THE LANGUAGE LEARNING PROCESS IN THE QUR'AN: A THEMATIC EXEGESIS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

Language teaching in Islamic educational institutions draws largely on Western theories, while the Qur'an, a scripture revealed in language and concerned throughout with teaching, has seldom been examined as a source for a model of language learning. This study uses thematic exegesis (tafsir mawdu'i) to formulate the Qur'anic concept of the language learning process and to examine its implications for English language teaching. Verses containing linguistic and pedagogical terms were located with a Qur'anic concordance, interpreted through classical and contemporary exegesis, and compared with second language acquisition theory, while what the exegetes state was kept distinct from the authors' pedagogical inferences. The analysis yields a seven-stage spiral process synthesised from two narratives, the teaching of names to Adam (QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 31–33) and the Prophet's reception of revelation (QS. al-'Alaq [96]: 1–5; QS. al-Qiyamah [75]: 16–19): listening, learning vocabulary, imitating, reading, writing, understanding and expressing, and reviewing and conveying. The process rests on eight principles and is enacted through thirteen methods. Its goals are six qualities of speech named in the Qur'an, which overlap with grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, pragmatic and intercultural competence while adding an ethical dimension. The model corresponds most closely to interactionist accounts of acquisition, in which input, guided imitation, feedback and repetition work together. For English classrooms in Islamic institutions, it supports listening before speaking, teacher modelling of difficult sounds, dialogue-based practice, gentle corrective feedback and explicit teaching of politeness. The model is conceptual and requires empirical testing.

Keywords: language learning process, Qur'an, thematic exegesis, English language teaching, second language acquisition, communicative competence

1. INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an is a scripture revealed in the form of language. Its message is carried not only by what it says but by its choice of words, sounds, rhythm, and structure, which classical scholars regarded as the summit of Arabic eloquence. The Qur'an itself states that it was

revealed "as an Arabic recitation so that you may understand" (QS. Yusuf [12]: 2), directly linking language (*'arabiyyan*) with reasoning and understanding (*ta'qilun*). Exegetes explain that the choice of Arabic as the language of revelation is tied to its clarity and richness of meaning and to its suitability for the community that first received the message [1, 2]. From the outset, therefore, the relationship between humans and revelation is a linguistic one: revelation is heard, read, memorized, understood, written, and put into practice.

The Qur'an is also a book about teaching and learning. The first revelation opens with the command *iqra'* (read), followed by references to the pen (*qalam*) and to God who teaches (*'allama*) (QS. al-'Alaq [96]: 1–5). The first story of human superiority over the angels is a story of language learning, in which God taught Adam "the names, all of them" (QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 31). Surah al-Rahman opens its list of divine blessings by stating that God "taught the Qur'an, created the human being, and taught him clear expression (*al-bayan*)" (QS. al-Rahman [55]: 1–4). These verses show that language and learning occupy a central place in the Qur'anic message.

Language education, including English teaching in Islamic schools, *madrasah*, *pesantren*, and Islamic universities, draws largely on theories developed in Western linguistics and psychology, from behaviorism and nativism to input-based, interactionist, and sociocultural accounts of acquisition [3-7]. These theories have shaped the methods that language teachers use today [8, 9] and have contributed a great deal. Their dominance, however, leaves the normative sources of Islamic education largely unexamined as a basis for language pedagogy. The gap has practical consequences: in a recent study of English teaching in a *pesantren*, students initially regarded English as "not useful for my afterlife", and their engagement grew when English instruction was connected with Islamic values [10].

This gap matters for four reasons. Theologically, learning Arabic is the gateway to understanding the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and the Qur'an presents the diversity of languages as a sign of God. Pedagogically, Islamic educational institutions need foundations for language teaching rooted in their own tradition rather than borrowed wholesale. Epistemologically, a dialogue between Qur'anic indications and modern findings can enrich both: the Qur'an supplies values and purposes, while modern science supplies technical tools. Practically, Muslim learners in Indonesia and elsewhere must master English for study and work, and they need a framework for language learning that is both effective and meaningful to them.

This article develops, condenses, and extends material from the authors' book on the language learning process in the Qur'an [11]. It reorganizes that material for an English

language teaching readership, revises its exegetical analysis, and adds a systematic comparison with current second language acquisition research. The study asks three questions. First, how does the Qur'an describe the nature of language and the human capacity to learn it? Second, what process, principles, and methods of language learning can be derived from the Qur'an through thematic exegesis? Third, how does this Qur'anic concept relate to current second language acquisition theory, and what are its implications for English language teaching in Islamic institutions?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theories of second language acquisition and teaching

Several competing accounts explain how languages are learned. Skinner's behaviorism treated verbal behavior as habits shaped by reinforcement, a view that underpinned the drills of the Audiolingual Method [3, 8]. Chomsky argued instead that children acquire language rapidly from limited input because they possess an innate language faculty [4]. Krashen's input hypothesis holds that acquisition results from comprehensible input slightly beyond the learner's level, allows for a silent period before production, and proposes an affective filter that blocks acquisition when anxiety is high [5]; the Natural Approach translated these ideas into classroom practice [12]. Krashen's hypotheses have been widely criticized as difficult to test and as underestimating the role of production and conscious attention [13].

Later research refined this picture. Long's interaction hypothesis proposes that acquisition is driven by input made comprehensible through negotiation of meaning, in which learners receive feedback and modified input from more proficient interlocutors [6]. Swain's output hypothesis argues that producing language pushes learners to notice gaps in their knowledge and to test hypotheses [14]. Schmidt's noticing hypothesis holds that input becomes intake only when learners attend to it consciously [15], and usage-based accounts emphasize the effects of frequency and repeated exposure on learning [16]. Sociocultural theory locates learning in interaction with more capable others within the zone of proximal development [7], and social learning theory emphasizes observation and modeling [17]. These later accounts treat listening, imitation, feedback, and repetition as interacting parts of one process rather than as separate stages.

Communicative language teaching broadened the goal of language learning from grammatical accuracy to communicative competence, which Canale and Swain defined as comprising grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence, later extended to include discourse competence [18]. Bachman's model added pragmatic competence [19], and Byram

extended the notion to intercultural communicative competence [20]. Methodology texts describe a wide range of methods, from the Direct Method and Audiolingualism to communicative and humanistic approaches, and generally favor principled eclecticism over a single method [8, 9]. In Arabic language teaching, the same methods have been adapted for learners in Indonesia and elsewhere [21, 22].

