

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

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Abstract

In this article, I present a language socialization approach to the study of Qur'anic schooling. Integrating insights from holistic study of the community and the institution, analysis of video recordings of Qur'anic school interaction, and video playback and interviews with community members, I describe the apprenticeship of Fulbe children into Qur'anic orality and literacy as a gradual transfer of responsibility for rendering the sacred text. I describe the organization of Qur'anic schooling at three levels: the stages of the curriculum, the phases of a lesson, and the turn-by-turn organization of child–teacher interaction. I present fine-grained analysis of video to illustrate how teachers and children used specific practices of body positioning, pointing, and eye gaze in conjunction with the written text and utterances in Arabic and Fulfulde to manage the transfer of the text during the first phase of a lesson. I then discuss perspectives on these multimodal practices articulated by Fulbe concerning how these practices contributed to the achievement of desired outcomes of Qur'anic schooling. I conclude by discussing how the language socialization perspective and attention to multiple modalities increase our understanding of Qur'anic schooling as an activity setting in which Muslim subjectivities come into being.

Keywords: language socialization; Islam; sacred text; reading; multimodality.

1. Introduction

At the start of this millennium, Fulbe children in Maroua, Cameroon, attended Qur'anic school to learn to recite, read, and write the sacred text.¹ The primary goal in the first years of schooling was the faithful—verbatim, fluent, and reverent—rendering of Qur'anic texts by the child.

Fulbe children learned the Qur'an 'by rote'. That is, they learned through extensive imitation, repetition, and memorization and without explanation of the literal meaning of the text, which was in a language they, and often their teachers, did not understand. Families sent their children to school to study the Qur'an to develop not only competence in reciting, reading, and writing the sacred text, but also good moral character and proper religious feeling (Hamadou Adama and Aboubakary Moodibo Amadou 1998; Santerre 1973).

Such practice is not unique to the Maroua Fulbe or Islam. Memorization of the Qur'an is an important part of elementary religious education in most Muslim communities today, even where modern systems of education have largely replaced traditional ones (Boyle 2004; Glassé 2001). Rote learning of sacred texts is characteristic of the traditional pedagogies associated with other religions, including Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Judaism (Wagner 1983). In many religious communities, the study of sacred texts with or without comprehension is valued as an act of piety, discipline, cultural preservation, and personal transformation (Drazin 1940; Dreyfus 2003; Fuller 2001; Nash 1968).

Several scholars have examined Qur'anic schooling in communities where Arabic is not a language of everyday communication and children study the sacred text for years without comprehending it. Cultural psychologists have studied Qur'anic school-based literacy and its cognitive effects in Liberia (Scribner and Cole 1981) and Morocco (Wagner 1993). Anthropologists and religious historians have described the pedagogies of Qur'anic schooling; the epistemologies that inform it; the social and political processes that have shaped it; and the intellectual, moral, affective, and spiritual effects attributed to it by participants (e.g., Boyle 2004; Brenner 2001; Eickelman 1985; Gade 2004; Mommersteeg 1998; Sanneh 1997; Santerre 1973; Street 1984). These researchers have produced rich accounts of elementary Islamic education using a wide range of methods, including interviews, questionnaires, (participant) observation, text analysis, archival research, and psychological experiments. However, none have used video to analyze in detail how participants in Qur'anic schooling accomplish the teaching/learning of sacred texts or to stimulate reflection by community members on Qur'anic teaching/learning practices and processes.

In this article, I present a language socialization approach to the study of Qur'anic schooling.² Integrating insights from holistic study of the community and the institution, analysis of video recordings of Qur'anic school interaction, and video playback and interviews with community members, I describe the apprenticeship of Fulbe children into Qur'anic orality and literacy as a gradual transfer of responsibility for the rendering of the

sacred text. I describe the organization of Qur'anic schooling at three levels: the stages of the curriculum, the phases of a lesson, and the turn-by-turn organization of child–teacher interaction. I present fine-grained analysis of video to illustrate how teachers and children used specific practices of body positioning, pointing, and eye gaze in conjunction with the written text and utterances in Arabic and Fulfulde (the language of the Fulbe) to manage the transfer of the text during the first phase of a lesson. I then discuss perspectives on these multimodal practices articulated by Fulbe, specifically their beliefs about how these practices related to the achievement of desired outcomes of Qur'anic schooling. I conclude by discussing how the language socialization perspective and attention to multiple modalities increase our understanding of Qur'anic schooling as an activity setting in which Muslim subjectivities come into being.

