

CRITERIA ADOPTED IN ACCEPTING AND REJECTING QIRA'AT: A COMPARATIVE-ANALYTICAL STUDY CONDUCTED ON PHONETICS BETWEEN THE ANCIENT ARAB GRAMMARIANS AND SCHOLARS OF QIRA'AT ^(*)

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the methodological criteria and standards in accepting and rejecting Quranic qira'at. This investigation concerns about linguistic-based issues such as phonetics and the well-established rules of Quran recitation. The research problem lies in examining the conditions and requirements to be employed in Quranic qira'at as a reference between the ancient grammarians' view and qira'at scholars' views. To tackle this problem, a comparative research method is used to analyse the classification criteria and requirements to be used in validating/verifying accepted qira'at from the unaccepted ones. The findings reveal that the criteria and requirements adopted by qira'at scholars are not employed and considered by most of the ancient linguists. These linguists' methodology was derived from the phonetic rules out of the Quranic qira'at. The study suggests careful inspection of the goals and objectives of the qira'at scholars and those of the ancient Arab grammarians in dealing with the Quranic qira'at. This, this, provides an essential factors in differentiating the criteria and requirements used in accepting and rejecting one qira' from another.

Keywords: *Ancient Arabic grammarians, disagreement, criteria, methodology, Quranic readings.*

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Quranic readings (Qira'at) are a major source for the articulatory phonetics of classical Arabic treatises and a basic source for the development of phonetic rules and theories. Religious and linguistic sources offer multiple interpretations for the vast body of Quranic readings. These sources show that the main goal of this diversity is to make the process of pronouncing phonemes as clear and smooth as possible in both words and sentences. This especially concerns about ancient Arab tribes, some of which have had dialects with phonetic features and words that are not found in other dialects². The main purpose of this study is to examine the methodological standards and criteria adopted by ancient grammarians and qira'at scholars in assessing Quranic qira'at. The main issue of the study lies in the fact that quranic qira'at lack a clear scientific evaluation to validate proper qira'at from the improper ones. In other words, this study tries to find out a systematic-based method that can justify and clarify who some qira'at are acceptable while others are unacceptable. This can be done by investigating the weaknesses and strengths of each qira'.

Having reviewed the literature, the study shows a research gap that has not been handled by grammarians by assessing the rejection and acceptance criteria concerning Quranic Qira'at³. Besides that the research gap shows a lack of systematic evaluation of the schematic criteria of acceptance and rejection of Qira'at on the part of the scholars of Quranic Qira'at⁴.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, the study discusses the most significant notions and definitions of Quranic readings (Qira'at). It also discusses the most important standards and criteria through which readers can identify the history of evaluative aspects of Qira'at. The sub-headings are divided as follows:

2.1 Methodology adopted in accepting Quranic readings

² Khalaf, H.A., (2019). Examples of Dialects in Frequent Readings| Analytical Study. *Journal of Al-Frahedis Arts*, 11(38), 1-25.

³ Shahpasand, E. (2019). Quranic Qira'at; from the Literary Approach to the Traditional Approach: A Comparative Study of Qur'anic Qira'at in the Ma'a ni al-Qur'an by al-Farrā'and Ma'āni al-Qur'ān by al-Zajjā. *Journal Of Historical Approaches To Quran And Hadith Studies*. 25(65), 49-70.

⁴ Gaba, A. (2020). Problems in the Science of Qu:ranic Readings (An analytical study). *Research and Islamic Studies Journal*. 61, 79-109.

There is a difference between scholars of Quranic qira'at and classical Arab grammarians about the criteria used in accepting qira'at. In fact, scholars of qira'at adopt different religious criteria unlike the linguistic criteria adopted by grammarians. This is because extrapolating Islamic rules from the Holy Quran is different from devising phonetic and linguistic rules from qira'at. The main focus of this research is on the comparison between qira'at scholars and grammarians on which qira'at are to be accepted.

2.1- The requirements of readings' scholars for accepting Quranic readings

Qira'at scholars formulated a list of essential criteria and requirements to validate the most common and accepted qira'at used in Qur'an recitation. Given the diversity of these conditions in the treatises of the qira'at scholars in the early Hijri centuries, Ibn Al-Jazari: (d. 833 AH / 1429 AD) categorized these qira'at requirements in his book *An-nashr fi al-qira'at al-Ashr*. He relied on the conclusions of previous qira'at scholars and categorized them under three headings⁵⁶⁷ These requirements are as follows:

1. Credibility of the sanad 'chain of narration', linked to prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) to whom the Holy Quran was revealed. This credibility is complete since it lies in accurate investigation of the moral traits such as sincerity and reliability. Credibility also lies in some pious outstanding people's memory who, by heart, could memorize the prophet's teachings. Those who transmitted these traditions had to possess these moral traits and the acquired skills so their narration would be accepted. If any of the aforementioned requirements was not available, it was not possible to accept the Quranic qira'at. This is because the qira'at seemed irrelevant to prophet's teachings⁸.

2. Compatibility between the narration of qira'at and the morpho-grammatical rules of Arabic at the sentence construction level. This means that various narrations of qira'at have to be subject to specific criteria of Arabic eloquence which is error-free in the Holy Qur'an. Hence, the narrators could not come up with any qira'at not compatible with the eloquence of the language of the Holy Quran. In fact, scholars of qira'at did not make use of the ancient Arabs'

⁵ Ibn Al-Jazari, M. (2002). *An-Nashr fi Al-qira'at al-Ashr*. Beirut: Dar Al-kutub Al-'ilmiyyah. p.15-17

⁶ Al-Qaysi, M. (1977). *Al-Ibanah an ma'anil Al-Qira'at*. (Ed.) Cairo: Nahdet Misr Publishing House. p. 51-56

⁷ As-Suyuti, (2005). *Al-Itqan Fi 'Ulum Al-Qur'an*. Markaz Ad dirasat Al-qura'niyyah. (Eds.). Medina: King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Quran. p. 491-508