2.2 Language and language learning in classical Islamic scholarship

Classical Muslim scholars produced a substantial body of thought on language. Ibn Jinni defined language as "sounds by which every people express their purposes," a definition that captures the phonetic, social, and functional nature of language [23]. Ibn Faris and Ibn Jinni debated whether language originated through divine instruction (*tawqif*) or human convention (*istilah*), with QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 31 as the central proof text [23, 24]. Ibn Khaldun argued that linguistic ability is a *malakah*, a firmly rooted habit acquired through repeated exposure and practice, and that hearing is "the father of linguistic habits" [25]. Osman shows that Ibn Khaldun's ideas anticipate modern second language acquisition research, since he favored learning through conversation and exposure over the study of formal grammar [26]. Che Haron et al. condense the *malakah* theory into three stages, namely input beginning with listening, storage through memorization, and output through practice [27].

2.3 Qur'anic perspectives on communication and English language teaching

Recent studies have used thematic exegesis to derive communication principles from the Qur'an. Ainissyifa et al. examined verses containing the term *qawlan* and built a model of educator–learner communication from them [28]. Safrodin identified six Qur'anic speech principles in verses on *tabligh* and related them to values in interpersonal communication theory such as honesty, empathy, and politeness [29].

A smaller body of work connects the Qur'an with English language teaching directly. Ali and Khan used pedagogic discourse analysis to identify Qur'anic teaching techniques and argued that they are compatible with recommended principles of teaching English as a foreign language, such as beginning with nouns, using the learner's first language, integrating the four skills, and reinforcing learning through repetition [30]. Abu Nawas et al. interpreted selected verses and hadith and concluded that, although neither requires proficiency in any particular language, both offer ethical and intellectual guidance that supports learning English for intercultural understanding [31]. Mustofa and Romadhon found that students in an

Indonesian *pesantren* initially saw English as irrelevant to their religious goals, and that connecting English instruction with Islamic values improved their engagement [10].

Ali and Khan's study comes closest to the present one. It analyses the Qur'an's teaching techniques through discourse analysis, however, rather than through the thematic exegesis of verses on language with reference to the exegetical tradition, and it does not formulate a learning process or compare it with current interactionist theory. Studies of Ibn Khaldun address a classical scholar's theory rather than the Qur'an itself, and studies of *qawlan* address communication ethics rather than language learning. In the literature reviewed for this study, no work combines the Qur'anic account of language, learning faculties, learning process, principles, methods, and goals into a single model and then examines that model against current second language acquisition research. The present study addresses this gap.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative library research using the thematic exegesis method (*al-tafsir al-mawdu'i*). Thematic exegesis collects the verses that address a single theme, arranges them with attention to the order and context of revelation (*asbab al-nuzul*) and the relationships between verses (*munasabah*), supplements them with relevant hadith, and formulates the Qur'an's overall concept of the theme. The procedure follows al-Farmawi [32] as developed in Indonesia by Shihab [33].

Locating verses. Verses were located with *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfaz al-Qur'an al-Karim* [34] through the roots of terms for language and learning: *l-s-n* (*lisan*), *q-w-l* (*qawl*), *k-l-m* (*kalam*, *kalimah*), *b-y-n* (*bayan*), *n-t-q* (*nutq*), *s-m-w* (*asma'*), *q-r-'* (*qira'ah*), *t-l-w* (*tilawah*), *r-t-l* (*tartil*), *'-l-m* (*ta'lim*), *q-l-m* (*qalam*), *k-t-b* (*kitabah*), *s-m-'* (*sam'*), and *h-w-r* (*hiwar*). A verse was retained if the term referred to (a) language or speech, (b) a teaching or learning event, or (c) the faculties of perception and expression; occurrences in unrelated senses, such as *kalimah* in the sense of a divine decree, were excluded. The analysis then concentrated on 31 core passages, listed in Appendix A with their Makki or Madani classification and, where known, their occasion or context of revelation.

Interpretation and coding. Each core passage was read through classical and contemporary exegetical works, namely those of al-Tabari, al-Zamakhshari, al-Razi, al-Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, Ibn 'Ashur, Sayyid Qutb, al-Maraghi, Hamka, and M. Quraish Shihab [1, 2, 35-42], together with relevant hadith and works of Qur'anic sciences. For each passage, two layers were recorded separately: what the exegetes state about its meaning, and the pedagogical inference (*istinbat tarbawi*) drawn by the authors. Inferences were then coded

into six categories: the nature of language, learning faculties, stages of learning, principles, methods, and goals. A principle or method was retained only when it was supported by at least two passages or by one passage with an explicit teaching context, which produced eight principles and thirteen methods. The seven stages were derived by synthesizing the sequences in two narratives, as explained in Section 4.3. Throughout the article, inferences are signaled with expressions such as "we infer" or "read pedagogically".

Conventions. Hadith are cited by the numbering used in standard editions. English renderings of Qur'anic verses are the authors' own, based on the translation of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs [43]. Arabic terms are transliterated in a simplified system without diacritics, and the six qualities of speech are given in their Qur'anic accusative form (e.g., *qawlan sadidan*).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The nature of language in the Qur'an

The word *lughah*, the common modern Arabic word for language, does not occur in the Qur'an. Instead, the Qur'an uses several terms, each highlighting a different aspect of language (Table 1). Together they present language as a social system (*lisan*), a speech act (*qawl*), a unit of meaning (*kalimah*), a cognitive capacity (*bayan*), an articulatory ability (*nutq*), a store of concepts (*asma'*), and a literacy skill (*qira'ah* and *kitabah*). The term *lisan* means the physical tongue but is also used for the language of a people, joining the physiological and social dimensions of language in a way that parallels the modern distinction between individual linguistic ability and language as a social system.

