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Teaching letters, pronunciation and writing, in Algerian Quranic schools (the Ouled Nail region as a model)

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Abstract:

The Ouled Nail region is rich in a wonderful educational heritage, especially in the Quranic schools for teaching boys, since before the French colonial era. The region is distinguished by a special educational method, through which the boy learns the principles and the Arabic alphabet. He begins by learning the letters in performance and writing, then repeats them accompanied by the three movements: damma, fatha and kasra.

This study comes to shed light on an aspect of the educational heritage in the region, as it includes a wonderful method for teaching letters and their movements that should not be lost or disappear, but rather must be preserved in order to analyze and study them, and to identify their scientific benefits in consolidating the principles of Arabic.

Keywords : Movement, performance, education, schools, Quran, Ouled Nail

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Introduction:

Among the letters of Arabic, there are three called soft letters, which are Alif, Waw, and Ya, and they are followed by three movements, which are Fatha, Damma, and Kasra. These movements accompany the letters and are inseparable from them, and their performance varies according to the organs of the speech apparatus and the method of performance.

The Ouled Nail region in central Algeria is a region known for preserving customs and traditions, including its distinctive method of teaching the Qur'an, as students are organized in groups in the Kuttabs, and learn the Qur'an according to that method with its stages known there. It is noticeable that the child takes a considerable amount of time to learn the letters before memorizing the surahs, in memorizing the letters and movements and the way to draw and write them on the board, so what is this method adopted in the region to teach pronunciation of movements? And how authentic is it and how related is it to the Arab heritage?

This study comes to unveil this unique method of education, especially teaching letters and movements, in terms of pronouncing their sounds and writing them, to preserve them from

extinction and oblivion, and they are considered one of the most important features of the region's heritage in the aspect of Quranic education.

The study depends on dividing the subject into two parts: a theoretical part that deals with defining movements and their nature, and the differences between raising, accusative and genitive on the one hand, and damma, fatha and kasra on the other hand, and an applied part, that deals with talking about the method of teaching letters and movements in the region of Awlad Nail in the kuttabs.

The nature of movements:

Ibn Jinni explains the nature of movements by saying: "Know that movements are parts of the letters of extension and softness, which are alif, ya and waw, so just as these letters are three, so are movements three, which are fatha, kasra and damma, so fatha is part of alif, kasra is part of ya, and damma is part of waw. The early grammarians used to call the fatha the small alif, the kasra the small ya, and the damma the small waw. Therefore, the vowels are parts of the long vowels alif, ya, and waw. The time taken to pronounce the vowels is less than the time taken to pronounce the long vowels. The extension of the long vowels may be longer than that in cases where a hamza comes after them, such as in yasha, yaji, and yasu', or when idgham comes, such as in 'aamah and dabbah, and so on.

One of the evidences that the vowels are parts of the long vowels is that when they are satiated, the long vowels themselves are produced, which indicates that they are parts of them.

As for the reason for calling the vowels vowels, it is "because they disturb the letter they are paired with, and attract it towards the letters that are parts of them. The fatha attracts the letter towards the alif, the kasra attracts it towards the ya, and the damma attracts it towards the waw. The speaker does not reach the extent of the letters that are parts of them. If he reaches their extent, the vowels are completed as letters, I mean alif, ya, and waw." Physically, movements are voiced sounds, through which air exits in a continuous succession, through the throat and mouth, without being obstructed by an objection that prevents its exit, or causes it some kind of audible friction, as mentioned by the linguist Daniel Jones, who was interested in researching movements, giving an accurate conception of their potential in linguistic pronunciation, and he concluded that there are two main organs that contribute to modifying the shape of the air stream flowing from the lungs, producing movements for us: the tongue and the lips. Through his careful examination of the positions taken by these two organs, he was able to reach nine possible movements, which were called standard movements. These movements are not taken from a specific language, and it is not necessary for all of them to exist in one language, but rather they are general standards. As for the difference between the three movements, it is the same reason for their three names, and the origin of the names is what was narrated on the authority of Abu Al-Aswad Al-Du'ali, who said to a man from Abd Al-Qais: "Take the Qur'an and a dye that differs in color from the ink." If I open my lips, put one dot above the letter, and if I close them, put the dot next to the letter, and if I break them, put the dot at the bottom of it." This is where the names of the fatha, damma, and kasra came from, and the position of the lips was a criterion for distinguishing between them. The movement is an accident, and the

stillness is the origin, so the letter is first still, then if it carries the movement, it becomes moving, and if its movement is complete, it results in a long vowel.