⁸ Ibn Al-Jazari, M. (2002). *An-Nashr fi Al-Qiraat al-Ashr*. p.15-17.

discourse in validating the accuracy of qira'at. It is possible for other methods to be used to assess the degree of acceptance of qira'at even though the method is not known among the ancient linguists and grammarians⁹

3. The suitability of the pronunciation of the narrated Quranic readings to the agreed text of the Holy Quran at the time of the Caliph Uthman Ibn Affan (Uthman ibn Affan) (d. 35 AH / 656 AD) commonly known as the Uthmanic Recension, which was used in the writing of all the words of verses of the Holy Quran¹⁰. In summary, the Uthmanic Recension is a way of writing Arabic letters and words. This was done by a specialized committee for stating/drawing down the Holy Quran. This was in the era of Caliph Uthman Ibn Affan (Uthman ibn Affan) who was responsible for this committee and who was the leader of the Islamic state in that period¹¹. The committee tried establish compatibility between the pronunciation and the writing in a manner suitable to the written letters and the sounds uttered or through other possible means whereby the written letter may be compatible with other sounds. Some of the script forms used in the Uthmanic Recension are slightly different to those of Modern Standard Arabic with some different spellings, such as the spelling of the hamza, separation and joining between some words, and omission and addition of some letters¹²

2.2- Analysis of the scholars' terms and conditions regarding qira'at

Accepting different narrations of qira'at is subject to three requirements detailed by Ibn Al-Jazari. This is based on the methodology of most qira'at scholars to establish narrations in order to develop decisive criteria differentiate between accepted from unaccepted qira'at¹³. The first condition is partly based on the impartiality and skill of memorisation of the narrators who transmitted these readings through preceding generations. The narrators' transmission from a previous group to a following one is known as mutawa:tir (having the active participle form) or tawa:tur (having the verbal noun form), as pointed out by

⁹ As-Suyuti, (2005). *Al-Itqan Fi 'Ulum Al-Qur'an*. p. 491-508.

¹⁰ Ibn Al-Jazari, M. (2002). *An-Nashr fi Al-Qiraat al-Ashr*. p.15-17.

¹¹ Caetani, Leone. (1998). *Uthmani and the Recension of the Qur'an*. Warraq, I. (Ed.). *The Origins of the Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book*. New York: Prometheus Books. p. 380

¹² Ibid., p. 380-390.

¹³ Ibn Al-Jazari, M. (2002). *An-Nashr fi Al-Qiraat al-Ashr*. pp.15-17.

some readings' scholars¹⁴¹⁵. The term *tawatur* 'passage through many reliable transmitters' in *qira'at* 'readings' refers to a chain of narrators who possess the requirements for transmitting Quranic readings through direct face-to-face contact so that the traditions are passed on from one generation to the next¹⁶. In the case of transmission of Quranic readings by individuals, the level of the reading falls from the collective sequence (*tawatur*), to the lower level known as *aḥad* 'singular'. This indicates the *qira'* spread through a limited number of individuals¹⁷. In case there is one element missing, the Quranic *qira'* is described as *aḥd* 'deviant' and cannot be at the same level as the mass transmitted readings used in prayers and as evidence for Arabic language rules according to the criteria of the readings' scholars¹⁸. Even though they are described as deviant, such readings have many positive features such as being an object of interest for Qur'an interpreters in terms of understanding the connotations of the accepted readings. Moreover, the scholars *qira'at* developed a system of different levels for 'deviant' *qira'at* to be used as evidence in linguistic issues. In general, the credibility of the chain of narration (*sanad*) was more important for accepting the narration of the Quranic readings than the two other elements. This is in line with the criteria of scholars' *qira'at* who classified these *qira'at* and used them as evidence in the Holy Qur'an-related issues.¹⁹ On the basis of this condition, Quranic *qira'at* were classified into at least five levels as indicated by Al-Suyūṭī (911 AH / 1505 AD) in his book *al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Quran*.²⁰

The second requirement lies in accepting *qira'at* in line with the grammatical rules of Arabic language. This can be achieved by checking the extent to which

¹⁴ Sobki, I. M., Yusof, N., and Yusof, Y. (2017). *Qira'at as Sunnah Muttaba'ah: A Perspective Study on Orientalist Views. International Journal of Academic Research In Business And Social Sciences*, 7(8), 39-45.

¹⁵ Al-Quḍāh, M., Syukri, M. and Maṣṣūr, M. (2017). *Muqadimat fi Ilm al-Qira'at*. (7th ed.). Amman: Dar Ammar. p. 76.

¹⁶ Nasser, S.H., (2013). *The Transmission of the Variant Readings of the Qur'ān: The Problem of Tawātur and the Emergence of Shawādh*, Leiden, p. 79-94.

¹⁷ Idri, M.A. and Baru, R. (2018). A criticism on G.H.A. Juynboll perspectives about Mutawatir Hadith. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*. 8(7), 940-951.

¹⁸ Abdullah, A. A. (2020). *Qira'at of the Holy Qura'n and Seven Letters*. *Journal wlkalam*, 1(37), 204-220.

¹⁹ Petra, K.I.A.S.I., Baru, R., Hassan, A.F., Salleh, A.Z.B. and Amin, M.F.M. (2014). *The mata'nu and sa'nad Criticism in Evaluating the Hadith*. *Asian Social Science*. 10(21), 152-158.