Table 1. Linguistic terms in the Qur'an

Term	Basic meaning	Aspect of language emphasized
Lisan	Tongue; language	Language as the system of a community and the organ of speech (QS. Ibrahim [14]: 4; QS. al-Rum [30]: 22)
Qawl	Saying, utterance	Concrete speech and its ethical quality (*qawlan sadidan*, *qawlan kariman*, etc.)
Kalam / *kalimah*	Speech; word	Units of meaning; good and bad words (QS. Ibrahim [14]: 24–26)
Bayan	Clarity, explanation	The ability to express thought clearly (QS. al-Rahman [55]: 4)
Nutq / *mantiq*	Speech, utterance	The capacity to speak, even "the speech of birds" (QS. al-Naml [27]: 16)
Asma'	Names	Vocabulary and concepts as the basis of knowledge (QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 31)
Qira'ah / *tilawah*	Reading; recitation	Reading skill, from written texts or from memory
Qalam / *kitabah*	Pen; writing	Writing skill and the recording of knowledge (QS. al-'Alaq [96]: 4; QS. al-Qalam [68]: 1)

The Qur'an also places linguistic diversity alongside the creation of the heavens and the earth as a sign of God's power: "And among His signs are the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors. Indeed, in that are signs for those who know" (QS. al-Rum [30]: 22). Exegetes explain that *ikhtilaf alsinatikum* covers both differences between languages and differences in the voice of each individual [2, 37]. From the closing words, *al-'alimin* (those with knowledge), we infer that the study of language can itself be understood as reading God's signs in creation. Three pedagogical implications follow from this reading: linguistic diversity is a richness rather than a problem, learning another language, including English, can be undertaken as an act of worship, and language learning should foster respect for speakers of other languages.

Four functions of language emerge from the verses. The communicative function (*tabyin*) appears in QS. Ibrahim [14]: 4: every messenger was sent "in the language of his people, so that he might make the message clear to them." Ibn Kathir reads this as an expression of God's kindness, since messengers spoke the language their audiences understood [2]. The social function (*ta'aruf*) appears in QS. al-Hujurat [49]: 13, which states that humans were made into nations and tribes "so that you may know one another"; we infer that mutual knowledge across nations presupposes command of their languages. The cognitive function appears in QS. Yusuf [12]: 2 and in the many verses that invite reflection (*tafakkur*, *tadabbur*) through parables and stories. Finally, the spiritual and ethical function appears in the parable of the good word as a good tree and the bad word as a bad tree (QS. Ibrahim [14]: 24–26).

On the origin of language, classical scholars disagreed over whether language was taught directly by God (*tawqifi*) or established by human convention (*istilahi*) [23, 24]. This study takes the view that what God taught Adam was the capacity and foundations of language, namely the ability to name, conceptualize, and express, while particular languages developed through social interaction over history. This reading agrees with Shihab's interpretation of the teaching of names as the bestowal of the human capacity to know the names, functions, and characteristics of things [42], and it opens a dialogue with Chomsky's notion of an innate language capacity [4].

4.2 The faculties for learning language

The key verse on human learning potential is QS. al-Nahl [16]: 78: "God brought you out of your mothers' wombs knowing nothing, and gave you hearing, sight, and hearts, so that

you might be grateful." Humans are born knowing nothing (*la ta'lamuna shay'an*), so all knowledge, including knowledge of language, is acquired through learning. God equips humans with three main faculties: hearing (*al-sam'*), sight (*al-absar*), and the heart or mind (*al-af'idah*), and the purpose of these faculties is gratitude, that is, using them for the ends for which they were created. This verse can be reconciled with the innate capacity named in QS. al-Rahman [55]: 4: what the newborn lacks is actual knowledge, while what it already possesses is the equipment to acquire that knowledge.

In most verses that name both faculties, hearing is mentioned before sight, for example in QS. al-Nahl [16]: 78, QS. al-Isra' [17]: 36, QS. al-Mu'minun [23]: 78, QS. al-Sajdah [32]: 9, and QS. al-Mulk [67]: 23. The pattern is predominant rather than universal: sight precedes hearing in *absir bihi wa asmi'* (QS. al-Kahf [18]: 26) and in the words of the guilty on the Day of Judgment, *absarna wa sami'na* (QS. al-Sajdah [32]: 12). In the exceptions, the context concerns God's perfect knowledge or seeing the truth of the Hereafter, not human learning, whereas the verses that place hearing first describe the faculties with which humans acquire knowledge. We therefore read the usual order, cautiously, as an indication that hearing is the first gateway to knowledge. Ibn Khaldun stated the corresponding linguistic principle explicitly, calling hearing "the father of linguistic habits" (*al-sam' abu al-malakat al-lisaniyyah*) and advising that fluency be built by hearing and memorizing eloquent speech [25].

The remaining faculties complete the picture. The heart or mind (*al-fu'ad*) is the seat of understanding, and the Qur'an condemns those who "have hearts with which they do not understand, eyes with which they do not see, and ears with which they do not hear" (QS. al-A'raf [7]: 179); we infer that learning which engages the senses without understanding has failed. QS. al-Balad [90]: 8–9 names the tongue and two lips as blessings, highlighting articulation. Finally, *al-bayan* in QS. al-Rahman [55]: 4 is interpreted by al-Hasan al-Basri as speech (*al-nutq*) and by Ibn 'Ashur as the ability to convey what is in the mind to others, a distinctively human capacity [35, 38]. Table 2 summarizes these faculties.

Table 2. Faculties for language learning according to the Qur'an

Faculty	Key verses	Function in language learning (authors' inference)
Al-sam' (hearing)	QS. al-Nahl [16]: 78; QS. al-Isra' [17]: 36	Absorbing sounds, vocabulary, and patterns; listening skill
Al-basar (sight)	QS. al-Nahl [16]: 78; QS. al-Balad [90]: 8	Recognizing referents and written text; reading skill
Al-fu'ad (heart and mind)	QS. al-Nahl [16]: 78; QS. al-A'raf [7]: 179	Understanding meaning, reasoning, internalizing

Faculty	Key verses	Function in language learning (authors' inference)
Lisan wa shafatayn (tongue and lips)	QS. al-Balad [90]: 9	Articulating sounds; speaking skill
Al-bayan (capacity for expression)	QS. al-Rahman [55]: 4	Innate ability to understand and express thought
Al-qalam (pen)	QS. al-'Alaq [96]: 4	Writing and recording knowledge

4.3 The language learning process according to the Qur'an

Two episodes in the Qur'an serve as paradigms of language learning. The first is the teaching of names to Adam:

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَٰؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٣١)

"And He taught Adam the names, all of them; then He presented them to the angels and said, 'Tell Me the names of these, if you are truthful.'" (QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 31)

Ibn 'Abbas, as reported by al-Tabari and Ibn Kathir, explained that Adam was taught the names of everything people know, down to the smallest objects [2, 35], and al-Razi notes that Adam's superiority over the angels was shown through knowledge rather than worship [36]. Exegetes explain that the pronoun *hum* in *'aradahum* (He presented them) refers to the things that had been named (*al-musammayat*), and that the form used for rational beings appears because such beings were among them [1, 37]. The verse thus states that the named things were presented to the angels; it does not specify how.

