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A Phonological Survey on Difficulties Faced by Kanuri Speakers of Nguru in the Pronunciations of Qur'anic Sounds

MUSA Abdulkadir

Department of Hausa
Umar Suleiman College of Education Gashua, Yobe State, Nigeria
Correspondence email: musaabdulkadir7330@gmail.com
(08037337330)

ABSTRACT
Muslims were encouraged to learn the correct pronunciation of Qur'an to avoid mispronunciation which can lead to change in the meaning of a word or the verse entirely. Qur'an as Muslims believed, is the words of God revealed to prophet Muhammad conveying a message, which it's recitation enables the reciter to get a reward on each letter or sound uttered. In the light of the above, this research aims to investigate the rationale behind the difficulties faced by Kanuri native speakers when it comes to the pronunciation of some Qur'anic sounds and the category of the sounds concerned as well as possibility of facing changes in the main message it is intended to convey if pronounced correctly. However, Qur'an is often recited by the Muslims/Kanuri repeatedly during the five daily obligatory prayers with the belief of spiritual or confidential talk with their Creator 'Allah'. It would be of great importance for each and every sound to be given a desired characteristics and features to avoid meaning changing due to poor pronunciation. The paper applied distinctive features, theory of Chomsky and Halle (1968) to showcase the instances where the meaning of a verse changes as a result of mispronunciation. The paper highlighted on the categories of the sounds Kanuri speakers faces difficulties in articulating correctly. The data used in the research is limited to chapter 85 (suratu A'ala) of the Qur'an. The research also highlighted some factors behind the mispronunciation of the verses, and lastly the instances where meaning changes due to poor pronunciation were cited.
Keywords: Kanuri Speakers, Qur'anic Sounds

INTRODUCTION

This a phonological research that studied the Phonological difficulties face by Kanuri native speakers in pronouncing Qur'an sounds and it meaning implications. Meanwhile, Qur'an is a divine book revealed in Arabic language with peculiar phonological rules governing its pronunciation (Tajweed). 'Tajweed' is an Arabic word meaning correct Pronunciation during recitation of the Qur'an. It's a set of rules which dictate how Qur'an should be recited. Qur'an sounds is one if not the most sensitive pronunciation that a minor change in the distinctive feature leads to the change in the meaning of the word considering its prescribed nature of the meaning.

Brief history of Nguru

According to encyclopedia Britannica 'Nguru is located in north/western part of Yobe state Nigeria, near the Hadejia River, a seasonal tributary of the Komadugu Yobe river, which follows into lake chad. Precisely when the town was founded is unknown but by early 16th century it had been incorporated into

the Bornu Kingdom of Kanuri people and was the seat of Galadima, the Bornu governor of the western provinces. Nguru is in the disputed area between the Hausa states and Bornu'. Nguru is populated by varieties of ethnic groups such as Kanuri, Bade, Hausa, Fulfulde among other minority languages.

The inhabitants of Nguru uses Hausa as lingua-franca in most of the places as mosque, schools, market, hospital and many other places where the people come in contact with the exception of some selected places and areas where Kanuri language is used.

Islam in Kanuri land

Islam is the religion practiced by the majority of Kanuri speakers since eleventh century. Islam has been the dominant religion in the land, where the law, education and life were affected by the injunctions of Islam. The first knowledge/civilization that came to Kanuri land was Islam and Qur'an education. According to Encyclopedia 'Today Islam is the central ideological force in daily lives of the Kanuri, affecting the thinking and behaviors of people in every way.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ahmad (2016) conducted a research on phonological difficulties faced by students in learning English. The research asserts that phoneme /r/ is been substituted with letter 'r' an /ɹ/ for that of American English carried by the same letter. The research also indicates an instances of such problem as in voiced alveolar approximant sound where it becomes less stressed English. As stated by the researcher, the students pronounced the letter r as voiced alveolar trill /r/. it is also states the voice alveolar approximant sound, looked more like that of Indonesian voiced alveolar trill sound. Another instances cited in the research is in the case of voiced dental fricative sound /ð/. Two common pronunciation errors were identified:

The /ð/ is pronounced like voiced alveolar plosive /d/ as in /that /ðæt/pronouncing as /det/ and the word 'although' /ə̩ðə̩ʊ/ is pronounced as /ə̩ltɔu/ by the syudents.