²⁰ As-Suyūṭī, (2005). *Al-Itqan Fi 'Ulum Al-Qur'an*. p. 236-243.

the commitment of qira'at scholars is consistent with the methods of the Holy Quran in terms of phonetic, syntactic and morphological structures, stylistic and rhetorical features which are compatible with the Arabic language and its different dialects before the revelation of the Quran²¹. Essentially, this is a safeguarding requirement since it refers to qira'at not contradicting the linguistic sources of the Holy Quran. The goal of this requirement is to subject qira'at to the syntactic and morphological rules established by linguists in several cases more than one hundred years after the revelation of the Holy Quran, for instance, Al-Kalil Ibn Ahmad (d. 170 AH / 786 AD) and Sibawayh (d.180 AH / 796 AD)²². The scholars of qira'at considered Quranic readings one of the sources to study Arabic, particularly phonetic areas. These scholars do not consider grammatical rules to be the first criterion for accepting the readings because these can be accepted even if they are different from the most widely used grammatical criteria²³. Therefore, the compatibility of the Quranic readings with the Arabic language is characterised by flexibility in terms of looking for linguistic justifications from the Arabs' general speech, which are appropriate to the diversity of the readings even if these linguistic justifications are classified by the grammarians since they are among the methods not belonging to the highest level of eloquence. The difference is clear between the two approaches. Scholars of Qira'at made the readings a criterion for developing the rules of Arabic, which is unlike some grammarians considering the rules of Arabic a criterion for assessing the accuracy of the qira'at. This was because the qira'at scholars relied on checking the narrators' credibility of qira'at before checking other requirements, as indicated previously.

The third requirement stipulated that the pronunciation of the Quranic qira'at must be appropriate to the way of writing Quranic manuscripts at the time of the Caliph Uthman ibn 'Affan (Uthman Ibn Affan) (d. 35 AH / 656 AD). This was based on a decision to unify all writing styles of the Holy Quran at the time of the Caliph. In this era, all different qira'at were found in true

²¹ Ibn Al-Jazari, M. (2002). *An-Nashr fi Al-Qiraat al-Ashr*. p.15-17.

²² Al-Farahidi, A. (2003). *Kitab al-'Ayn*. Hindawi, (Ed.). Beirut: Da:ru Al-kutub Al-'Ilmiyyah. p. 35-42

²³ Al-Kitbi, M.S.B.A. (2020). Styles of Qur'an Recitation as a Sources of Arabic Grammatical Rules: Grammarians' Perspectives. *QURANICA-International Journal of Quranic Research*. 12(1), 69-87.

narrations²⁴. The script requires a phonetic-based analysis to distinguish the articulations of the sounds to determine the prefixes and suffixes playing a role in changing the meaning of the structure of the original word and its compatibility with its connotations in other contexts. Memorizing Quranic verses by heart protected the Holy Qur'an from distortion. A decision of writing down the whole Quran in a manuscript was adopted by official bodies of the government at the era of Caliph. The main aim was to protect the Qur'an from any manipulation and from any incompatibility at both pronunciation and writing levels in line with authentic narrations. Oral-based system was largely used in teaching Quran preserved in authentic manuscripts. Many copies were sent to Islamic centres in Mecca, Basra and Damascus²⁵. Each copy was accompanied by a skilled reader whose mission was to identify the possible readings of the Uthmanic Recension based on authentic narration as indicated by historical sources. This means that words of the Qur'an can be read in different readings in line with the authentic narrations prior to the writing system. Pronouncing a word with different qira'at does not mean that the way of pronunciation is acceptable unless the qira' is in line with an authentic narration²⁶.

2.3- The requirements of Arabic grammarians for accepting Quranic readings

Ancient Arab grammarians adopted a different methodological system, unlike the scholars of qira'at, in assessing the criteria for accepting the Quranic qira'at. However, there was no consensus regarding the differences between the grammarians and the qira'at scholars. One group of these grammarians agreed with the qira'at scholars. This concerned the criteria for accepting Quranic qira'at. Another group of qira'at scholars, however, agreed with the grammarians' methodology regarding the way of accepting qira'at.²⁷ What matters most in this context is to discuss the linguistic methodology relying on Quranic qira'at as a source of linguistic rules, especially phonetic and phonological ones. There are

²⁴ Caetani, Leone. (1998). *Uthmani and the Recension of the Quran*. Warraq, I. (Ed.). The Origins of the Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book. New York: Prometheus Books. p. 380.

²⁵ Al-Shareef, A.M. and Abdul Salam, Y.I, (2020). Early Manuscripts of Quran through Data of Hijazi Calligraphy and Archaeological Evidence. *Journal of the General Union of Arab Archaeologists*. 5(1), p.1-26.

²⁶ Ibn Al-Jazari, M. (2002). *An-Nashr fi Al-Qiraat al-Ashr*. p.15-21.

²⁷ Al-Maḳzumi, M. (1958). *Madrasat al-Kufah* (2nd ed.). Cairo: Maṭbat Muṣṭafa: Al-babi Al-Halabi. p. 237-248.

three different views amongst the ancient grammarians to deal with Quranic qira'at in respect with linguistic topics particularly those that need evidence for establishing the rules of the language²⁸ The first view was that qira'at are a primary source to be relied upon in establishing grammatical and phonetic rules, since they are as important as the correct narrations of the Holy Quran proved to be credible and accurate. The second view was that qira'at were accepted to enhance the linguistic evidence in case other sources such as Arabic dialects are missing. In fact, it is not possible to formulate grammatical and phonetic rules on qira'at that are different from the accepted Arabic dialects. The third view was different completely from the first one in that several Quranic readings deviate from the rules of the Arabic language. Such deviation demonstrates different sources. Thus, there is no room for adopting the Quranic readings since not being compatible with other criteria in developing phonetic, syntactic and morphological rules.

That the ancient grammarians adopted different views on Quranic readings as a source of Arabic grammar had an impact on assessing the three criteria adopted by the well-known scholars of qira'at for accepting Quranic readings. It is obvious that the criteria of one group of grammarians were different from the criteria of the scholars of qira'at who classified readings into accepted and deviant. This is in fact attributed to scholars' different goals in using qira'at as evidence. This was particularly the case when Quranic readings deviated from the grammatical rules underpinned by the adopted Arabic dialects before the revelation of the Holy Quran. The primary requirement that the scholars relied on was "the connection via a chain of narrators" to validate Quranic readings, which were not adopted by some linguists since the authenticity of the narration adopted by those grammarians heavily relied on narrator's credibility even if s/he was one person. Hence, the grammarians sought a balance between the correct readings and the anomalous ones in order to develop phonetic, syntactic and morphological rules, as mentioned by Ibn Ğinni: in his book *Al-Muĥtasab*. This balance is in effect when anomalous readings are accepted by linguists²⁹. The existence of a chain of trustworthy narrators according to the criteria of the readings' scholars for the aim of validating Quranic readings was not a primary requirement for the grammarians, as they dealt with Quranic readings as a linguistic record narrated by a pure Arab who could not make mistakes in his

²⁸ Ibid., p. 237-248.