Read pedagogically, which is our inference rather than the exegetes' claim, the passage contains the components of a complete learning event: a teacher (God, *'allama*), a learner (Adam), content (*al-asma' kullaha*), presentation of what is named (*'aradahum*), elicitation (*anbi'uni*, "tell Me"), demonstration by the learner (*ya Adam anbi'hum*, "O Adam, tell them"), and humility before knowledge (the angels' reply, *subhanaka la 'ilma lana illa ma 'allamtana*). From the sequence of teaching, presenting, eliciting, and producing, we infer a model of vocabulary instruction in which words are linked to their referents and then produced by the learner; in classrooms, this can be realized with real objects, pictures, or digital media.

The second paradigm is the Prophet Muhammad's reception of revelation. In the account of the first revelation reported by al-Bukhari from 'A'ishah (no. 3), the angel Jibril commanded "*Iqra'*" three times before reciting the opening verses of Surah al-'Alaq [44]. The command was linked to "the name of your Lord" (*bismi rabbik*) and followed by a reference

to the pen, joining reading and writing within a frame of faith. The verses that most explicitly describe the Prophet's learning, however, are QS. al-Qiyamah [75]: 16–19:

لَا تُحَرِّكْ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهِ (١٦) إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ (١٧) فَإِذَا قَرَأْنَاهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ (١٨) ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ (١٩)

"Do not move your tongue with it to hasten it. Upon Us is its collection and its recitation. So when We have recited it, follow its recitation. Then upon Us is its explanation." (QS. al-Qiyamah [75]: 16–19)

According to the report of Ibn 'Abbas in al-Bukhari (no. 5), the Prophet initially moved his lips while Jibril was reciting, for fear of forgetting, and these verses were revealed in response. Ibn 'Abbas glossed "follow its recitation" as "listen to it and be silent", and after this, when Jibril came, the Prophet listened, and when Jibril left, he recited as Jibril had recited [44]. The final verse needs care. In the same report Ibn 'Abbas explains *thumma inna 'alayna bayanah* as God's enabling the Prophet to recite it, while other exegetes understand *bayan* here as the explanation of its meanings and rulings [2, 35]. On either reading, the *bayan* of QS. al-Qiyamah [75]: 19 is God's act toward the learner, not the learner's own capacity for expression named by the same word in QS. al-Rahman [55]: 4. We therefore keep the two senses apart: the learner first receives clarification of the material, and only later expresses meaning independently.

Three stages emerge from the passage and its occasion: attentive listening until the material is gathered (*jam'ahu*), imitation after the model is complete (*fattabi' qur'anah*), and clarification by the teacher (*thumma inna 'alayna bayanah*), where *thumma* (then) signals sequence. The Prophet's learning continued through gradual revelation over about twenty-three years, "so that We may strengthen your heart by it" (QS. al-Furqan [25]: 32), which scholars explain as easing memorization, understanding, and practice [45]. Jibril met the Prophet every night of Ramadan to review the Qur'an with him (al-Bukhari, no. 6), and in the year of his death reviewed it with him twice (al-Bukhari, no. 4998) [44], a practice known as *mu'aradah*. The process culminated in *tabligh*: the Prophet recited, explained, and had the revelation written down for his companions.

Table 3 synthesizes the two paradigms into seven stages. The order of the stages is the authors' synthesis, not a sequence stated in either text. Listening comes first because both narratives begin with the teacher's input. Vocabulary is placed second, before imitation, because in the Adam narrative names are taught before they are elicited, and a word can only be imitated after it has been heard and linked to its referent. Reading and writing follow the oral stages because the revelation was recited and memorized before it was written down,

which also matches the natural order of first language development. Understanding and expressing, and reviewing and conveying, come last because both narratives end with the learner's independent performance before others. The order is a heuristic for planning, and the stages are spiral rather than linear: with each new body of material, the learner passes through them again at a higher level of complexity.

Table 3. Seven stages of the language learning process (authors' synthesis)

Stage	Key verses and reports	Core activity	Skill
1. *Istima'* (listening)	QS. al-Qiyamah [75]: 16–18; al-Bukhari no. 5; QS. al-A'raf [7]: 204	Listening to a language model attentively and calmly	Listening
2. *Ta'lim al-asma'* (learning vocabulary)	QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 31	Linking words to their referents and concepts	Vocabulary
3. *Ittiba'* (imitating)	QS. al-Qiyamah [75]: 18	Reproducing the model's speech accurately	Speaking (pronunciation)
4. *Qira'ah* (reading)	QS. al-'Alaq [96]: 1–3; QS. al-Muzzammil [73]: 4	Reading with *tartil* and understanding	Reading
5. *Kitabah* (writing)	QS. al-'Alaq [96]: 4; QS. al-Qalam [68]: 1	Writing and recording	Writing
6. *Fahm* and *bayan* (understanding and expressing)	QS. al-Qiyamah [75]: 19 (meaning clarified for the learner); QS. al-Rahman [55]: 4 (learner's capacity to express)	Receiving clarification of meaning, then expressing ideas independently	Productive speaking and writing
7. *Muraja'ah* and *tabligh* (reviewing and conveying)	QS. al-A'la [87]: 6; al-Bukhari nos. 6, 4998	Reviewing, being corrected, and conveying to others	Integrated

The resulting pattern is receptive before productive and oral before written, culminating in independent and meaningful use. It matches the four-skill sequence of Arabic pedagogy (*maharat al-istima'*, *al-kalam*, *al-qira'ah*, and *al-kitabah*) [21].

4.4 Principles of language learning in the Qur'an

Principles are general values and rules, while methods are the operational means that follow from them. The analysis yields eight principles (Table 4). The principle of *tawhid* derives from the command to read "in the name of your Lord" (QS. al-'Alaq [96]: 1) and frames language learning with sincere intention and the awareness that linguistic ability is a divine gift. The principle of gradualness (*tadarruj*) derives from the staged revelation of the Qur'an; we infer from it that material should move from sound to word, sentence, and discourse, and from concrete to abstract. The principle of ease (*taysir*) rests on QS. al-Qamar [54]: 17, repeated four times in the surah: "And We have certainly made the Qur'an easy to remember; so is there anyone who will be mindful?" Exegetes explain that God made the Qur'an easy to read, memorize, and understand [2].