2. Language socialization research, literacy, and multimodality

This article is based on a longitudinal study of the apprenticeship of seven Fulbe children in their first year of public school into three language practices in the primary socializing institutions of their community: the recitation of verses of the Qur'an in Arabic at Qur'anic school and at home, the enactment of dialogues in French at public school, and the telling of folktales in Fulfulde at home (Moore 2006a, 2006b). The study (2000–2001) built upon my previous work in the region as a researcher (1996, 1999) and a Peace Corps volunteer (1992–1994).

In this study I employed a language socialization approach as my central theoretical and methodological orientation. Research within this paradigm investigates how and why novices are apprenticed through language into particular activities and identities (Ochs 2002). It is concerned with the development of 'all of the knowledge and practices that one needs in order to function as—and, crucially, to be regarded by others as—a competent member of (or participant in) a particular community or communities' (Garrett and Baquedano-López 2002: 345). Thus, language socialization studies are longitudinal, ethnographic, and demonstrate the acquisition (or not) of particular linguistic and cultural practices (Kulick and Schieffelin 2004: 350). In order to understand how the transition to linguistic and cultural competence is organized, researchers study interactions between more and less knowledgeable community members. Video-recorded natural discourse is examined by researcher and community members, and this microanalysis is contextualized in a holistic study of the community to illuminate the structures of everyday communication as cultural arrangements, shaped by and in turn shaping community beliefs and values (Schieffelin and Ochs 1995).

I video recorded seven focal children at monthly intervals over the course of one public-school year as they participated in the three focal practices. I recorded 17 hours of Qur'anic schooling in four schools with six teachers. Three Fulbe research assistants and I transcribed the video recordings, making first-pass transcripts from audio lifts and then working with the video to refine and annotate these transcripts. After completing video data collection, I conducted interviews and video playback sessions with family members, Qur'anic teachers, and local Islamic scholars (11 hours of interview/playback with Islamic educators and 27 hours with family members, some of whom were Qur'anic teachers). These sessions (which were audio recorded and transcribed) resulted in further annotations of the transcripts and a collection of community members' metadiscursive remarks on Qur'anic school practices. I further complemented analysis of video-recorded interactions by collecting and analyzing locally available documents related to Islam and Islamic education, as well as by spending many hours as an observer (and sometimes participant) in the homes, neighborhoods, and schools of the focal children.

Video recording was crucial because it allowed me to study in detail not only how participants used language, but also how they used their bodies, artifacts, and other structure in the environment for teaching and learning. Language socialization research has 'an analytic focus on speech, writing, gesture, images, music and other signs as primary means and endpoints of the socialization process' (Ochs and Schieffelin in prep.), and multimodal analysis is an increasingly important part of the methodology. Language socialization scholars interested in literacy attend to multiple communicative modalities to understand how competence in reading and writing is defined, performed, and acquired (or not) in different communities, as well as to understand how literacy practices are linked to values, beliefs, and identities across social contexts (Besnier 1995; Heath 1983; Schieffelin and Gilmore 1986; Sterponi 2007).

3. Qur'anic schooling in Maroua

The primary site for the transmission of Qur'anic textual knowledge was the *janngirde* ('place of recitation, reading, study') (Noye 1989; Seydou 1998). When I asked Fulbe parents why they sent their children to Qur'anic school, the first answer was always '*haa binngel ekkito juulgo*'. The verb *juulgo* means both 'to pray' and 'to be Muslim', so this phrase means both 'so that the child learns to pray' and 'so that the child learns to be Muslim'. At school children learned to recite Qur'anic texts from memory, a skill they needed for canonical prayer. Some teachers provided

instruction on how to pray, and children were taught the basic tenets of Islam (e.g., the unity of God, Mohammed's status as the final prophet) and proper conduct for Fulbe and Muslims (e.g., dressing modestly, respecting one's parents). However, the teaching/learning of Qur'anic texts was the primary activity, to which nearly all school time was dedicated.

Nearly all Fulbe children participated in Qur'anic school for at least a year or two, usually starting at the age of five or six (Tourneux and Iyébi-Mandjek 1994). Children typically attended more than one session (one to two hours long) per day: one in the morning, one in the early afternoon, and one at night. Minimally, a child was expected to learn to recite part of the Qur'an from memory, handle the Qur'an respectfully, and listen to Qur'anic recitation and citation with the proper speech, demeanor, and affect (Hamadou Adama and Aboubakary Moodibo Amadou 1998; Santerre 1973). Qur'anic texts in their oral and/or written form were crucial to many community practices other than prayer, and children had to learn not only to pray with them but also to respond properly to their use in sermons, ceremonies, conversations, and healing practices.