Abubakar (1989) discusses the difficulties of learning a second language and asserts that '' when one wishes to learn a foreign language, one is bound to have some difficulties in areas of phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics, and the most of the mentioned area is phonology''

However, the research is related to the current research considering Qur'an sound as second language to Kanuri speaker being Arabic sounds.

Lipinska (2017) studies the attitudes of polish speakers towards learning pronunciation of English sounds and reveals that, the learners (Polish speakers learning English) experience difficulties in separating old from the new vowel categories. They perceived all the categories the same. Based on this reason, he concluded that successful communication in a second language largely depends on the learner's comprehension and intelligibility of speech when trying to convey the intended message. However, he emphasizes that, it is not only the grammar that may be corrected but also the pronunciation rules must be obeyed for the accomplishment of the target aim. The study target also reveals that it's a usual case for non-native speakers of the language who has a different backgrounds of the sound in their native languages. This is because native speakers in their different languages are equipped with the required phonological rules of their various languages which reflects in the production of the sounds of the target language. The current research also focuses on the related issues faced by the Kanuri speakers in pronouncing the sounds of second language (Qur'an) to them which the influenced of the Kanuri sounds played a significant role in the way and manner their pronounced the Qur'an sounds.

Alduais (2012) studies the applicability of generative phonological rules for Qur'anic phonological rules of Arabic, mainly non-syllabic Noun's rules and asserts that, generative phonology theory does apply to the Qur'anic phonology rules, but in one level it fails to show representation of the rules of concealment, that is, it seemed easy to other rules and they have captured the changes required. The study also reveals that; it is difficult to make distinctive features which can state that the non-syllabic Noun in the case of concealment is neither assimilated nor pronounced clearly. This research is related to the current research looking at considering the focus of the research on Tajweed with focusses on how Qur'an should be recited applying all the rules it governed.

Muhammad (2023). Studies the applicability of the generative phonology and Qur'anic phonology, where he applied some of the Qur'anic phonology rules on generative phonology using qualitative method. The researcher itemizes four basic rules (aahkam) of non-syllabic Nuuns and translated them into generative phonology rules. In the line of the above, 28 tables have been designed to show the formulation of 28 Qur'anic phonological rules. The research also groups the Qur'anic phonological rules into four main groups, each of which he divided again into a number of rules namely; assimilation, complete change, concealment and clear pronunciation. However, the research highlights that, the notion of generative of any sound has two levels: one is phonological and the other one is phonetic. The researcher formulates a rule for both Qur'anic phonology and the generative phonology where he applied in each formulated rule at least three or two distinctive feature were drawn. The first one shows always the non-syllabic Noun, where the second one shows always the sounds which it follows at the time, and finally the third one shows the output of the of the formulated rule itself within the phonological level and phonetic level. The first formulated rule is assimilation (idghaam) rules where the research identifies six rules under it. The research further divides the assimilation into two sub-rules namely; incomplete or partial assimilation (ʔidghaam naaqis) and full or complete assimilation (ʔidghaam kaamil).

The second group are the rules of complete change (ʔiqlaab) where the research reveals that, only one generative rule is required and formulated.

The third rule of non-syllabic Noun is concealment (Ikhfaa) which consist fifteen rules and for that the research uses and formulates fifteen generative rules.

The fourth rule is clear pronunciation (ʔidhaar) which consists six rules of generative rules.

Finally, the research proves the universality of the generative phonology theory and pointed out some short coming in some of the Qur'anic phonological rules such as concealment.