The principle of attending to capacity (*mura'at al-wus'*) rests on QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 286, "God does not burden a soul beyond its capacity," and parallels differentiated instruction and Vygotsky's zone of proximal development [7]. The contextual principle (*bi lisani qawmih*) rests on QS. Ibrahim [14]: 4 and implies that teaching should begin from learners' own language and culture, including judicious use of the mother tongue as a bridge in early stages. The principle of listening first (*taqdim al-sam'*) follows from the predominant order of hearing before sight and from QS. al-Qiyamah [75]: 16–18. The principle of repetition (*takrar*) is drawn by analogy from the Qur'an's own style. Qur'anic repetition, such as the refrain "Which, then, of your Lord's favors will you deny?" in Surah al-Rahman, is primarily a rhetorical feature studied in *balaghah* and the Qur'anic sciences, where it serves emphasis, memorization, and the disclosure of new aspects of meaning [46]. Its link with repetition in language teaching is therefore an analogy, not a claim about the purpose of the verses. Finally, the principle of example and *adab* reflects the courteous relationships in which learning takes place in the Qur'an, such as Moses' polite request to learn from Khidr (QS. al-Kahf [18]: 66).

Table 4. Eight principles of language learning in the Qur'an

Principle	Key verses	Implication for teaching (authors' inference)
Tawhid	QS. al-'Alaq [96]: 1	Learning as worship; language used for good
Tadarruj (gradualness)	QS. al-Furqan [25]: 32; QS. al-Isra' [17]: 106	Material sequenced from easy to difficult
Taysir (ease)	QS. al-Qamar [54]: 17; QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 185	Accessible and enjoyable presentation
Mura'at al-wus' (capacity)	QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 286	Differentiation by ability
Contextual	QS. Ibrahim [14]: 4	Start from learners' language and culture
Taqdim al-sam' (listening first)	QS. al-Nahl [16]: 78; QS. al-Qiyamah [75]: 16–18	Listening before speaking
Takrar (repetition)	QS. al-Rahman [55]; QS. al-Qamar [54] (by analogy)	Varied, spaced repetition
Example and *adab*	QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 32; QS. al-Kahf [18]: 66	Teacher as model; etiquette of learning

4.5 Methods of language learning in the Qur'an

The Qur'an is not a technical manual of language teaching, and the methods formulated here are the result of exegetical reasoning (*ijtihad*) that draws lessons from two sources: the ways in which God taught language and knowledge to the prophets, and the rhetorical styles (*uslub*) of the Qur'an itself. Thirteen methods were identified (Table 5).

Talaqqi wa mushafahah (direct, face-to-face reception) is the method of revelation itself: the Qur'an was recited by Jibril, heard, and followed (QS. al-Shu'ara' [26]: 192–195),

and it has been transmitted the same way through unbroken chains (*sanad*) ever since. Its strength is accuracy of pronunciation, since sounds absent from the learner's mother tongue are hard to master from writing alone. For Indonesian learners of English, this applies to sounds such as /θ/ and /ð/ in *think* and *this*, which do not exist in Indonesian and are best learned by watching and imitating a model and being corrected. **Istima' wa insat** (listening attentively in silence) rests on QS. al-A'raf [7]: 204, "When the Qur'an is recited, listen to it and be silent," while QS. al-Zumar [39]: 18 adds a critical dimension by praising those who "listen to speech and follow the best of it." **Ta'lim al-asma'** (teaching names) derives from QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 31–33 and teaches vocabulary by linking words to their referents.

Hiwar (dialogue) draws on the many dialogues in the Qur'an, such as those between Moses and Khidr (QS. al-Kahf [18]: 60–82) and between Luqman and his son (QS. Luqman [31]: 13–19), which model turn-taking, requests, apologies, and affectionate address. **Su'al wa jawab** (question and answer) draws on the pattern *yas'alunaka ... qul* ("they ask you … say"), found, for example, in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 189 and 219, and on rhetorical questions that provoke reflection. **Qasas** (stories) uses narrative, which the Qur'an presents as "the best of stories" (QS. Yusuf [12]: 3) and as a lesson for people of understanding (QS. Yusuf [12]: 111). **Amthal** (parables) explains the abstract through the concrete; notably, the parable in QS. Ibrahim [14]: 24 is about language itself, likening a good word to a good tree.

Takrar (varied repetition) is drawn by analogy from the Qur'an's refrains and retold stories, which shift context and emphasis with each repetition; Ibn Khaldun held that linguistic *malakah* forms only through sustained repetition [25]. **Tartil and qira'ah jahriyyah** (measured reading aloud) rests on QS. al-Muzzammil [73]: 4, "recite the Qur'an with measured recitation," which Ibn Kathir links to understanding and reflection [2]. **Kitabah** (writing) rests on God's oath by the pen in QS. al-Qalam [68]: 1, on the command to record debts in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 282, and on the Prophet's scribes of revelation. **Uswah wa mushahadah** (example and observation) rests on QS. al-Ahzab [33]: 21, while Moses' remark that his brother Aaron "is more eloquent than I in speech" (QS. al-Qasas [28]: 34) points to the value of fluent models. **Maw'izah wa mujadalah** (exhortation and argument) rests on QS. al-Nahl [16]: 125, which names wisdom, good counsel, and courteous argument [36, 39]. Finally, **du'a wa riyadah** (prayer and spiritual training) rests on Moses' prayer, "My Lord, expand my chest, ease my task, and untie the knot in my tongue, so that they may understand my speech" (QS. Taha [20]: 25–28); from its order, which places inner composure before fluency, we infer that barriers to speaking often lie in anxiety.

Table 5 relates each method to a modern counterpart. A counterpart was identified when the two share the same learning mechanism, namely input, imitation, feedback, interaction, repetition, or affect, not merely a similar classroom activity. The table also states the main difference, because similarity in technique does not imply similarity in theory. *Talaqqi*, for example, resembles Audiolingual mimicry in technique, but it rests on a personal teacher–learner relationship and on understanding, not on the behaviorist view of learning as habit formation.