Accurate reproduction of Qur'anic texts was the goal of Qur'anic schooling, while comprehension was not. Teachers did not provide explanations of their meaning and, according to participants, children never thought to ask for them. In fact, most teachers had minimal comprehension of Arabic and little or no training in Qur'anic exegesis (Tourneux and Iyébi-Mandjek 1994). A good Muslim did not need to comprehend the Qur'an, but to mispronounce even a single sound of the sacred text was considered morally wrong and spiritually dangerous. Participants in my study expressed the firm belief that for Qur'anic recitation to be valid or effective, the rendering must be faithful to the text. A reciter must pronounce the sounds accurately and in correct sequence with correct intonation, pausing only where it was required or permissible. Otherwise, he might be saying something completely different than what was revealed (in Arabic) to the Prophet by God. As one young man said, 'The Qur'an is the truth; you cannot make it lie'.³ Thus a recitation error had to be corrected for the sake of the reciter, those listening, and the Qur'an itself.

There were several stages in Qur'anic schooling (see Table 1). The optional first stage entailed irregular attendance and more observation of

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

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

other children as they studied than attention to the child's own assignment. In the second stage the child memorized the *suuraji araani*, the 'first chapters' of the Qur'an (1 and 114–104) (the Arabic word for Qur'anic chapter is *suurah*, literally 'a row'), which are short, rhythmic, and often used in prayer. This stage was sometimes extended so that the child memorized the first *hisbeere* (from Arabic *hizb*), roughly one-sixtieth of the Qur'an (chapters 114–187). In the third stage, the child memorized the Fulfulde names of the Arabic consonants as they appeared in the *suuraji araani*. In the fourth stage he learned to name in Fulfulde (not sound out) the Arabic consonants with vowel markings of the same twelve chapters.

Once he completed the fourth stage, the student was said to be *perdo*, able to read on his own. *Perdo* is the verbal noun of the *feergo*, an intransitive verb that means 'to open, to burst open (spontaneously)' and by metaphorical extension 'to be able to read independently' (Noye 1989). Several participants referred to this metaphoric quality explicitly, explaining to me that a child's intelligence (*faamu*, from Arabic *fahm* 'understanding') 'opened like a cotton boll' when he learned to read the Qur'an (cf. Mommersteeg 1991). It might be many more months or even years of study before the child was able to decode fluently, and many a *perdo* continued to recite texts from memory rather than read them. Nonetheless, completion of this stage was regarded as a transition to a higher level of learning and was celebrated at the school with a meal provided by the family of the student.

In the fifth and final stage, the child recited/read and wrote the whole Qur'an, working 'backward' from chapter 108 or 103 to finish with chapter 2. As the child progressed through the Qur'an, parents presented the teacher with gifts of appreciation. While many children continued to memorize texts because they were not fluent decoders or to achieve fluid recitation, in most Fulbe-run schools memorization was not required after the second stage. In this the Fulbe differed from their neighbors the Arab Shoah and many other Muslim communities that emphasize 'mnemonic possession' of the entire Qur'an (Brenner 2001; Eickelman 1985). The recitation of the final verses of chapter 2 was marked by a final lesson conducted with an audience of family, friends, and fellow students, followed by a large celebration (*tumbirndu*). Having completed the elementary cycle of Qur'anic education, the student was said to have 'finished his Qur'an' and thereby earned the title of *mallum* (from Arabic *mu'allim* 'teacher'), a title also used for Qur'anic teachers. It could take anywhere from three years to a lifetime to finish the Qur'an, and most Maroua Fulbe never did (Santerre 1973; Tourneux and Iyébi-Mandjek 1994). Once a student finished the Qur'an, he might re-read it or begin study of one or more of the Qur'anic sciences.



Figure 1. Upright alluha, Arabic writing runs right to left



Figure 2. Fulbe boy holding alluha across his lap, writing Arabic from top to bottom

At every stage, the child's assigned text was transcribed from a printed loose-leaf Qur'an onto his *alluha* (from Arabic *al-lawh* 'the tablet'), a wooden board usually about 40 by 20 centimeters with a handle at one end (see Figure 1). When the *alluha* was held upright, the writing followed the dominant Arabic convention of running from right to left (see Figure 1). A child might hold his *alluha* in the upright position while practicing his recitation, but he learned to decode and transcribe letters holding the *alluha* across his lap, handle to the left, at a ninety degree, counter-clockwise angle from the dominant convention (see Figure 2). During the first few stages, a more expert person (the teacher, an advanced student, or a member of the child's family) transcribed the text for the child. Writing instruction typically began only after the child had learned to decode Arabic writing. Initially, the teacher would scratch the text into the clay coating on the *alluha* (which made the surface smoother and erasing easier), and the child wrote with pen and ink over the

teacher's marks. As the child became more a competent writer and was deemed mature enough to handle the Qur'an respectfully, he was allowed to transcribe the text onto his *alluha* following only lines scratched by the teacher to help the child write in straight lines. Eventually, the scaffolding would cease, and the child would transcribe independently (Hamadou Adama and Aboubakary Moodibo Amadou 1998).