²⁹ Ibn Jinni, A. (1999) *al-Muĥtasib fī Tabyīn Wujūh Shawādhidh al-Qirā'āt wa-al-Īdāh 'Anhā* (Eds.). al-Qāhirah : al-Majlis al-A'lá lil-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyah. p. 32-36.

mother tongue. While the scholars of qira'at were concerned with moral traits to prove narration credibility in transmitting qira'at, the grammarians did not consider this as a requirement for the Arab speaker, whose speech was considered a reference for grammatical rules, as indicated by As-Suyuṭi (d. 911 AH / 1505 AD) in his book *Al-Iqtirah*.³⁰

The third condition/criterion was based on the appropriate pronunciation of the narrated Quranic qira'at consistent with the written form of the Holy Quran at the time of the Caliph 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan (Uthman ibn Affan). Uthmanic recension was an essential criterion linked to the relation between the written symbol and the sound uttered³¹ This is a complex matter that involves several difficulties such as: 1- the articulation of the sounds for the written words of the Holy Quran, and 2- the diversity of Quranic readings. This shows that this writing at that time of the first Hijri century did not include Arabic consonant pointing or the short Arabic vowel marks, which led to additional possibilities for the uttered and written forms.³² The scholars of qira'at found a solution to the aforementioned differences by proposing possibilities that might arise when reading the written symbols of the Quranic words, as shown in table (1).

Table 1: Possibilities in uttered and written language

	Compatibility between what is uttered and what is written	Conformity to the rules of Arabic	Availability of the narrators	Result of accepting the reading
Possibility 1	✓	✓	✓ (Accredited narrators)	Authentic
Possibility 2	✓	✓	×	Unaccepted
Possibility 3				Unaccepted

³⁰ As-Suyuṭi, (2005). *Al-Itqan Fi 'Ulum Al-Qur'an*. p. 52-54

³¹ Caetani, Leone. (1998). *Uthmani and the Recension of the Quran*. p. 380-390.

³² Al-Farahidi, A. (2003). *Kitab al-'Ayn*. p.305.

	✓	×	×	
Possibility 4	✓	×	✓ (Non-accredited narrators)	Anomalous
Possibility 5	×	✓	✓ (Non-accredited narrators)	Anomalous
Possibility 6	×	×	×	Unaccepted

An outstanding solution was produced by linguists, who developed a method to distinguish the relevant features in the Arabic script by eliminating these undesirable possibilities and by preventing confusion between what is uttered and what is written. They did this by adding marks to similar consonant sounds to distinguish between them and between the short vowel marks differentiating them from the letters. These distinctive marks in the Arabic script helped avoid confusion. There is a number of stages following the revelation of the Holy Quran and which demonstrate the forms accepted in Quranic qira'at and in other texts in all fields. The first stage is attributed to Abu Al-Aswad Ad-Duali (d. 69 AH / 688 AD) and involved placing marks above, in the middle and underneath the Arabic consonants to indicate short vowels. The second stage focuses on differentiating consonants in writing such as ب /b/, ت /t/ and ث /θ/, and ج /ǧ/, ح /ħ/ and خ /k/³³. In the third stage, Al-Khalil Ibn Ahmad changed the vowel-marking system used by Abu Al-Aswad Ad-Duali. This stage develops special forms of the short vowels in Arabic as well as the hamza sign to distinguish this from alif^{34,35}.

Scholars of qira'at later adopted this writing system in writing the Holy Quran in all different Quranic qira'at and in eliminating the possibilities of

³³ Al-'Askari, *Sharh Ma Yaqaou fihī al-Tashif wa-al-Tabrif*, (Ed.). Cairo: Maṭbaat Muṣṭafa: Al-babi: Al-Halabi. p. 13

³⁴ Al-Qalqashandī, A. (1922) *Subh al-A'shā*. Cairo: Dar: Al-Kutub Al-Miṣriyyah p. 167-169

³⁵ Al-Hamad, G. (2016). *ʿIlm al-naqṭ wa-al-Sakl (al-tārīḥ wa-al-uṣūl)*. Amman: Dar Ammar. p. 25-57

disconnection between what was uttered and what was written. The emerging writing system is still employed in modern Arabic, which allows for the distinction between similar consonants and between short vowels. Despite these developments in the Arabic writing system which influenced the way of writing the Holy Quran, many words in the Uthmanic Recension of the Holy Quran are still written differently from the way they are written in modern Arabic. Some contemporary researchers believe that the difference in the writing of these words is a result of the way in which the Uthmanic Recension was written, and it is not something specific. This distinguishes this system from the general writing system³⁶. For instance, the words أولئك ulaik 'those' and الرحمن ar-raḥman 'the most gracious' are spelt in the modern writing system as in the Uthmanic Recension. In أولئك ulaik 'those', there is a long vowel after the first hamza (even though it is not pronounced in normal speech); and in الرحمن ar-raḥman there is no long vowel in writing after /m/ even though this is uttered in normal speech. This suggests the validity of the view of several researchers that these features of the Uthmanic Recension result from the influence of the Nabataean writing system derived from the Aramaic script and which affected the development of Arabic writing³⁷.