METHODS

The methodology adopted in the process of undertaking this research is observation tools analyzed based on the recitations of the Kanuri speakers that participated in the process of conducting the research. Twelve Kanuri native speakers participated who came from different words of Nguru local Government area of Yobe State. The research is qualitative in nature that relies on observation in order to collect data. The research is restricted to the places in Nguru where Kanuri is predominantly spoken by the members.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected from the field while undertaking the research is analyzed based on distinctive feature theory in order to showcase the instances of meaning changes as a result of mispronunciations or an alteration due to the denial of a desired feature of a particular sound.

RESULT

The researcher identified four factors behind the difficulties faced by Kanuri speakers in pronouncing some Qur'anic sounds as follow:

1. Absence of the sounds in Kanuri language
2. Pride
3. Ignorance

Absence of the sounds in Kanuri language

Absence of the sounds in the language make the sounds foreign to the speakers and therefore it is a big challenge for him to pronounce it correctly. The total number of the sounds identified are eight in number. The table below showcase the sounds and what Kanuri speaker pronounces as an alternative for him:

The sound and their places of articulation in Arabic or Qur'an and What Kanuri speaker produces instead

[Suad] is pronounced when the tip of the tongue touches the edge of the lower two front teeth and lightly touches edge of the upper two front teeth	/s/ alveolar fricative voiceless
[Dhuad] is pronounced from the often back edge of the tongue when touching the root of the molars and premolars	/d/ alveolar stop plosive voiced
[Thaa] is pronounced when the when the tip of the tongue touches the edge of the upper two front teeth	/s/ alveolar fricative voiceless
[Haa] is pronounced from the middle part of the throat	/h/ glottal fricative voiced
[Zaa] is pronounced when the tip of the tongue touches the root of the upper four front teeth	/z/ alveolar fricative voiced
[Zwaa] is pronounced when the tip of the tongue touches the root of the upper two front teeth	/z/ alveolar fricative voiced
[Khwaa] is pronounced from the top of the throat which nearest to the mouth	/k/ velar plosive voiceless
[ain] is produced from the middle part of the throat	/?/ glottal stop voiceless

From the above diagram it can be observe that /s/ alveolar fricative voiceless that is available in the Kanuri language is used in the position of both /θ/ and /Ṣ/.

In the row four of the diagram, the /d/ sound is used by the Kanuri speaker to pronounce /ḍ/. However, in the Qur'an phonology there are two /h/ which different part of the throat are responsible of producing them,' ه' and ' ح'. The first one is produced from the button of the throat which's nearest to the chest where the second one is produced from the middle part of the throat.

/z/ sound is available in the Kanuri language therefore, the sound is used to alternate /ẓ/ and /ʒ/ respectively.

For 'kwaa' sound in Qur'an which is produced with from the top of the throat which is nearest to the mouth is alternate with the /k/ that is available in the Kanuri language.

There are two stop glottal sound sounds in Qur'an phonology. The first one is produced from the middle part of the throat and other one is produced from the button of the throat which is nearest to the chest. The Kanuri speaker uses the second which available in his language to pronounce the two.

Pride/ self-esteem

This a state of being satisfied in oneself. This prevent the category of such group from learning the correct pronunciation of the Qur'an from the expert which resulted in poor pronunciations.

Ignorance

Ignorance is another finding of this research where a person or groups doesn't acquire the knowledge of the correct pronunciation, where some sees it as of no value.

Sample of instances where the meaning changes as a result of poor pronunciation

a. Qur'an sounds [ǂ] and the [ʕ] are the two sounds produced in the middle of the throat. In order to produce the sounds, Kanuri native speakers alternate the Arabic pharyngeal non-emphatic voiced with glottal fricative voiced [h] where the sound [ʕ] which is pharyngeal non-emphatic voiceless is pronounced as the glottal plosive voiceless [ʔ].