While there was no celebration or title to mark this shift in responsibility for rendering the text in written form, it was for participants an important transition (Hamadou Adama and Aboubakary Moodibo Amadou 1998). The ability to transcribe Qur'anic texts clearly and accurately was highly valued, and the act of transcription was regarded as a sign and a means of higher engagement with and deeper understanding of the text. Some teachers would allow an advanced student to read Qur'anic texts directly from the loose-leaf pages of a printed Qur'an instead of transcribing them onto his *alluha*. However, this practice was widely disparaged, a view expressed in the saying 'to finish the Qur'an with pages is like crossing a river in a boat [instead of swimming]' (*timmugo Deftere bee wakeere bana feyyititgo bee laanawal*). Participants in my study argued that, while recitation was the most important part of learning the text, it was much better to immerse oneself fully in the Qur'an through transcription as well.

As stated above, Fulbe children's apprenticeship into Qur'anic orality and literacy can be understood as a gradual transfer from teacher to child of responsibility for rendering the text. Guided by the teacher, the child worked his way through the Qur'an one text segment at a time. He advanced through the Qur'anic school curriculum not only by learning to render more and more of the sacred text, but also by learning to engage with it through more modalities. He learned first to recite the Qur'an, then to read it, and finally to write it, and these shifts in participation were valued as indicators of successively deeper levels of religious knowledge.⁴ In the next section I describe shifts that occurred over the course of a lesson as the child assumed more and more responsibility for the vocal and embodied rendering of a text.

4. Qur'anic lessons

The primary lesson objective at every stage of the curriculum was the faithful recitation of the Qur'anic text by the child without assistance from the teacher. The teaching and learning of the text written on one side of the child's *alluha* constituted a lesson, which might be completed in a single session or over the course of several sessions. Each lesson had three phases: Modeling–Imitation, Rehearsal, and Performance. Each



Figure 3. *Modeling imitation, first phase of a lesson*

phase entailed specific objectives and obligations for teacher and child, as well as different norms for speech, embodiment, and the use of artifacts and space.

The first phase was Modeling–Imitation, in which the teacher modeled the rendering of the text for the child (*saatugo*), who then attempted to imitate the rendering (*saahugo*). In this formal and focused one-to-one interaction, teacher and child sat very close, facing one another or side by side. Typically, the teacher sat on a mat or sheepskin with his legs folded under him or crossed, and the child sat with legs folded under and to one side, his *alluha* across his lap (see Figure 3). Surrounded by students reciting their own texts very loudly, teacher and child spoke at a relatively low volume and kept their focus on the text and one another.

During this first phase, the child was expected to listen attentively (*heditaago*) to the model provided by the teacher in order to be able to reproduce it as accurately as he could. For his part, the teacher listened closely to the child's efforts to reproduce the model in order to detect and correct any errors. This phase continued until the teacher felt the child was able to practice it effectively on his own, and the teacher and child might go over the text together once or several times. Teachers and parents stressed the importance of the child being able to be very calm and observe with great focus during this phase in order to achieve an adequate understanding of the text (*deyffitaago haa faamu*).

The second phase of a lesson was Rehearsal. Once judged by the teacher to have sufficient command of the text to practice it independently, the child was sent to sit among the other students and practice his recitation until he mastered it. Rehearsal could last a single session, or it could take several weeks for a child to master the text. The teacher's responsibility was to supervise (*aynugo*, literally 'to guard') and correct the child and his fellow students as they practiced recitation of their texts. Some teachers remained seated most of the time, while others walked among the



Figure 4. *Rehearsal, second phase of a lesson*

students. It was not unusual for the teacher to absent himself, leaving a deputy to maintain order and monitor students' recitations (see Figure 4).

The child's responsibility during Rehearsal was to sit and recite the text over and over at very loud volume until his recitation was fluent (*diggi-tingo*, literally 'to render soft, supple, or fine'). According to teachers and parents, a loud recitation was important because the teacher needed to be able to hear the child in order to detect and correct any errors in recitation, the child needed to drown out the recitations of his neighbors in order not to be distracted by them, and a loud recitation indicated that the child was concentrated on her text and making a good effort to learn it. In my recordings, commands to recite at higher volume were the most frequent type of corrective feedback given during Rehearsal. Teachers also corrected head positioning, gaze direction, and handling of the *alluha* in vocal and nonvocal ways that directed children's attention to their written texts. In principle, the teachers were obligated to detect and correct any error in the vocal rendering of the Qur'an. In practice, teachers varied in vigilance, and the often high child-to-teacher ratios and the din of many voices reciting different texts made close, consistent monitoring difficult during this phase.