Between Raising and Dammah: Raising in grammar is “a state of inflection that occurs in nouns and verbs”, while Dammah is “moving the lips with Dammah when pronouncing the letter, which produces a faint sound that is comparable to the letter”. The difference between the words Raising and Dammah is that Raising is a characteristic of the sound, and Dammah is a characteristic of the lips, which is their plural, and occurs with raising the lower palate upwards. Dammah is the first and basic sign of raising, and it is sometimes replaced by: the waw in the sound masculine plural and the five nouns, the alif in the dual, and the presence of the nun in the five verbs. “Raising is considered the most honorable and highest of movements because it is the inflection of the intentions and no speech is free of it, and for this reason it is the first state for nouns and verbs if the first is stripped of the factors that cause the accusative or the preposition and the second is stripped of the factors that cause the accusative or the jussive. Perhaps the reason for it being the highest of the grammatical movements is that it is achieved by verbal and semantic factors, while the accusative and genitive are only achieved by verbal factors. What is meant by the pillars are the important words that are characterized by the nominative, such as the subject and the agent, and the present tense verb that is similar to the noun in being inflected. The nominative linguistically means high status, and it is “heavy, so it is specific to the pillars.” As for the damma, it is merely a sign of the nominative, and it is a characteristic of the movement of the lips with a damma.

Between the accusative and the fatha:

The accusative is also a grammatical case that is attached to nouns and verbs, like the nominative, while the fatha is a sign of this accusative, and other letters may replace the fatha, such as the alif in the five nouns, the ya in the dual and the sound masculine plural, and the deletion of the nun in the five verbs.

Just as the accusative is like the nominative in that they are two grammatical cases together, the fatha is like the damma in that they are two characteristics of the lips, so the lips part when pronouncing the fatha movement.

The accusative is the declension of the waste, and what is meant by waste is the exception, the state, the distinction, and the five objects: the direct object, the object for the sake of it, the object with it, the object in it, and the absolute object.

Between Jarr and Kasr:

Jarr is a division of Raising and Accusative, it is a declensional state like them, and its sign is the Kasr which is a characteristic of the position of the lips with the tongue sliding down, and Jarr is specific to nouns, and is achieved by letters, addition, dependency, proximity, imagination or compensation.

Jarr is "for what is between the main and the surplus, because it is lighter than Raising, and heavier than Accusative", and Jarr has another term which is Khufd, and between the two terms

there is a closeness in meaning, except that Khufd is clearer in meaning than Jarr in its opposition to Raising, and this name, I mean Khufd, was given by the Kufians, where they "interpreted it similarly to the interpretation of Raising and Accusative, so they said it is for the lowering of the lower palate when pronouncing it, and its inclination to one of the two sides."

Between Jazm and Sukun:

Jazm in language means cutting, as if it is cutting off the movement from the word, and in terminology it is "a state of the inflection cases specific to present tense verbs if they are preceded by certain tools called tools of Jazm", while Sukun is the basic sign of Jazm, and it is replaced by deleting the vowel in weak verbs, and deleting the nun in the five verbs.

Sukun is the opposite of movement, and means restricting the letter and cutting it off from the movement, and it has another term which is the stop, except that there is a difference between them, as if the stop is general and the stop is a state of the stop or one of its aspects, in addition to stopping with the Romans and the Ishmām and the like.

Sibawayh went to differentiate between the titles of the movements of inflection and the titles of the movements of construction, so he made the raising, the accusative, the genitive and the Jazm movements of inflection, and made the damma, the fathah, the kasra and the stop movements of construction, and the Kufians disagreed with him in that.