Table 5. Thirteen Qur'anic methods, their modern counterparts, and the main difference

Method	Key verses	Modern counterpart (shared mechanism)	Main difference
Talaqqi wa mushafahah	QS. al-Shu'ara' [26]: 192–195	Teacher modeling and corrective feedback in pronunciation teaching (imitation, feedback)	Rests on a personal teacher–learner bond and a chain of transmission, not on habit formation
Istima' wa insat	QS. al-A'raf [7]: 204; QS. al-Zumar [39]: 18	Listening-first instruction; Natural Approach (input)	Adds critical selection of "the best of it"
Ta'lim al-asma'	QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 31–33	Direct Method; teaching vocabulary with referents (input, noticing)	Ends with the learner's demonstration and humility before knowledge
Hiwar	QS. al-Kahf [18]: 60–82	Communicative Language Teaching; role play (interaction)	Dialogues model courtesy and character, not only functions
Su'al wa jawab	QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 189; QS. al-Zumar [39]: 9	Questioning and inquiry-based learning (interaction, output)	Starts from learners' own questions (*yas'alunaka*)
Qasas	QS. Yusuf [12]: 3	Storytelling and retelling (input, output)	Stories carry a moral lesson (*'ibrah*)
Amthal	QS. Ibrahim [14]: 24; QS. al-'Ankabut [29]: 43	Analogical teaching; figurative language (noticing)	Parables aim at reflection on meaning
Takrar	QS. al-Rahman [55]; QS. al-Qamar [54]	Spaced and varied repetition (frequency)	An analogy from rhetorical repetition, not a mechanical drill
Tartil / qira'ah	QS. al-Muzzammil [73]: 4	Reading aloud; reading fluency (output, feedback)	Joins accurate articulation with reflection
Kitabah	QS. al-Qalam [68]: 1; QS. al-'Alaq [96]: 4	Controlled to free writing; process writing (output)	Writing as preservation of knowledge
Uswah wa mushahadah	QS. al-Ahzab [33]: 21; QS. al-Qasas [28]: 34	Observational learning; immersion (modeling)	The teacher models character as well as language
Maw'izah wa mujadalah	QS. al-Nahl [16]: 125	Public speaking; debate; persuasive writing (output)	Argument must be conducted courteously (*billati hiya ahsan*)
Du'a wa riyadah	QS. Taha [20]: 25–28, 114	Lowering anxiety; affective filter (affect)	Composure is sought through prayer as well as technique

These methods are meant to be combined according to learning goals, learner characteristics, and content, an eclecticism consistent with modern methodology [8, 9] and with the Qur'an's own alternation of styles within a single surah. The modern counterparts in Table 5 draw on standard descriptions of these methods [8, 12, 17]. What unites them are the principles in Section 4.4, above all *tawhid* and *adab*.

4.6 Ethical language use as the goal of learning

In the Qur'anic perspective, language learning aims not only at correct (*sahih*) and fluent (*fasih*) use but at good and courteous use. The Qur'an describes six qualities of speech, each in a specific context, which recent studies have treated as Qur'anic communication principles [28, 29]. This study reads them as the goals of language learning (Table 6). *Qawlan sadidan* (QS. al-Nisa' [4]: 9; QS. al-Ahzab [33]: 70) is speech that is true in content and accurate in form. *Qawlan balighan* (QS. al-Nisa' [4]: 63) is speech that reaches and moves its listener; from the same root comes *balaghah*, the science of fitting speech to its situation. *Qawlan kariman* (QS. al-Isra' [17]: 23) is honorable speech to parents, in a verse that forbids even the single syllable *uff*. *Qawlan maysuran* (QS. al-Isra' [17]: 28) is gentle, easy speech when one must decline a request. *Qawlan layyinan* (QS. Taha [20]: 44) is soft speech, commanded even toward Pharaoh; exegetes reason that if gentleness is required toward a tyrant, it is all the more required toward others [2, 37], a lesson for how teachers correct learners' errors. *Qawlan ma'rufan* (QS. al-Nisa' [4]: 5) is speech that is fitting by recognized social norms.

Table 6. The six qualities of speech as goals of language learning

Quality	Key verses	Competence targeted	Example in English teaching
Qawlan sadidan	QS. al-Nisa' [4]: 9; QS. al-Ahzab [33]: 70	Grammatical competence; truthful content	Accurate grammar and honest reporting in presentations
Qawlan balighan	QS. al-Nisa' [4]: 63	Discourse competence; fit to situation	Organizing an argument for a specific audience
Qawlan kariman	QS. al-Isra' [17]: 23	Sociolinguistic competence (honorific register)	Formal register when writing to a lecturer
Qawlan maysuran	QS. al-Isra' [17]: 28	Pragmatic competence (polite refusal)	"I'm afraid I can't make it, but…"
Qawlan layyinan	QS. Taha [20]: 44	Affective dimension of interaction	Gentle corrective feedback; recasts
Qawlan ma'rufan	QS. al-Nisa' [4]: 5; QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 235	Intercultural competence	Awareness of politeness norms across cultures

Read through applied linguistics, these qualities overlap with grammatical, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence [18], with pragmatic competence in Bachman's

model [19], and with intercultural communicative competence [20]. They do not correspond directly to strategic competence, the ability to compensate for breakdowns in communication. Their distinctive contribution is an explicit ethical dimension, which Luqman's advice to "lower your voice" (QS. Luqman [31]: 19) extends to paralinguistic features such as volume and tone.

4.7 Dialogue with second language acquisition theory

Table 7 places the Qur'anic process in dialogue with second language acquisition theory. The aim is not to force agreement between scripture and science but to identify points of contact and what is distinctive.

Table 7. The Qur'anic process in dialogue with second language acquisition theory

Theory	Central idea	Point of contact and difference
Behaviorism [3]	Language as habit formed through reinforcement	Shares repetition (*takrar*) and Ibn Khaldun's *malakah*; but the Qur'an does not reduce learners to response mechanisms, given *fu'ad* and *bayan*
Nativism [4]	Innate language faculty	Meets *'allamahu al-bayan* and the teaching of names; the capacity is a divine gift with a transcendent purpose
Input hypothesis [5]	Comprehensible input; silent period; affective filter	Shares listening first and attention to anxiety; but the silent period is contested, and the Qur'anic model adds guided imitation and correction
Interaction hypothesis [6]	Input, negotiation, and feedback with a more proficient interlocutor	Closest fit: *talaqqi* and *mu'aradah* combine a model, the learner's attempt, and expert correction
Output hypothesis and noticing [14, 15]	Production and attention reveal gaps	Meets *ittiba'*, *tabligh*, and the learner's demonstration (*anbi'hum*)
Usage-based accounts [16]	Frequency and repeated exposure	Meets varied, spaced review (*takrar*, annual *mu'aradah*)
Sociocultural theory [7]	Learning through interaction with more capable others	Meets the Jibril–Prophet and Prophet–companion relationships; framed by *adab* and *sanad*

The comparison suggests that the Qur'anic process fits interactionist accounts better than a strictly input-based one. The report in al-Bukhari describes listening followed by recitation that Jibril later reviewed, which combines input, the learner's own production, and expert feedback [6, 14]. The silent period, by contrast, is contested in second language acquisition research [13], and the Qur'anic sequence does not prescribe prolonged silence, only that the learner should not rush ahead of the model. The most fundamental difference from all of these theories lies in the transcendent dimension: learning begins "in the name of your Lord," is supported by a divine guarantee (*inna 'alayna jam'ahu*), and aims at gratitude and at receiving and conveying guidance.