Rehearsal was followed by Performance. In this final phase of a lesson, the child displayed his mastery of the text by reciting it for the teacher in a focused, one-to-one interaction. Usually it was up to the child to decide when to begin the Performance phase, though young children in the first year or so of schooling often had to be called upon by the teacher. The child signaled readiness to demonstrate his mastery of the text by sitting down in front of the teacher, legs crossed or folded under, head bowed, *alluha* on his lap as in the first phase (see Figure 5). Once told to begin, the child recited the entire passage written on his *alluha* without help from the teacher. For his part, the teacher listened attentively to judge whether or not the child had truly mastered the text. Even though memorization



Figure 5. *Performance, final phase of a lesson*

was not required for most Qur'anic texts, the verb most often used in talk about this phase was *huunjango*, which means 'to recite to someone something one has learned by heart'. During Performance, feedback was minimal if the child recited well. The backchanneling typical of the first phase was absent in the final one. Once the recitation was over, the teacher signaled approval by nodding, saying that it was good, telling the child that he had mastered the text, and/or instructing him to go wash his *alluha*. This marked the end of the lesson and the successful transfer of responsibility for the vocal and embodied rendering of the text.

5. Qur'anic school interaction

In this section I present two excerpts from a video recording of the Modeling–Imitation phase to illustrate how Qur'anic school participants used multimodal practices to manage the transfer. Fulfulde was the language of instruction in all phases of a lesson, but participants said little in Fulfulde relative to the amount of speech in Arabic. Teachers and children used body positioning, pointing, and eye gaze in conjunction with the written text and speech in the two languages to organize their attention and action.

First, a few notes on transcription (see also the appendix for transcription conventions). The transcripts are representations of the teacher's and student's conduct, including their renderings of the Qur'anic text, which have been transcribed by my Fulbe research assistants and me using the tools of conversation analysis. They are not Roman alphabet transliterations of the written Arabic text. Thus, while I have followed transliteration conventions for word segmentation and capitalization in representing the participants' renderings, I have not 'standardized' them with respect to pronunciation. Despite the Fulbe's beliefs about the importance of accurate reproduction discussed above, renderings of Qur'anic texts did not

always conform to the tradition of recitation (Arabic *qiraa'aat*) the reciter or teacher believed he was following. The tradition most commonly taught in Qur'anic schools in Maroua was Warsh (*waras* in Fulfulde), and the renderings below follow but do not fully conform to that tradition. If an utterance and a nonvocal action were simultaneous, they share a line number in the transcript. When describing pointing on the *alluha* without reference to the text I use Muusa as origo. 'Down' indicates movement toward his torso and 'up' indicates movement away from his torso. Finally, for the sake of simplicity and because neither participant understood the Arabic they recited, I have glossed only Fulfulde utterances.

In the following segments, the teacher (an advanced Qur'anic student who was authorized by the *mallum* to supervise less advanced students) introduced Muusa to a new text, the first four (of eight) verses of chapter 102 At-Takathur. Muusa was in the third stage of the Qur'anic curriculum; that is, he had already memorized several chapters but had yet to begin instruction in naming Arabic letters. The teacher began the lesson by modeling the *basmalah* (line 1), the Arabic formula that opens every sura but sura 9 At-Tawba and means 'In the Name of God, The Merciful, The Compassionate'.

(1) Muusa KS 2, 00:50–01:40

Teacher (T), Muusa (M)

- | | | | |
|---|----|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | T: | Bism Allaahi Rahmani Rahim. | RUNS PEN OVER <i>BASMALAH</i> |
| 2 | M: | Bism Allahi Rahmani Rahim. | |
| 3 | T: | Alheekum takasuru. | RUNS PEN OVER VERSE 1 |
| 4 | M: | Alheekum takafuru. | |
| 5 | T: | <u>Alheekum takasuru.</u> | RUNS PEN OVER VERSE 1 |
| 6 | M: | Alheekum taka(s/f)uru. | |
| 7 | T: | Hatta zurtumin maqaabira. | RUNS PEN OVER VERSE 2 |



- 8 M: Hatta zurtumin makaabira.
 9 T: Kalla sawfa taalamuuna. RUNS PEN OVER VERSE 3
 10 M: Kalla sawfa taalamuuna.
 11 T: Summa kalla sawfa taalamuuna. RUNS PEN OVER VERSE 4
 12 M: Summa ka s- sawfa= (muuna.)
 13 T: =Summa kalla sawfa taalamuuna. RUNS PEN OVER VERSE 4
 14 M: Summa sawka-
 15 T: kalla sawfa taalamuuna. RUNS PEN OVER VERSE 4
 16 M: kalla sawfa taalamuuna.
 17 T: Alheekum takasuru. RUNS PEN OVER VERSE 1

In this first pass, the teacher modeled the text verse by verse, and Muusa repeated after her without missing a beat. This is a noteworthy achievement given that this was the first time the text was modeled for Muusa to imitate. He could not draw upon knowledge of the text to project the end of the teacher's turns, nor could he use syntactic or semantic cues because he did not understand Arabic. Modeling turns varied too much in length for him to project on that basis when the teacher was likely to stop speaking. Teacher and child both looked at the *alluha*, so speaker change could not be signaled by gaze. Nevertheless, turn taking proceeded smoothly, with few gaps or overlaps (as in most of my recordings of teacher–student interaction).