Education in Quranic schools in the Ouled Nail region:

Since ancient times, Moroccans have paid great attention to the Quran and its teaching, and focused on it more than any other science. Ibn Khaldun says about this: "As for the people of Morocco, their approach to children is to limit themselves to teaching the Quran only... They are therefore more upright in writing and memorizing the Quran than others." The institutions and schools concerned with teaching the Quran were represented by corners, schools, and mosques. If we want to talk about the Kuttabs in particular, they are relatively small centers that spread throughout Algeria in general and in the Ouled Nail region in particular, especially those that were in the Algerian center, before the colonial era, and they remain to this day. They often include one or two rooms, and their main mission is to memorize the Quran and teach it to boys and youth. They may be attached to a large mosque, and they may also be in some of the neighborhood houses, donated by their owner, or the house may be owned by the Quran teacher himself, and the teacher receives a fee for each student from his guardian, in addition to what is called in the Ouled Nail region "the Khamisiya," which is a small amount that the student's guardian sends to the teacher every Thursday, in appreciation of the efforts he makes with the Quran students.

The students sit on mats made of saffron or esparto, and have three educational tools in their hands or next to them:

-The board: a board on which the learner writes a part of the Qur'an to memorize it by repeating his reading.

-The inkwell: or the inkwell, which is a small container in which local ink is placed, made from a mixture of water and gum, or burnt wool.

-The pen: made of a reed, sharpened at its end, and a small amount of ink is engraved in it, enough to write some words.

The method of memorization and indoctrination prevails in education in the kuttabs, as the teacher explains, indoctrinates, and teaches the children who cannot read well, as they gather around him to repeat what the teacher says until they memorize it in their hearts. The teacher also dictates to those who can write and read the part that they want to memorize, so they write it on the board and the teacher monitors his writing, correcting his mistakes. If the student has memorized what is on the board well, the teacher allows him to erase it with clay and pure water, and expose it to the sun until it dries, then he rewrites a new part.

However, with the passage of time, circumstances and means have evolved and the Kuttabs are no longer as simple and easy as before, but rather changes have occurred that have led to the emergence of what are called Quranic schools, many of which have replaced the slate, pen and inkwell as means of memorization with mere memorization directly from the Qur'an.

It is noted that traditional education in the Quranic Kuttabs preserves and masters the Quranic script, and teaches spelling and the principles of Arabic.

Teaching Arabic letters in the Kuttabs in the Ouled Nail region:

The Kuttab teacher uses several methods to teach the Arabic alphabet to children, so that all of these methods are integrated, resulting in the child learning the Arabic letters in pronunciation, writing, handwriting and drawing, in a descriptive way for the letters that enables the child to consolidate them in his mind.

In some schools, the teacher writes the letters for the children on a large board in alphabetical order, with the vowels for raising, lowering, and dragging. They gather around it, and he holds a stick with which he points to the letter, reads it, and the children repeat it after him. He repeats the process over and over again until they have memorized all the letters. The teacher may assign one of the older students to take his place in teaching the letters to the children. The process of teaching the letters and vowels can be divided into three stages:

The first stage:

The young learner first memorizes the letters of the alphabet: Alif, Ba, Ta, Tha, Jim, etc., stripped of everything. The teacher writes them for him on his board, and they remain like that for a period that may exceed a month, except that he memorizes them with a colloquial pronunciation as follows: Lif, Ba, Ta, Tha, Jim, Ha, Kha, Dal, Dhil, Ra, Zay, Seen, Sheen, Sad, Dad, Ta, Dha, Ain, Ghain, Fa, Qaf, Kaf. Lam, Meem, Noon, Ha, Waw, Ya, Hamza.

What is noticeable about this pronunciation of the letters in the colloquial language is connecting them to the definite article Al, as if these letters are independent words with special meanings, so that they leave an impression on the child that makes him deal with them as

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tangible things, describing them as beautiful or ugly, comparing and differentiating between them.

It is also noticeable that the Hamza is deleted from the reading of some letters, so the Ba is pronounced as Ba, the Ta is pronounced as Ta, the Ta is pronounced as Ta,... and so on, and perhaps this deletion is due to the tendency to lighten, and resort to what makes it easier for him to pronounce them.

