

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Qurayshi accent is among the most eloquent of all accents with having the richest lexicons, and style (Hejazi, 34, Abdultawab, 20).

- Economic status: many Meccan merchants who traveled to Yemen and Shaam (today, Syria) for business provided the grounds for the spread of the language and the dialect spoken by the Quraysh tribe, which consequently paved the way for the hegemony of the Qurayshi dialect over other dialects and accents (Hejazi, 35; Abdultawab, 20).
- Quraysh tribe authority and influence: Compared to other tribes in the region, Quraysh enjoyed a superior position and an enormous influence due to its cultural growth as well as its civilization. Poems were often in Qurayshi dialect. According to Ibn Al-Khaldun, the RAJAZ pronounced between the fighters before the emergence of Islam (in wars such *Basoos*, *Dahees*, *Ghebra*, *Yoom Halimeh*, etc.) were all in Qurayshi Arabic (Ibn Khaldun, 815).
- The Distance between Quraysh and foreign territories: The geographical location of Quraysh and its distance with other foreign lands and territories preserved Qurayshi Arabic from mixing with other languages. Many morphologists and syntacticians referred to Qurayshi Arabic as the most eloquent Arabic (Wafi, 107).

It is sparkingly obvious that the language spoken by a nation (here, referred to as the common language) ought not to be constrained to a specific local tribe or to the language and dialect of an ethnic community. It should, on the contrary, be derived from the language which enjoys a higher social status and people (especially poets, spokesmen, lecturers, and the elite) of the society have accepted the vernacular as the most culturally enriched variety (Wafi, 114-114; Abdultawab, 59 and 93).

In the meantime, the main features of a common language should not be dependent upon a small community. That's why Quranic Arabic is approved and confessed by many poets and spokesmen as the most eloquent and most comprehensive Arabic language. Arabic society is endowed with the spirit of seeking knowledge by reason of the presence of Islam and the teachings of the holy Quran. The holy Quran has paved the way for scientific and intellectual endeavors and knowledge enhancement in the Arabic societies.

The positive attitude of people from all walks of life and from the farthest corners of the world with various linguistic and cultural backgrounds towards Islam and its holy scripture and the availability of various ethnic tribes predisposed the ground for and increased the possibility of making mistakes in both reading and interpretation of the holy Quran. This issue is quoted by many sources as one of the chief reasons behind the development of Arabic grammar. The reason is that both Arabic language and the way the holy Quran was recited were directly and negatively influenced by linguistic features such as *Lahn* (Loghawi, 5 and 59; Ibn Khaldun, 118; Allameh, 28-9; Tantawi, 10; Makhzoumi, 37; Shooshtari, 66-7). Consequently, some Arab scholars including the Quranic reciters, the jurists, syntacticians, and morphologist made serious attempts to preserve Arabic language form damage and corruption (Allameh, 15; Makhzoumi, 37). The reciters attempted to punctuate the text of the Holy Scripture, although they caused the emergence of various readings of the Quran. They provided reasons and evidences as proofs to their claims, which are somehow irrelevant to the topic of discussion in this article. The jurists aimed to interpret the verses and come up with better appreciation and understanding of them in order to achieve the required *Sharia*-based judgments and decrees on a number of economic, political and religious issues. Syntacticians and morphologists tried to develop Arabic rules and regulations in the form of Arabic grammar. To do so, they traveled a lot to different places in the deserts and collected original words from local indigenous people and attempted to develop Arabic grammar through establishing competing syntactic schools (Allameh, 15; Tantawi, 46; Sobhi, 92; Hammoud, 12).

Non-Arabs learned Arabic through rote memorization and repetition and evidently their speech was accented (Mokram, 48). This accent or better to say special intonation affected their speech as they read the Quran and the Hadith, probably causing problems in both reading and understanding the texts. Loghawi states that "inappropriate punctuating and inaccurate reading of the scripture by non-Arabs, which needed to be taken care of, initiated at the time when the Prophet was still alive and consequently distorted the Arabic language. Once the Prophet heard someone reading the Quran incorrectly and told him "Ershado Akhakom" (Loghawi, 5 and 23). Lahn is in fact the deviation from accurate speech through addition and deletion. Ibn

Khaldun finds the roots of deviation in Arabic language in the interaction of Arabs and non-Arabs through which, he believes, Arabic grammar came into existence.

Based on verse 30, *Sura Mohammad*, which states “*and of course you know them through their speech*” Ragheb Esfahani mentions that the word *Lahn* means to deviate a word from its original and traditional way of pronunciation, to depart from punctuation norms, to inappropriately move parts or sections of the word or the sentence; this is unconventional and inappropriate (Esfahani, 739; Tabatabai, 18 and 388). In addition, grammar rules and regulations were formulated and explained, certain principles were introduced and applied which had various sections and titles. He called this rule formation the science of Arabic syntax.