Close analysis of the video revealed that the teacher signaled the end of her turn by intonational contour and pointing at the text. Her pitch fell at the end of each of her turns. As she recited each verse, she ran her pen over the corresponding written text, stopping at the end of the written verse as she completed her vocal rendering of it. I observed two different styles of pointing used by experts when guiding a child through a text. Most teachers I observed used the bracketing point: they pointed to the beginning of a verse as they began its vocal rendering, lifted their hand from the *alluha*, and pointed to the end of the verse as they completed its rendering. They sometimes repeated this gesture as the child reproduced the model. The 'teaching assistant' in this segment used what I call the sliding point. When children pointed to the written text as they vocalized it, they also used the sliding point.

While Muusa took his turns without difficulty in this segment, he made several recitation errors. Error correction was a very important part of Qur'anic lessons and was nearly always accomplished without the use of Fulfulde. The teacher used several different means to alert Muusa that he had made an error. She repeated the verse at slightly higher volume, simultaneously moving her pen back to the start of the written text she had just pointed to and running her pen over it again (lines 5,

13, 15). She also stopped Muusa from completing his turn, cutting him off to re-model the verse in its entirety (line 13) or in part (line 15). In each instance, Muusa displayed his understanding that he must try again by attempting to repeat what the teacher had just said (lines 6, 14, 16). The teacher signaled her acceptance of a rendering by modeling the next verse. She made this move not only audible by her vocalization but also visible by the movement of her pen over the corresponding written text, which was further down or further to the right on the *alluha* than the text she had pointed to in her immediately prior turn (lines 7, 9, 11).

After this first, guided pass through the text, Muusa attempted unsuccessfully to render the text as a whole on his own. The teacher resumed the verse-by-verse turn-taking format for five passes through the text, had the boy do two solo renderings, and then guided him through the text two more times before the next segment. She signaled the shift from scaffolded rendering to solo rendering with the Fulfulde command *Janngu* ('recite/read') and by moving her pen-holding right hand from the *alluha* to her lap (line 1).

(2) Muusa KS 2, 04:32–04:50

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| 1 | T: <i>Janngu.</i> | MOVES HAND WITH PEN FROM
<i>ALLUHA</i> TO LAP |
| | Recite/read | |
| 2 | M: Alheekum takasuru. | RUNS FINGER DOWN <i>ALLUHA</i> AT
LEFT END |
| 3 | M: Hatta kurtu min ma kabira. | RUNS FINGER DOWN <i>ALLUHA</i> AND
FURTHER TO THE RIGHT |
| 4 | T: Ooho.
Yes | |
| 5 | M: | LOOKS UP, LOOKS BACK DOWN AT
<i>ALLUHA</i> , MOVES FINGER UP
ABOUT 2 INCHES |
| 6 | T: °Kalla, | |
| 7 | M: Kalla:: | RUNS FINGER DOWN <i>ALLUHA</i> AND
FURTHER TO THE RIGHT |
| 8 | | STOPS FINGER |
| 9 | T: Ndaa do.

Here it is | POINTS WITH LEFT HAND ON
<i>ALLUHA</i> ABOVE AND LEFT OF
MUUSA'S FINGER |



- | | | | |
|----|----|---|---|
| 10 | M: | Kalla: | MOVES FINGER CLOSE TO
TEACHER'S, RUNS FINGER DOWN
<i>ALLUHA</i> |
| 11 | | | STOPS FINGER |
| 12 | T: | Kalla sawfa tala muuna. | RUNS FINGER OVER VERSE 3 |
| 13 | | | MOVES HAND TO HER LAP |
| 14 | M: | Kalla sawfa tala muuna. | RUNS FINGER OVER <i>ALLUHA</i> TO
RIGHT OF WHERE T DID |
| 15 | | | STOPS FINGER |
| 16 | T: | Ooho.
Yes | |
| 17 | | (1.0) | |
| 18 | T: | Summa kalla | RUNS FINGER OVER FIRST PART OF
VERSE 4 |
| 19 | | | MOVES HAND TO LAP |
| 20 | M: | Summa- | RUNS FINGER ABOVE AND RIGHT
OF WHERE TEACHER DID |
| 21 | | Summa kalla sa:la muuna. | RUNS FINGER OVER SAME PART OF
<i>ALLUHA</i> |
| 22 | T: | °Ooho. <i>Alheekum</i> takasuru.
Yes | RUNS PEN OVER VERSE 1 |
| 23 | M: | Alheekum takasuru. | |