The second stage: The child memorizes the letters in this description in the colloquial language:

A: Lif Matarq

B: Ba Sinina, T: Ta Sinina, Th: Tha Sinina

C: Jeem Makhaytif, H: Ha Makhaytif, Kh: Kha Makhaytif

D: Dal Bujnahin, Dh: Dhal Bujnahin

R: Ra Mu'arraqa, Z: Zay Mu'arraqa S: Seen Thalatha Sininat, Sh: Sheen Thalatha Sininat

S: Sad Muzaywad, D: Dad Muzaywad

T: Ta Buqrin, Dha: Dha Buqrin

F: Alfa Fam Al-Dheeb, Q: Qaf Fam Al-Dheeb

K: Kaf Bujnah

L: Lam Mu'arraqa

M: Meem Duwayra

N: Noon Mu'arraqa

H: Alha Umm Kreishtin

W: Waw Butuwayba'

Y: Alya Mawliya

E: Hamza Umm Marifqat

La: Lamalif Maqees. It is noted that this beautiful description of the line of letters and the way they are written is inspired by Bedouin nature. Let us take examples of this:

-Haa is Makhtif, which is the diminutive of Makhtaaf, and Makhtaaf is the name of a tool that works like a hook, it grabs distant things, and the drawing of Haa resembles the verb Makhtaaf.

-Sad is Mazyoud, which is the diminutive of Mowdood, and Mowdood is a container made of leather or the like in which provisions are placed, and the drawing of Sad and Dad is a verb that resembles Mowdood.

-Taa is Boqrain, and Al-Qarin is the diminutive of Al-Qarn, referring to that line that enters into the drawing of Taa, as if it were a horn, like the horn of a goat or gazelle.

-The hamza is described as the mother of "Marifiqat" and "Marifiqat" means the plural of Mirfaq, and "Mirfaq and Marfaq of humans and animals are the upper arm and the lower arm" (Lisan Al-Arab, dt, p. 1695), so the drawing of the hamza resembles the elbows of a human being if he folds his arms over his upper arms — .The letter waw is bu twayba', and twayba' is the diminutive of taba', and "bu" is used in the dialect of the region to mean "dhu", i.e.: the waw is dhu taba', and they mean by taba' the line descending in the drawing of the waw to the bottom of the line, as if this descending line is the tail of the letter, and bu twayba' is a nickname for the wolf, so that line resembles the tail of a wolf" — .Lamalife Maqys" "La" is actually two letters: Lam and Alif, but they are added together at the end of the letters after the hamza, and their drawing actually resembles scissors.

It is also possible to notice the prevalence of diminutive forms in these descriptions: Matarq, Sanina, Mkhaitif, Mziyud, Qarrin, Duwayra, Krishtin, Twayba', Mrifqat, Mqys, and diminutives are actually a common language on the tongues of the people of this region, and there is hardly a phrase of one of them that does not include a diminutive of a word in it.

The third stage: The child memorizes the dots of the letters in this description: A: Leif without a dot on it, B: Ba with a dot from below, T: Ta with two dots from above, Th: Tha with three dots from above, C: Jeem with a dot from below, H: Ha with no dot on it, Kh: Kha with a dot from above, D: Dal with no dot on it, Dh: Dhal with a dot on it, R: Ra with no dot on it, Z: Zay with a dot on it, S: Seen with no dot on it, Sh: Sheen with three dots from above, S: Sad with no dot on it, D: Dad with a dot on it, T: Ta with no dot on it, Z: Tha with a dot on it, F: Alif with a dot on it, Q: Qaf with two dots from above, K: Kaf with no dot on it, L: Lam with no dot on it, M: Meem with no dot on it, N: Noon with a dot on it, H: Ha with no dot on it, W: Waw with no dot on it, Y: Ya with two dots from below :ء ,Hamza with no dot on it On it, no: Lamalif la shana alayh.

The meaning of la shana alayh: no dot on it.

This is a stage in which the student learns the letters:

-Dotted and non-dotted

-The number of dots on dotted letters

-The locations of the dots accompanying dotted letters, whether they are at the bottom or top.