Regardless of these controversial issues in the writing of the Uthmanic Recensions, there is an influence on the three requirements for accepting Quranic readings. The perception of ancient Arabs concerning this criterion differs markedly from that of scholars of qira'at; particularly those grammarians who adopted the view of Quranic qira'at as correct or wrong, even if they are compatible with the previous three requirements according to the criterion of scholars of qira'at.³⁸ The ancient Arab grammarians relied mainly on spoken words to develop linguistic rules due to the linguistic narrations transmitted from pure native Arabic speakers. These grammarians were affected by narrators who were from Bedouin areas and villages far from the cities where standard Arabic is mixed the non-standard one (slang)³⁹. Thus, the ancient Arab grammarians who did not abide by the requirements of the qira'at scholars were interested in correcting narrated forms even if they were from individuals rather than groups.

³⁶ Al-Hamad, G. (2003). *al-Dirasat al-Sawiyiyah 'inda 'Ulama Al-Tajwid* (2nd ed.). Amman: Dar Ammar. p. 294-317.

³⁷ Abulha, S.D. (2007). *Roots of Modern Arabic Script: from Musn'ad to J'azim*. Dahesh Voice. New York: SUNY Academic Works. p. 16-21

³⁸ Al-Makzumi, M. (1958). *Madrasat al-Kufa*. p. 237-248.

³⁹ Sibawayh, A. (1991). *Kitab Sibawayh*. Harun, (Ed.1). Beirut: Dar Al-Jil Al-Waid. vol.1, pp. 24, 27, 312. Vol. 2, p. 279, 477.

These grammarians did not confine themselves to written texts because of the difference between the spoken and written systems. The written (graphological) system is not always consistent with the phonological system because there is no necessity for one written symbol to correspond to one articulated sound. In fact, there are words that contain written symbols that are not pronounced in speech. Conversely, there are sounds that are pronounced but have no corresponding written symbol, as is common in many languages having an alphabet such as Arabic and English⁴⁰. Therefore, ancient Arab grammarians should not have completely relied on the written system in developing the language rules on the basis of linguistic sources, for instance, Quranic qira'at that justifies the use of spoken language rather than the written one as a source.

Built on what is aforementioned, it is clear that qira'at scholars and ancient Arab grammarians adopted different methodologies in dealing with Quranic qira'at. These differences can be summed up as follows:

1- Scholars of qira'at were agreed to accept Quranic readings through three requirements. These requirements became the criteria for classifying the readings into two main categories: 1- mass transmitted readings and ii. anomalous readings. There are some categories that are close to the former category and others close to the latter. Some other readings were rejected because of not meeting the necessary requirements. By contrast, the ancient Arab grammarians disagreed in terms of relying on Quranic readings as one of the sources of the language. Some grammarians accepted the views of qira'at scholars since there is no deviation from the common rules of language. A third category of ancient Arab grammarians disagreed with Quranic qira'at, since these qira'at include linguistic issues incompatible with the general rules of Arabic.

2- The ancient Arab grammarians differed from the qira'at scholars about accepting or rejecting Quranic readings. The first principle for the qira'at scholars was the presence of a chain of narrators who were well-known for their honesty and credibility. Besides there had outstanding skills in memorizing Qur'an by heart. However, the Kufan grammarians in particular considered the Quranic qira'at to be the only linguistic source for understanding phonetic rules, the word and sentence structure. These grammarians did not follow the conditions and requirements set by qira'at scholars even in cases of anomalous readings. The first principle for these grammarians to accept texts was the narration authenticity

⁴⁰ Bassetti, B. (2008). *Orthographic Input and Second Language Phonology*. Input matters in SLA. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, p.191-206.

even though it was narrated by one individual. A chain of narrators was not a necessary requirement for kufan grammarians to accept qira'at, which is different from the methodology adopted by qira'at scholars.

3- The method of writing the script of the Holy Quran known as the Uthmanic Recension was unique. The specialist committee, drawing up the Uthmanic Recension, strove to strike a balance between what was written and what was spoken. This shows different realisations of phonemes in different dialects. Written symbols, which can remain fixed for a long time, do not necessarily change with phonetic changes. The committee faced another difficulty in making the written and spoken forms compatible because of the non-existence of Arabic consonant pointing and short Arabic vowel marks. As a result of this difficulty, the ancient scholars allowed for several possibilities in order to avoid interference between the written and spoken forms. They addressed these possibilities by adopting these criteria used to verify the extent of acceptance of Quranic qira'at, which preserves the correct pronunciation of the phonemes in the Holy Quran. This illustrates that written symbols are merely a means to represent sounds and may not be able to capture all the pronunciation elements. The sounds represented by these symbols involve specific movements of the articulatory organs. The relationship between the written symbol and the sound is in fact conventional. This may be attributed to the written symbol representing a group of allophones distinguished by context. The relationship is not built on a simple correlation between a sound and its symbol. The International Phonetic Alphabet was introduced in contemporary phonetic studies to mitigate (put an end) to these problems by providing a common set of symbols to represent all the phonetic elements in the spoken languages.

This comparison between the methodologies adopted by qira'at scholars and the ancient Arab grammarians relied on Quranic readings as one of the sources of phonetic studies. This in fact reveals important details to deal with these sources and with the criteria having to be met for the rejection or acceptance of particular Quranic readings. This remains of high importance in Arabic phonetic studies to provide documentation of the way in which Arabic sounds were pronounced in the past.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ADOPTED

This study adopts a comparative research method by which researcher can compare different qira'at. This analytically comparative-based approach enables researcher to analyse and compare all different qira'at adopted by both ancient grammarians, having adopted phonological system to validate and verify

their opinions, and well-known qira'at scholars. In this regard, the methodological approach of this study enables researcher to systematically and accurately compare both of the aforementioned groups' criteria and requirements in verifying which qira'at are to be accepted. Comparative research method adopted by this study may be of great advantage to tackle the main research problem of this study, which is built on the differences taking place between ancient grammarians and scholars of Quranic qira'at. These differences demonstrate the evaluative measures that show what Qira' is to be accepted/rejected. Built on the relevant literature to find out the criteria for accepting and rejecting Quranic qira'at, the criteria below are found essential in helping researcher to analytically conduct the comparative investigation.