The Quran has had a significant impact on Arabic language in various ways. It influenced the dynamism Arabic language, unified Arabic accents, became the official language of Moslem nations, became the language of education, and beautified the Arabic language as Arabic was originally used by nomads and desert settlers. Immensity of the meanings conveyed through its verses, capability of being a blueprint or an agenda for jargons and expressions and the emergence of Islamic sciences and technologies, and innovation in coining religious terminologies are among other features of the holy Quran (Faroukh, 78/3; Zayyat, 86).

As mentioned earlier, the holy Quran paved the way for the emergence of Arabic language, an issue which was first studied by Arabic linguistics, since there was a need for Arabic lexicology prior to the writing of grammatical rules by the syntacticians. That’s why syntacticians like Khalil Ibn Al-Farahidi started to collect as many samples as possible from deserts in Hijaz, Najd and Tahama (Sobhi, 150; Abdultawab, 455, Ghazi Zahed, 14).

Taking the above-mentioned points into consideration, it seems that with the help of punctuation marks, the Quran would not need Arabic language grammar. But this is not a sound conclusion, as grammar encompasses many other aspects including the structure of the sentence and understanding the meaning of the text (Sobhi, 126). Although some traditional definitions in syntactic argumentation made some believe in the inconsequentiality of punctuation, some others have faith in the significance of punctuation. The emergence of the science of Arabic grammar has made it easier to avoid making mistakes in speech. This in turn motivated many scholars to write books on speech and accent (Mokram, 91):

Public speech by Kasai, the pioneer of Kufi syntax (1941)

Public speech by Abu Obaydeh (209)

Public speech by Abu Othman Mazani (209)

Public speech by Abu Hatam Sajestani (225)

Public speech by Abu Hanifeh Dinvari (290)

Public speech by Abu Hesham Lakhmi (600)

Public speech by Abu baker Zobaydi (379)

Specific speech by Abu Halal Askari (395)

The pearl of the diver in the dreams of the elite by Hariri (516) and ...

2. Discussion

The language of the holy Quran soon became widely known as the best and the most eloquent language as compared to other Arabic languages, leading many starting to learn how to read its rich text and comprehend its divine concepts. For the same reason it was necessary for other people to get familiar with. Other nations felt the dire need to establish grammatical rules for learning Arabic to be able to use the Quran in various areas like juridical, economic, political, religious, rational behaviour and ways of interacting friends and foes, ways of bearing and rearing children and the right way of living and so on and so forth. Also they needed be able to use the religious teachings in different aspects of life.

The emergence of Islam in the Arab community aroused the grammarians to establish some principles and grammatical rules for this language. Although the Arabic language existed before the Quran, no specific attention was paid to it. When the Quran was descended to the Prophet, it was recognized as the common and eloquent language among all Arabs. Then scientists decided to establish grammatical rules and scientific principles for it. Despite the fact that the Quran was descended in a scientific language, it addressed all

humans, gave some information about the news from the past generations, and predicted the incidents which would happen in the future. Apparently, this does not regard Arabs only. People around the world ought to learn the language, which clearly shows the significance of developing grammar rules.

Apart from the fact that the eloquent language of the holy Quran, by and large, aroused the interest of the Arabs to establish grammatical rules for it, the competition of the Arabs with non-Arabs like Greeks, Iranians, and Indians in various scientific areas led to a more rational behaviour in doing so. Furthermore, the less progress in science as compared to other nation led the envious Arabs to do more endeavour in this regard, because by imposing their own language to the foreigner they could learn lots of different sciences from them. Unlike the spoken language which has a variety of dialects and accents, the written language must be based on a common language which must be intelligible for all tribes and groups of people and also must be in such a way that all social levels gain benefit from it.

3. Conclusion

Apart from the Arab-language community, many people from different parts of the world did not consider the Quran merely for the Arab community and attempted to learn the language as they believed the holy Book is universal and the language of the last Prophet belong to everyone. That is why we find lots of syntacticians, lexicologists, poet, and scientists among the non-Arab community, especially among Iranians. According to the above-mentioned reasons except form the errors of speech there were some other reasons which led to the emergence of grammar. As we know, errors of speech entered Arabic language by the non-Arabs. Although there are different dialects and accents in any community, they are not considered to be harmful to the language and only cause varieties in the spoken language; however, errors of speech are linguistic errors which bring damage to the spoken language and harm the origin of the speech.

The holy Quran helped promote the status and development of Arabic linguistics. Islamic sciences emerged right after the introduction of the Quran to the people in the second half of the first century *Hijra*; Arabic grammar is considered to be the most significant of them all. Many resources hold that the main reason behind the introduction of the Arabic grammar has been the attempt to avoid errors of speech. Yet as mentioned above, other factors are involved including the accuracy of reading the holy Quran, understanding the true meanings of the Quran, and the interest of other nations in learning the language and consequently the introduction of Arabic grammar.

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