Let's have example of an instances where this [ǂ]

Glorify the name of thy Guardian-Lord Most high Q1:87 سَبِّحِ ٱسۡمَ رَبِّكَ ٱلۡأَعۡلَى

Glorify سبح

The name اسم

Lord ربك

Most high الاعلي

For the /ǩ/ sound in the phrase ‘ sabbi**h**isma’ some Kanuri speakers pronounces it with the deletion of the /ǩ/ sound before the /ʔ/ sound. The meaning of ‘sabbi**h**isma’ is ‘’praising the name’’ where if the sound is produced with /ǩ/ deleted, the meaning changes to’’ insulting the name’’ instead of glorifying the name.

Another example could be seeing in the second verses of the same surat (Al’a’ala)

Alladhi khalaqa fa sawwa (Q:87:1) ٱلَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّىٰ

Meaning

Who hath created, and further given order and proportion

Who الذي

Created خلق

The [ð] sound that is in the second syllable of the word ’**الذي** ’ is voiced dental fricative. The sounds is substituted with voiced alveolar fricative [z].

Whereas in the second word ‘**خلق**’ /khalaqa/ which mean created. The voiceless fricative uvular [χ] sound is substituted with voiceless glottal fricative [h].

The meaning implication here is. In the phrase (**الذي خلق** (Alladhi khalaqa) which means Who created, When pronounced with [ð] and [χ]. However, the meaning changes automatically when pronounced with [z] in the position of [ð] and [h] in glottal non-emphatic voiced [h]. If recited this way, (Alladhi kalaqaka) the meaning changes automatically to ‘Who mislead’ instead of ‘who created’

And who brings out the pasture (Q 87: 4) (وَٱلَّذِيٓ أَخۡرَجَ ٱلۡمَرۡعَىٰ

[x] voiceless velar fricative in the word ‘أَخۡرَجَ’ is subtitled with the voiceless velar stop [k]

In the word ا **المرعي** the voiced glottal fricative [ʕ] sound is substituted with glottal stop plosive [ʔ]. The meaning of the word changes automatically from the pasture to the female.

And [then] makes it black stubble. (Q: 87: 5) فَجَعَلَهُۥ غُثَآءً أَحۡوَىٰ

Dental fricative voiceless sound [ɵ] in the medial position of the word ‘**غثاء**’ is substituted with alveolar fricative voiceless [s]. If this change occurs, the word become meaningless. However, for the voiceless glottal fricative [ħ] in the medial position of the last word ‘ا **أحوي**’ is substituted with glottal pharyngeal

voiceless and pronounced as ‘أهوي ا’, the meaning of the word changes to weakness or desire.

Except what Allah should will. Indeed, He knows what is declared and what is hidden (Q:87:7)

إِلَّا مَا شَآءَ ٱللَّهُۚ إِنَّهُۥ يَعۡلَمُ ٱلۡجَهۡرَ وَمَا يَخۡفَىٰ

The [x] voiceless velar fricative in the word ‘يخفى’ which means ‘hidden’ is subtitled with the voiceless velar stop [k] the meaning of the word if the pronunciation is uttered as in the above example changes to meaningless word.

So remind if the reminder should benefit (Q87:9) فَذَكِّرۡ إِن نَّفَعَتِ ٱلذِّكۡرَىٰ

The voiced interdental fricative in the word ‘فَذَكِّرۡ’ which means remind and ‘ٱلذِّكۡرَىٰ’ which mean reminder is substituted with voiced alveolar fricative. If pronounced with that the meaning of the chapter changes to ‘so complete if the completion should benefit

CONCLUSION

In conclusion the result of this research showcases instances of alternation and the difficulties faces by the speakers of Kanuri language in making correct pronunciation of some Qur’ani sounds. However, some of the reasons were identified. The research also proved that a single change in the distinctive feature of any sound can lead to the change in the meaning of the message in the Qur’anic it carries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The difficulties could be overcome or minimize if the following recommendation would be used

1. The Qur’an should be taught by the expert who have perfect the pronunciation of the sound of the Qur’an.
2. The idea of I can teach my self be should avoided and lastly visiting and associating those who prefect the pronunciation is of great benefit

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