- 1- scholars' requirements for accepting qira'at.
- 2- analysis of the conditions of qira'at scholars.
- 3- The requirements of ancient Arab grammarians for accepting Quranic readings.

Through these themes, the study aims to identify and clarify the ancient grammarians' methodology adopted in accepting and rejecting qira'at.

3- The results of analysis

Quranic qira'at are a major source for the articulatory phonetics of the classical Arabic. This is attributed to the preservation of the classical pronunciations of the Arabic sounds. There are differences in the methodological approaches adopted by the ancient Arab grammarians and by the qira'at scholars. These differences lie in the criteria adopted by each group in verifying the qira'at to be accepted. Such differences play a role in categorizing qira'at into either accepted and rejected. Qira'at scholars put tremendous effort to develop strict criteria to check the validity of narrations and to establish moral requirements for narrators. This includes honesty, credibility, and strong memorization skills to prove the narration accuracy so that the verses of the Holy Quran would not be distorted across the generations. The methodology adopted by the ancient Arab grammarians dealt with qira'at to provide a high-level practical model of phonetic phenomena in the Classical Arabic dialects. Arabic poetry was also used in this model. The basis of the ancient Arab linguists, built on the phonetic rules, was adopted out of Quranic qira'at compatible with the rules of Arabic as extrapolated from other sources.

The ancient Arabic grammarians employed Quranic qira'at as a source aiming to corroborate the existence of phonetic phenomena found widely in

Arabic dialects^{41,42}. These grammarians demonstrate the way to articulate the basic and secondary allophones in the Arabic dialects. They then follow these dialects with their counterparts in the Quranic qira'at. This sometimes involves a change in the writing style and in the word to illustrate the phonetic changes in terms of the correct pronunciation. More importantly, these grammarians did not just describe the phonetic changes of these sounds, but went beyond this to explain the reasons according to their criteria^{43 44 45}. The Holy Quran was revealed in eloquent Arabic compatible with the phonetic and phonological differences between the diverse dialects, particularly the principle dialects which the Arab grammarians relied on for developing the rules of grammar and phonetics^{46 47}. While the Classical Arabic dialects are the main reason for the diversity of qira'at as a result of the phonetic harmony between them, these qira'at preserved many features of these dialects⁴⁸.

The Quranic qira'at differ in that one consonant or one vowel may be different from another. Some of these consonants or vowels may be omitted in other qira'at.⁴⁹ There was an impact of phonetic assimilation and dissimilation in the Classical Arabic dialects in the Quranic qira'at. This assimilation and dissimilation would have led to a long-term loss of forms and uncertainty of how to pronounce them. Quranic qira'at preserved this phonetic documentation from one generation to another through these qira'at which reflect the pronunciations of these ancient Arabic tribes⁵⁰ Thus, the methodology of grammatical treatises

⁴¹ Ibn Yaish, A. (2001). *Sharh Al-Mufaṣṣal* (Ed.). Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyyah. p. 520

⁴² Al-Andalusi, A. (2010). *Al-Babr al-Mubiṭ* (Ed.). Beirut: Dar Al-Fikri Al-Lubnani. p. 143

⁴³ Sibawayh, A. (2015). *Kitab Sibawayh* (Ed.). Beirut: Zein Legal Publications. pp. 728-732

⁴⁴ As-Sirafi, A. (1966). *Akbar An-Nahwiyyin Al-Baṣriyyin*. (Eds.) Cairo: Maṭbaat Muṣṭafa Al-Babi Al-Halabi, p. 386-396

⁴⁵ As-Suyuti, J. (2001). *Ham Al-Hawami*. (Ed.). Kuwait: Institute for Scientific Research. p. 280-302

⁴⁶ Ibn Faris. (1997). *Aṣ-Sahibi fi Fiqh Al-Lughah*. (Ed.). Beirut: Dar Al-ku:tubi Al-Ilmiyyah. p. 146-147

⁴⁷ Al-Farabi, N. (1990). *Kitab al-Huruf* (2nd ed) (Ed.) Beirut: Dar Al-Mariq. p. 28-30

⁴⁸ Gholitabar, M. and Kamali, A.D., (2012). The Quran and the Development of Arabic linguistics. In International Conference on Language, Medias and Culture IPEDR. 33, 26-30.

⁴⁹ Al-Qudāh, M., Syukri, M. and Maṣṣur, M. (2017). Muqadimat fi Ilm al-Qira'at. p. 74-84

⁵⁰ Ibn Al-Jazari, M. (2002). *An-Nasbr fi Al-Qiraat al-Asbr*. p.15-48.

of the classical Arabic differs from the methodology of the treatises of Quranic qira'at in that the Arabic grammatical treatises focus on the origins of qira'at in respect with Arabic dialects before the revelation of the Holy Quran. The treatises of Quranic readings, by contrast, are concerned with the narration of qira'at by the accepted narrators after the revelation of the Holy Quran.

To illustrate, the ancient Arab grammarians dealt with the short vowel faṭḥah /a/ and long vowel /a:/ called alif which has several allophones in the Quranic qira'at. This is attributed to the different origins in the classical Arabi dialects^{51 52}. Some of the Arab tribes used to utter these two sounds with what was known as Imalah ('inclination'), which means pronouncing this short faṭḥah /a/ with 'inclination' towards the short kasrah /i/ and the long faṭḥah /a:/ with 'inclination' towards the long kasrah /i:/⁵³. By contrast, there were other tribes that articulated these two sounds with what is called alif at-tafki:m:, meaning the pronunciation of the short faṭḥah /a/ inclined towards the short ḍammah /u/, and the long faṭḥah /a:/ towards the long ḍammah /u:/^{54 55}. Both these can occur to different degrees, as detailed in tajwi:d treatises which attributed them to accepted reciters of the Quranic readings. Some grammarians used other terms for these notions, such as Sibawayh and Al-Mubarrid (286 AH / 899 AD) in their respective treatises⁵⁶. Due to the interest of the grammatical treatises of classical Arabic in tracing the origins of these phenomena in the Arabic dialects, the sources in these treatises show that ʔima:lah was found in the region of Najd in the Arabian Peninsula, for instance among the Tami:m dialect, while fataḥ was common in the dialects of the Hijaz, e.g. the Quraysh dialect in Mecca and surrounding areas⁵⁷. What matters most in this context is that grammatical treatises of the Classical Arabic did not focus on the details of the accepted

⁵¹ Ibn As-Sarri, A. (1996). *Al-Uṣul fi an-Nahw*. (3rd ed.). Al-Fatli, A. (Ed.). Beirut: Al-Resalah Publishing House.

