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# Body, text, and talk in Maroua Fulbe Qur'anic schooling

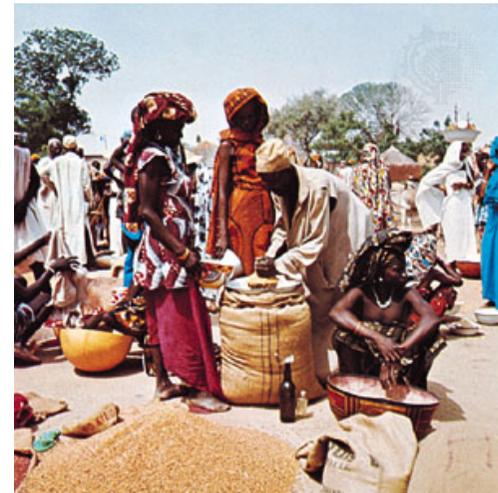
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# Background information

- Maroua, Cameroon: Arabic is not a language of everyday communication.
- Fulbe children attend Qur'anic school to learn the sacred text of Islam to develop good moral character and proper religious feeling.
- Rote learning: imitation, repetition and memorization---without explanations of the meaning (p. 644).



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# Language socialization research, literacy and multimodality

- Language socialization studies are longitudinal, ethnographic, and demonstrate the acquisition (or not) of particular linguistic and cultural practices (p. 645).
  - Methods: video recording of seven focal children at monthly intervals; 17 hours of Qur'anic schooling in four schools with six teachers.
  - Video recording: enabled researchers to study in detail how participants used language, and how they used their bodies, artifacts and other structure for teaching and learning.
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# Qur'anic schooling in Maroua

- Purpose: “to pray” and “to be Muslim”  
accurate reproduction of Qur'anic texts  
(not comprehension)
  - Nearly all children attend Qur'anic school for at least a year or two, usually starting at the age of five or six.
  - Children need to learn to recite the Qur'an from memory and handle the sacred text respectfully and appropriately.
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# Stages in Qur'anic schooling

Table 1. *Stages of Qur'anic schooling in Maroua*

1. Irregular, informal attendance
2. Memorize chapters 1 and 114–104 or 1st *hizb* of Qur'an
3. Name consonants of chapters 1 and 114–104
4. Name consonants with vowel markings of chapters 1 and 114–104
5. Recite/read and write remaining chapters (103–2)

At every stage, the assigned text is transcribed from a printed loose-leaf Qur'an onto the child's *alluha*.



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# Stages in Qur'anic schooling

- A child might hold his *alluha* in the upright position while practicing his recitation, but learned to decode and transcribe letters holding it across his lap, handle to the left, at a ninety degree, counter-clockwise angle (p. 649).
- Clear and accurate transcription: a sign and a means of higher engagement with and deeper understanding of the text.
- A gradual transfer from teacher to child of responsibility for rendering the text.



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# Qur'anic lessons

- Modeling-Imitation
  - Rehearsal
  - Performance
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# Qur'anic lessons

- **Modeling-Imitation:**

- ✓ Formal and focused one-to-one interaction;
- ✓ Teacher and child sit very close, facing one another or side by side;
- ✓ Speak at a low volume;



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# Qur'anic lessons

- **Rehearsal:**

- ✓ Practice recitation independently;
- ✓ Teacher supervision and correction (e.g. commands to recite at higher volume, head positioning, gaze direction, and handling of the alluha in vocal and nonvocal ways that direct the child's attention to their written texts.



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# Qur'anic lessons

- **Performance:**

- ✓ The child recites the assigned text in a focused, one-to-one interaction;
- ✓ The teacher listens attentively and provide minimal feedback if the recitation is good.



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# Qur'anic school interaction

- The instructional language: Fulfulde (the amount of which is little in relation to the Arabic speech).
  - Teachers and children use body positioning, pointing, and eye gaze in conjunction with the written text and speech in the two languages to organize their attention and action (p. 653).
  - Error correction was a very important part of Qur'anic lessons and was nearly always accomplished without the use of Fulfulde (the teacher used several different means to indicate errors: e.g. raise the voice, move the pen back to the start of a sentence, stop the student, etc. )
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# Participants' perspectives on multimodal practices

- Pointing at the text
    - ✓ Help the child make connection between speech and writing;
    - ✓ Help with future transcription;
    - ✓ Indicator of focused, effortful study (avoid being distracted);
    - ✓ Remind the child of the importance of reciting the text as it is written.
  
  - Sitting gestures
    - ✓ Sitting bowed over the *alluha* with legs crossed or folded under him, the child was said to be learning to show and feel submission to God's word.
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# Conclusion

- “Throughout the Muslim world, the meaning and the power of the Qur’an are believed to be conveyed not only by its lexico-semantic content, but also by the sounds of its recitation and the forms of its inscription” (p. 660).
  - For this particular context where children were learning the Qur’an by memorization of the texts (mostly without comprehension), it is necessary to analyze the use of multiple modes that indicate the shift of practices and development of participation.
  - Video playback helps with the understanding of “how and why” (p. 662) certain communicative modalities are employed for Qur’anic schooling.
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# Discussion questions #1 & 2:

- As is discussed in the article, Fulbe children learned to be socialized into the Muslim community through rote memorization of the Qur'an without fully comprehending the meaning of the text. In this case, what role does language (Arabic or Fulfulde) play in the socialization process?
  - Multiple communicative modalities were used by teachers to “define, perform, acquire and assess Qur'anic orality and literacy” (p. 662). How do we as researchers investigate the relationship between language and other modes of communication (gestures, volumes, etc.)?
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## Discussion question #3

- How do we conduct second language socialization research in different contexts (e.g. EFL, ESL, FL, EAP, etc.)? How do we research literacy socialization (e.g. academic writing, etc.)? How do we define “socialization” in the first place?