4.8 The Qur'anic Language Learning Model and its implications for English language teaching

Combining these findings, this study proposes a Qur'anic Language Learning Model with seven components (Figure 1): a foundation, learner faculties, eight principles, the seven-stage process, thirteen methods, evaluation, and goals. Evaluation follows the Adam narrative and the practice of *mu'aradah*: it should be authentic and performance-based, continuous, inclusive of all four skills, attentive to the ethics of language use, and delivered with gentle, constructive feedback. QS. al-Jumu'ah [62]: 2 describes four roles of the teacher: reciting (*yatlu*), purifying (*yuzakki*), teaching the Book (*yu'allimu al-kitab*), and teaching wisdom (*al-hikmah*). For a language teacher, we read these as modeling good language, nurturing motivation and character, teaching linguistic knowledge and skills, and developing wise and meaningful use.

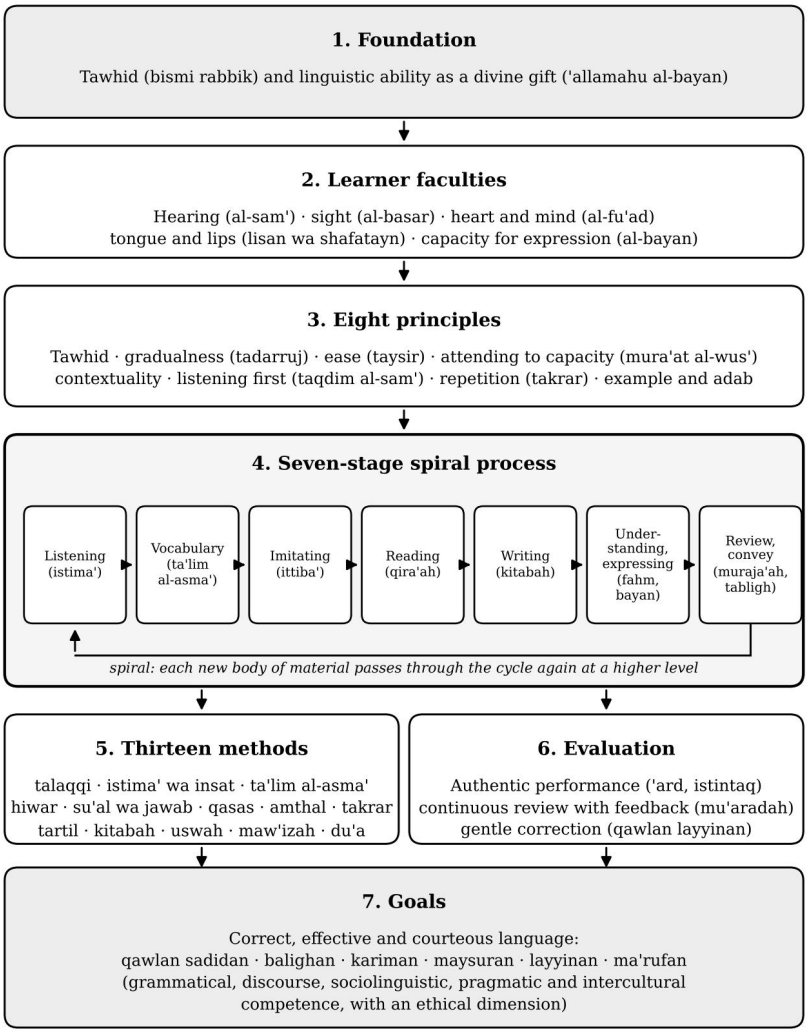


Figure 1. The Qur'anic Language Learning Model

Can a model derived from how the revelation was learned in Arabic guide the teaching of English? We distinguish two kinds of features. Some reflect general patterns of human learning, which in Islamic terms belong to *sunnatullah*, God's regular ways in creation: listening before speaking, linking words to referents, imitation with feedback, gradual sequencing, repetition, and the role of anxiety. These apply to any language. Others are specific to the transmission of the Qur'an, such as the rules of *tajwid* and the requirement of an unbroken chain of transmission (*sanad*), and these do not transfer to English. The Qur'an and Sunnah also support learning other languages. QS. al-Rum [30]: 22 and QS. al-Hujurat [49]: 13 present linguistic diversity as a sign of God and a means of mutual knowledge, and the Prophet instructed Zayd ibn Thabit to learn the writing of the Jews so that he could write and read the Prophet's correspondence, which Zayd reported mastering in less than half a month (al-Tirmidhi, no. 2715; Abu Dawud, no. 3645) [47, 48]. Some versions of the report name the language as Syriac, and al-Tirmidhi graded it *hasan sahih*.

For English teaching in Islamic schools and universities, the model translates into concrete practices: a listening phase before production; teacher modeling and correction of sounds that do not exist in Indonesian; vocabulary taught with real objects or images; dialogue practice that includes polite forms; reading aloud with attention to stress and pausing; short dictation; gentle corrective feedback; and spaced review. Table 8 illustrates these in a beginner lesson adapted from the Arabic example in the source book [11]. The opening prayer and intention-setting are appropriate in Islamic institutions with Muslim learners. In classrooms with learners of other faiths, or in non-religious institutions, they can be replaced by a short reflection on goals, while the other stages remain unchanged. Digital tools can extend listening, recording-based *mu'aradah*, and spaced repetition, but the method of *talaqqi* underlines that technology cannot replace a teacher who models, corrects, and sets an example.