⁵² Zajjāji, A. (1988) *Al-Jumal Fi An-Nahw*. (Ed.). Beirut: Al-Resalah Publishing House. p. 409

⁵³ Ibn Jinni, A. (2001). *Al-Khasaiṣ*. Handawi, A. (Ed.). Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyyah. p.495

⁵⁴ As-Sirafi, A. (2008). *Sharh Kitab Sibawayh*. (Eds.). Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyyah. pp. 386

⁵⁵ Al-Qaysi, M. (1996). *Al-Ri'ayah li al-Tajwid al-Qiraah wa Tahqiq Lafz al-Tilawah* (3rd ed.). Farhat, H. (Ed.) Amman: Dar Ammar. p. 109

⁵⁶ Al-Mubarrid, A. (1994). *Al-Muqtaḍe'b*. Uḍaymah, M. (Ed.). Cairo: Ministry of Egyptian Endowment. p. 34-45

⁵⁷ As-Sirafi, A. (2008). *Sharh Kitab Sibawayh*. p. 386. As-Suyuti, J. (2001). *Ham Al-Hawami*. p. 294-295. Ibn Jinni, A. (2001). *Al-Khasaiṣ*. p. 495

narrators who employed *Imalah* and *fataḥ* in their Quranic *qira'at*. Rather, they looked for the roots of these allophones in the Classical Arabic dialects regardless of the use of these sounds in authentic or anomalous Quranic readings according to the criteria of the readings' scholars⁵⁸.

The aim of these grammatical treatises of classical Arabic is to extrapolate phonetic laws by using *qira'at* as a source with roots in the Arabic dialects in the Arabian Peninsula⁵⁹. It may take the example of the accepted allophone of the phoneme /ʃ/ which is close to the standard allophone [z] of the phoneme /z/. This means the sound comes to be realised between [ʃ] and [z]. This phenomenon is termed *Isymam*, 'partial assimilation between two consonants sharing the same manner of articulation'. Ibn Yaish (d. 643 AH / 1246 AD) illustrates the articulation of this allophone with the words *maṣḍar* 'source' and *yaṣḍuq* 'attest', in which the phoneme /ʃ/ in the first syllable is realised somewhere between the standard allophones of the phonemes /ʃ/ and /z/ in Arabic. Ibn Yaish adds that this allophone was already employed in Quranic readings, supporting his claim with the word *ṣiraṭ* 'path' in the Holy Quran⁶⁰. Abu Said Al-Sirafi (d. 368 AH / 978 AD) had previously discussed this when he explained this allophone with examples in Quranic *qira'at*⁶¹. However, he did not expand on this word as Ibn Yaish did. Abu Hayyan Al-Andalusi (d. 745 AH / 1344 AD) stated that *isymam* makes this sound fall between the standard allophones of /z/ and /ʃ/ in the dialect of Bani Qays⁶². While some other Arab tribes pronounced this as /ʃ/ in this word, others pronounced it as /s/ and some as a pure /z/ unmixed with another sound⁶³. Abu aliy Al-Farisi: (d. 377 AH / 987 AD) attempted to rank Quranic *qira'at* through speculative phonetic interpretations in terms of the difficulty of the phonetic assimilation⁶⁴. However he erred in that these speculations do not match the origins of these readings in

⁵⁸ Sibawayh, A. (2015). *Kitab Sibawayh*. p. 728-729 and Ibn Yaish, A. (2001). *Sharh Al-Mufaṣṣal*. p. 518-520.

⁵⁹ Gholitabar, M. and Kamali, A.D., (2012). *The Quran and the Development of Arabic linguistics*. p. 27-29

⁶⁰ Ibn Yaish, A. (2001). *Sharh Al-Mufaṣṣal* (Ed.). Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyyah. (5) p. 520

⁶¹ As-Sirafi, A. (2008). *Sharh Kitab Sibawayh*. p. 388-389.

⁶² Al-Andalusi, A. (2010). *Al-Bahr al-Muḥiṭ*, p.143

⁶³ Ibn Yaish, A. (2001). *Sharh Al-Mufaṣṣal*, p. 520. Ibn Al-Jazari, M. (2002). *An-Nashr fi Al-Qiraat al-Ashr* p.213

⁶⁴ Al-Farisi, A. (2001). *Al-Hujjah Lil-Qura' As-Saba'ah* (Ed.). Beirut: Dar: Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyyah. p. 53-55.

the dialects of the ancient Arabs before the revelation of the Quran⁶⁵. It is not possible to assume that one pronunciation was more difficult than another for tribes that were used to a specific form of pronunciation no matter it was by assimilation or dissimilation between these sounds. The result is that this difference in pronunciation of Arabic dialects influenced qira'at, which employed all these variants because of the phonetic assimilation which occurs between these three sounds. This is due to the proximity of their places of articulation and due to what they have in common the ṣafir 'sibilant' manner of articulation. The differences lie in other manners of articulation such as jahr and hams, and iṭbaq 'velarization' and infitah 'non-velarization' 'based on the positioning of the back of the tongue towards the upper palate'⁶⁶.