While the teacher no longer took a turn to model each verse (as in [1]), there was still a verse-by-verse turn-taking structure. After Muusa produced a verse to her satisfaction, the teacher signaled her acceptance by saying 'ooho' ('yes') (lines 4, 16, 22). Other tokens of acceptance used by teachers were nodding or a loud nasal in-breath or out-breath. Such back-channeling usually diminished and finally ceased as the child's renderings

became more accurate and fluent over the course of the Modeling–Imitation phase.

As the teacher had done in the first segment, Muusa both vocalized the four verses and looked at and ran his finger over the writing on the *alluha* as he spoke. Muusa had not yet been taught to decode Arabic letters, and he did not point accurately as he recited. When the teacher provided a model of accurate pointing (lines 9, 12, 18), Muusa moved his finger closer to hers, but his pointing remained imprecise and was not corrected (further) by the teacher. While he did not point to the part of the written text that corresponded to his vocalization, Muusa’s pointing indicated an understanding of script directionality: he ran his index finger over the *al-luha* from top to bottom and moved his hand further to the right as he recited each successive verse.

Muusa had trouble reciting four times in this segment. In three instances he stopped vocalizing and stopped moving his hand over the writing (lines 8, 11, 15). By falling silent and discontinuing his manual trajectory across the *alluha*, Muusa signaled his need for assistance, and the teacher obliged (lines 9, 12, 18). In the fourth instance of trouble, Muusa broke off his vocalization and his pointing, but quickly began both again in an instance of vocal and manual self-repair (lines 20, 21). Following this segment, the pair made 14 more passes through the text, with Muusa gradually coming to recite the verses with less and less vocal and non-vocal support from the teacher until he was able to recite the whole text independently and to her satisfaction. The teacher then sent him away to practice on his own. Four weeks later Muusa recited the text to the satisfaction of his *mallum* and washed his *alluha*.

6. Participants’ perspectives on multimodal practices

Above I discussed how teacher and student used multimodal practices to coordinate their actions and attention. But language socialization research is ‘not only interested in the details of what Conversation Analysts call “local management systems”’ (Kulick and Schieffelin 2004: 351), and neither were participants in my study. In interviews and playback sessions, adults and adolescents spoke of these multimodal practices in terms of how they related to the long-term goals of Qur’anic schooling: Qur’anic literacy skills, self-discipline, and respect for and submission to God’s Word and those learned therein.

Patterns in eye gaze and pointing proved to be more than the less-than-conscious practices I had initially assumed them to be. Participants readily articulated for me the expected developmental trajectory for

pointing and looking at Qur'anic texts. A child started out not looking or pointing at his *alluha* while reciting. Later he looked at his *alluha* and used the sliding point inaccurately (as Muusa did). As he learned to read, the child looked at the written text and used the sliding point accurately while he recited. An expert reader did not need to point at the text. The bracketing point was for pedagogical purposes and was described by several people as 'more refined' than the sliding point.

In Modeling–Imitation, a child was expected to track the teacher's pointing and to look and point at the text when repeating after the teacher. Teachers encouraged children to look and point at the text during Rehearsal as well. Even children who had not yet begun to name the consonants were directed to orient to the written text on the *alluha* while practicing their recitation. Teachers did this in several ways: by pushing the child's head down, tapping on the *alluha*, and/or by explicitly commanding the child to look at or point to the written text. These practices were believed to help the child make the connection between speech and writing, an important first step toward learning to decode Arabic script. Participants also said it was important to develop the habit of orienting to the written text while reciting because in the future the child would use transcribed and eventually printed Qur'anic texts as mnemonic support for recitation.

Even if a child never learned to read, teachers said it was still important for them to point and look at the text while reciting. Like reciting at high volume during Rehearsal, pointing and looking was said to indicate focused, effortful study as well as to help the child avoid being distracted from his text. A few participants noted that it was helpful for the teacher to point to the written text when correcting even a pre-literate child because it helped the child (regain) focus on his recitation. One teacher asserted that pointing while correcting 'reminded [the child] that he must recite the Qur'an as it is written'. Thus, practices of pointing and eye gaze by teacher and student were considered both signs of and means for the development of literacy skills, self-discipline, and a sense of accountability to the text.