Table 8. Sample beginner English lesson (80 minutes, e.g., two 40-minute sessions) applying the model

Phase (time)	Activities	Methods
Objectives	By the end of the lesson, students can name five classroom objects, ask and answer "What is this?" accurately, and pronounce /θ/ in *this* and *that* correctly in the dialogue.	–
Opening (10 min)	Greeting and prayer (QS. Taha [20]: 25–28) or, in mixed or non-religious classes, a short goal-setting reflection; warm-up in a language learners know	*Du'a*; contextual principle
Istima' (10 min)	Teacher reads a short dialogue, "In the Classroom," twice; students listen without writing	*Istima' wa insat*

Phase (time)	Activities	Methods
Ta'lim al-asma' (15 min)	Teacher shows classroom objects (book, pen, desk, chair, board) and names them; students repeat; teacher models /θ/ and /ð/ and corrects; teacher points at random and students name the objects	*Ta'lim al-asma'*; *talaqqi*
Hiwar (15 min)	Pair practice with "What is this?" / "This is a pen," swapping roles and extending to other objects	*Hiwar*; *su'al wa jawab*
Reading and writing (15 min)	Students read the dialogue aloud with attention to stress and pausing, then write the new words in a short dictation	*Tartil*; *kitabah*
Bayan and *tabligh* (10 min)	Pairs perform the dialogue; classmates listen and give courteous feedback	*Maw'izah*; *qawlan layyinan*
Closing (5 min)	Review of core vocabulary; reflection; closing prayer *rabbi zidni 'ilma* or summary	*Takrar*; *du'a*
Assessment	Performance check during the pair performance: correct naming of objects, accurate question and answer, and pronunciation of /θ/ and /ð/, recorded on a simple checklist; dictation scored for spelling	*'Ard*, *istintaq*, *mu'aradah*

5. CONCLUSIONS

This thematic study of Qur'anic verses leads to six conclusions. First, the Qur'an views language from multiple dimensions through the terms *lisan*, *qawl*, *kalam*, *bayan*, *nutq*, *asma'*, *qira'ah*, and *qalam*, and presents linguistic diversity as a sign of God. Second, humans are born without knowledge but with faculties for learning language, and the predominant precedence of hearing over sight can be read as an indication that listening is the first gateway to language. Third, a seven-stage spiral process can be synthesized from the teaching of Adam and the Prophet's reception of revelation, moving from listening to independent use; its order is the authors' synthesis rather than a sequence stated in the text. Fourth, this process rests on eight principles. Fifth, thirteen methods can be derived from the Qur'an, each sharing a learning mechanism with a modern method while differing in its ethical and spiritual framing. Sixth, the goal is correct, effective, and courteous language, expressed in six qualities of speech that overlap with several components of communicative competence.

The proposed model fits interactionist accounts of second language acquisition most closely and offers English teachers in Islamic institutions a framework rooted in their own tradition and compatible with current theory. The study has limitations. It is conceptual and interpretive, and its categories rest on the authors' inferences from the text, which other readers may draw differently. Its comparison with modern theory is analytical rather than empirical. Future research should test the model through classroom action research, experimental studies, and research and development in English classrooms, and should examine how teachers and learners in Islamic and non-religious institutions respond to it.

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APPENDIX A. CORE PASSAGES ANALYSED

Classification follows the surah headings of the standard Indonesian *mushaf*; individual verses with a different classification within a surah are not marked. Occasions are given only where a report or the verse itself states them.

Table A1. Core passages, classification, and context

Passage	Theme	Makki / Madani	Occasion or context
QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 31–33	Teaching names to Adam	Madani	Dialogue with the angels on the vicegerent (2: 30)
QS. al-'Alaq [96]: 1–5	Reading; the pen	Makki	First revelation in the cave of Hira' (al-Bukhari, no. 3)
QS. al-Qiyamah [75]: 16–19	Listening before reciting	Makki	The Prophet hastened to repeat Jibril's recitation (al-Bukhari, no. 5)
QS. al-Rahman [55]: 1–4	Teaching *al-bayan*	Disputed (Makki or Madani)	–
QS. al-Nahl [16]: 78	Hearing, sight, hearts	Makki	–
QS. al-Isra' [17]: 36	Accountability of the faculties	Makki	–
QS. al-Kahf [18]: 26	Sight before hearing (exception)	Makki	God's perfect knowledge
QS. al-Sajdah [32]: 12	Sight before hearing (exception)	Makki	The guilty on the Day of Judgment
QS. al-Balad [90]: 8–9	Tongue and lips	Makki	–
QS. al-A'raf [7]: 179	Faculties without understanding	Makki	–
QS. al-A'raf [7]: 204	Listening in silence	Makki	–
QS. Ibrahim [14]: 4	The language of one's people	Makki	–
QS. Ibrahim [14]: 24–26	The good and bad word	Makki	–
QS. al-Rum [30]: 22	Diversity of languages	Makki	–
QS. al-Hujurat [49]: 13	Knowing one another	Madani	–
QS. Yusuf [12]: 2–3	Arabic Qur'an; the best of stories	Makki	–
QS. al-Furqan [25]: 32	Gradual revelation	Makki	Reply to the objection that the Qur'an was not revealed all at once (stated in the verse)
QS. al-Isra' [17]: 106	Recitation at intervals	Makki	–
QS. al-A'la [87]: 6	Recitation and retention	Makki	–
QS. al-Muzzammil [73]: 4	Measured recitation (*tartil*)	Makki	–
QS. al-Qalam [68]: 1	The pen and writing	Makki	–
QS. al-Qamar [54]: 17	Ease of the Qur'an	Makki	–
QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 286	Capacity	Madani	–
QS. al-Kahf [18]: 60–82	Moses and Khidr	Makki	–
QS. Taha [20]: 25–28, 44	Moses' prayer; gentle speech	Makki	Moses and Aaron sent to Pharaoh
QS. al-Nahl [16]: 125	Wisdom, exhortation, argument	Makki	–
QS. al-Nisa' [4]: 5, 9, 63	*Qawlan ma'rufan*, *sadidan*, *balighan*	Madani	–
QS. al-Isra' [17]: 23, 28	*Qawlan kariman*, *maysuran*	Makki	Speech to parents and to those one cannot help
QS. al-Ahzab [33]: 21, 70	Example; *qawlan sadidan*	Madani	–
QS. al-Jumu'ah [62]: 2	Roles of the teacher	Madani	–
QS. al-Shu'ara' [26]: 192–195	Revelation brought by Jibril	Makki	–