These treatises provide several examples that demonstrate that a symbol of one phoneme changes into the symbol for another, like words ṣala:h 'prayer', zaka:h 'charity' and ḥaya:h 'life' in which the symbol for alif ^ا changes into that for wa:w و – thus ṣala:h 'prayer', which is normally written as صلاة is written as صلوة, zaka:h 'charity', which is normally written as زكاة, is written as زكوة, and hayah 'life', which is normally written as حياة, is written as حيوة.⁶⁷

Al-Nasir considered many of the non-standard pronunciations of vowels that were discussed by Sibawayh, for instance, contextual variants (Al-Nassir, 1993, pp. 91-103)⁶⁸. One example of these is the imalah 'vocalic inflection' which is the fronting and raising of /a/ when it occurs in the context of /i/ or /y/. He demonstrates an example in the word abid 'worshipper', where the /aa/ combination is pronounced as [e:] (Al-Nassir, 1993, pp. 93). The pronunciation of /aa/ as [e:] is purely a function of the context in which it occurs. [e:] does not contrast with the sound /a:/ or similar ones which could be the pronunciation of a different word. Thus, [e:] is considered to be an allophone of /aa/. This view is similar to the one adopted by Dickins who claimed that [u] and [w] may be

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 53-57.

⁶⁶ Ibn As-Sarraj, A. (1996). *Al-Uṣul fi an-Nahw*. (3rd ed.). Al-Fatli, A. (Ed.). Beirut: Al-Resalah Publishing House. p. 404. Zajjājī, A. (1988) *Al-Jumal Fi An-Nahw*. p. 413

⁶⁷ Sibawayh, A. (2015). *Kitab Sibawayh*. p. 728; Zajjājī, A. (1988) *Al-Jumal Fi An-Nahw*. p. 409; Al-Mubarrid, A. (1994). *Al-Muqtaḍe'b*. p. 85; Ibn Yaish, A. (2001). *Sharh Al-Mufaṣṣal*. p. 520; As-Suyūṭī, J. (2001). *Ham Al-Hawami*. p. 294).

⁶⁸ Al-Nassir, A.A. (1993). *Sibawayh the Phonologist: a Critical Study of the Phonetic and Phonological Theory of Sibawayh as Presented in His treatise Al-Kitāb*. London: Kegan Paul Intl.

considered as allophones of single phoneme /u/∕w/ (Dickins, 1996, pp. 8-12)⁶⁹. Sibawayh considered alif at-tafkhi:m as a variant of alif, and Rabin argued that the tajwi:d works the final syllable of the words and thus pronounced as [o] rather than [au]⁷⁰. Al-Nassir considered that the pronunciation was between [ɔ] and [o]. Rabin believed that this pronunciation is a positional variety of the phoneme closer to the [u] sound. Both Nassir and Rabin agreed that alif at-tafkhi:m is considered a 'position-variant'. In other words, they both regarded it as an allophone of /aa/ determined by context.

The ancient Arab grammarians did not investigate all the cases in which the spoken form does not match the written because of the differences between Arabic dialects in the pronunciation of the phonemes. This in fact led to different allophones of one phoneme. These grammarians' explanations relied on the incompatibility between written and spoken forms, using phonetic justifications related to the Arabic dialects⁷¹. The main point of the Arabic grammatical treatises was on the spoken rather than on the written form of the language. This is unlike the discipline of Quranic readings, which sought a balance between the spoken and written due to its connection with the writing of a sacred book and due to the criteria showing the significance of accuracy in writing and in validating qira'at as well as the narration credibility.

4- CONCLUSION

This study has investigated the necessary criteria used by qira'at scholars and ancient grammarians in evaluating Quranic qira'at. This evaluation led both groups to justify acceptance and rejection of qira'at. The study finds that classical Arabic dialects and poetry were a major source for Arabic variations. Nevertheless, Quranic qira'at are distinguished since they preserve the phonetic pronunciations of classical Arabic. This was in fact attributed to the qira'at scholars' methodology which has been inherited from ancient generations and passed on through skilled specialists in the field. The study finds that contemporary phonetics has developed technical criteria by adopting a descriptive, analytical and comparative approach in the evaluation process.

⁶⁹ Dickins, J. (1996). Some speculations on the vowel system of classical Arabic. CMEIS Occasional Papers: Three Topics in Arabic phonology. 53, 6-19.

⁷⁰ Rabin, C. (1951). *Ancient West-Arabian*. London: Taylor's foreign Press. p. 105-106.

⁷¹ Az-Zamakhshari, A. (1993). *al-Mufaṣṣal fī ṣan'at al-i'rāb*. (Ed.) Beirut: Dar wa Maktabat Al-Hilal.

(O'Grady et al., 2011, p. 8)⁷². The study concludes that methodology adopted by qira'at scholars focused on the narration roots and origins of qira'at. This was done by thorough investigation of identifying trustworthy readers after the revelation of the Holy Quran. Besides the study concludes that methodology of the ancient Arab grammarians focused on the origins of qira'at through phonological system derived from Arabic dialects before the revelation of the Holy Quran. Having investigated the methodological approaches used by ancient grammarians and qira'at scholars, the study concludes that most of ancient scholars, having adopted phonetic rules to assess whether one qira' can be accepted, did not in fact follow the criteria and requirements formulated by the outstanding scholars of qira'at. criteria and standards in accepting and rejecting Quranic qira'at. The study concludes that comparatively analytical research method was greatly helpful in answering research questions and in tackling the main study issue. The findings demonstrate that the criteria adopted by the well-known qira'at scholars were not employed and considered by most of the ancient linguists who derived their evaluation criteria based on the phonetic rules of the Quranic qira'at. The study suggests a future research to investigate the main goals behind the criteria set by both qira'at scholars and ancient grammarians in assessing the validity and quality of qira'at in Qur'an.

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⁷² O'Grady, W., Archibald, J. and Katamba, F. (2011). *Contemporary linguistics*. (2nd ed.). Harlow: Longman.

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