The fourth stage: It is the stage of teaching the movements to children and how to pronounce them. We divide it according to the movements into:

-Teaching the raising movement:

A: or raised, B: bu raised, T: tu raised, th: thaw raised, J: jo raised, H: ho raised, K: khw raised, D: do raised, Dh: dhu raised, R: rhu raised, Z: zu raised, S: su raised, Sh: sho raised, S: su raised,

D: dhu raised, T: tu raised, Dh: dhu raised, F: fu raised, Q: qu raised, K: ku raised, L: law raised, M: mu raised, N: no Raised, H: He is raised, W: Woo is raised, Y: Yu is raised. With each pronunciation of a raised letter, the child becomes more entrenched in his mind for this movement, and passes it on with all the letters until he becomes familiar with it accompanied by it. It is known that "the movement does not occur by itself and is only found in a letter." With its repetition in each letter, the child realizes the way to pronounce the movement by closing and bringing the lips together. It is noted that the Ra' is closed in (raised) contrary to the original by opening it, and perhaps this is a way of following the movement to what preceded it by closing the letter. Teaching the accusative movement: A: A nṣb, B: Ba nṣb, T: Ta nṣb, Th: Tha nṣb, J: Ja nṣb, H: Ha nṣb, K: Kha nṣb, D: Da nṣb, Dh: Tha nṣb, R: Ra nṣb, Z: Za nṣb, S: Sa nṣb, Sh: Sha nṣb, S: Sa nṣb, D: Dha nṣb, T: Ta nṣb, Dh: Dha nṣb, F: Fa nṣb, Q: Qa nṣb, K: Ka nṣb, L: La nṣb, M: Ma nṣb, N: na nasb, H: ha nasb, W: wa nasb, Y: ya nasb. With the pronunciation of each nasb letter, the student learns the fatha movement, and that what causes the lips to open is what is called nasb, which is pronounced every time.

-Teaching the movement of reduction: A: E Khifd, B: B Khifd, T: T Khifd, Th: Thi Khifd, C: J Khifd, H: Hay Khifd, K: Khay Khifd, D: Di Khifd, Dh: Dhi Khifd, R: Ri Khifd, Z: Zi Khifd, S: Si Khifd, Sh: Shi Khifd, S: Si Khifd, D: Dhi Khifd, T: Tay Khifd, Dh: Dhi Khifd, F: Fi Khifd, Q: Qi Khifd, K: Ki Khifd, L: Li Khifd, M: Mi Khifd, N: Ni Khifd, H: Hi Khifd, And: wa khifd, y: yi khifd.

With the pronunciation of each majrur letter, the student learns the kasra movement, and that what caused the lower palate to drop is what is called khifd, which is pronounced every time.

Here, we notice the kasra of the kha in the word khifd, and perhaps it is a follow-up to the letter before it which is kasra, and the term khifd was mentioned instead of jar, either to avoid what the situation requires of breaking up the assimilation into jar, which is not palatable, or because the people followed the Kufians in the name, and they still follow this follow-up.

Endowment education:

A: Aa stop, B: Ab stop, T: At stop, Th: Ath stop, C: Aj stop, H: Ah stop, Kh: Akh stop, D: Ad stop, D: Adha stop, R: Ar stop, G: Az stop, S: As Stop, sh: Ash stop, S: As stop, Z: Ad stop, T: At stop, Z: Az stop, F: Af stop, Q: Aq stop, K: Ak stop, L: All stop, M: Um stop, N: That stop, E: Oh stop, W: Aww waqf, Y: Ayyw waqf.

It is noted here that the hamza was brought before the consonant so that it can be started with a vowel and not with a consonant.

Conclusion:

After this research journey into the sounds of the vowels, and standing on how the people of the Ouled Nail region taught children in the kuttabs, we can reach the following results:

-Raising, nasb, jar and jazm are grammatical cases, while damma, fatha, kasra and sukun are signs of those cases, the first describes the grammatical case, and the second describes the speech organs responsible for them.

-The term khufd in the meaning of jar is more common in the kuttabs of the Ouled Nail region than the term jar, and its origin is that the Kufians are the ones who launched it in accordance with their approach in launching the terms raf' and nasb, because the palate drops down when jarring, and rises up when raising.

-The people of the region also use the term waqf in the context of teaching the Qur'an to children, and they mean by it sukun or cutting off the movement from the sound.

-The teachers in the region have a method for teaching vowels that they inherited from their fathers and grandfathers, and taught it to successive generations, which depends on reading all the letters with one vowel, accompanied by the name of the vowel, so that it is fixed in the mind of the young learner — .This method of teaching letters and vowels has a good effect on memorizing the Quranic surahs starting from Al-Fatihah without the learner making mistakes or mispronunciations, as he has been well trained in the beginning to pronounce the letters with the vowels, in addition to learning how to draw the letters and how to write them.

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