In the Modeling–Imitation and Performance phases of a lesson, teacher and child arranged their bodies relative to one another and the text in ways that created 'a shared, public focus for the organization of attention and action' (Goodwin 2007: 57). As Goodwin points out, such arrangements are routine in the interactive organization of apprenticeship for just this reason. In the Qur'anic school activity setting, the arrangement had greater significance to participants. Several people explained that the teacher thus provided the child with a model of the body positioning and eye gaze practices a Muslim should use when reciting, reading, or

listening to the Qur'an. In sitting bowed over the *alluha* with his legs crossed or folded under him, the child was said to be learning to show and feel submission to God's Word. The child's controlled and submissive posture was also described as an important means of developing and displaying self-discipline and respect for his teacher.

This arrangement of bodies and text embodied the asymmetric but intimate relationship between teacher and child that Fulbe explicitly valued. The teacher was said to be like a father to his students, and parents often chose teachers whom they believed were well suited to the temperament of the child: a strict disciplinarian for a disobedient child, a gentler teacher for a timid one. Participants expressed the importance of personalized, one-to-one transmission of Qur'anic knowledge by contrasting the participant structures in 'traditional' Qur'anic school with those in 'modern' Islamic educational settings, where students sat in rows of desks to receive collective instruction from a teacher standing at the front of the classroom.⁵ A few participants sent children to modern Islamic schools, but they also sent them to traditional Qur'anic schools because they believed that a child needed to participate in the latter institution to learn the Qur'an deeply (cf. Gade 2004) and to learn to be a good Muslim.

7. Conclusion

Brenner (2001) observes that the ultimate aim of Qur'anic schooling is for the child to make the Qur'an his own by committing it to memory (cf. Boyle 2006; Eickelman 1985). He goes on to say that the pedagogical methods of Qur'anic schools in West Africa

are also intended to imbue the child with a wide range of appropriately submissive postures of respect (both internal and external) toward the Holy Word and its great powers. The disciplinary régime of the Qur'anic school, about which much has been written, can be understood as integral to the aim of schooling at this early stage, which is to fuse the Holy Word into the very being of the child. The Qur'anic school is therefore a first essential phase in the creation of a Muslim subjectivity which is achieved by nurturing both specific postures of submissiveness and a specific form of consciousness. (Brenner 2001: 19)

Previous ethnographic studies of Qur'anic schooling have provided insights into this first phase by documenting and contextualizing curricula, disciplinary practices, and participants' accounts of their experiences. Throughout the Muslim world, the meaning and the power of the Qur'an are believed to be conveyed not only by its lexico-semantic content, but also by the sounds of its recitation and the forms of its inscription (Denny

1994). The Qur'an states several times that it has 'the capacity to affect human experience in the present, to remake a person, reorienting him or her to moral sensitivity, social responsibility, and an appropriate relationship to the Creator' (Gade 2004: 39), even if the person does not understand the literal meaning of the sacred text. Many researchers describe local conceptualizations of the acquisition of Qur'anic textual knowledge as a progressively transformative process and one that is fundamental to becoming Muslim. However, the details of how the process of Muslim-ing occurs in Qur'anic school contexts remain somewhat vague (cf. Kulick and Schieffelin 2004: 351–352).

Taking a language socialization approach, I have sought to illuminate the processes through which children come to function and be recognized as competent members of their Muslim community through participation in Qur'anic schooling. In addition to studying the community, the institution, and its curriculum with 'traditional' ethnographic methods, I used video to study the organization of participation, the developmental trajectories, and the significance of Qur'anic schooling. Fine-grained analysis of video recordings enabled me to identify the shifts in participation and the multimodal practices used by participants to accomplish these shifts, while video playback with community members helped me understand the meanings they assigned to these shifts and practices.

We miss much of the meaning of an interaction if we consider only the spoken discourse (Norris 2004) or only the turn-by-turn mechanics (Smart 2008). This was particularly true in my study because children were learning the Qur'an 'by rote' and much of the video data involved people using language they did not comprehend. So, while participants' speech might clearly display their understandings of prior turns, it rarely carried ideational content for the participants or, consequently, the researcher. To understand how and why the child's body and unintelligible speech were made symbolic in the Qur'anic school context, I needed to analyze more than natural discourse.⁶ The video-based methods of language socialization research were essential to recognizing how Qur'anic textual competence was defined in the community and how, over time—the curriculum, a lesson, and moment-by-moment interaction—the child developed and displayed new understandings and assumed an increasingly active, self-regulating role in Qur'anic school activities.

Video recordings made it possible to analyze the use of multiple modes, which proved to organize Fulbe children's apprenticeship into Qur'anic orality and literacy at multiple levels. The curriculum was structured in part by the successive acquisition of different modes of engagement with the text, and the phases of a lesson were differentiated and constituted by means of linguistic and nonlinguistic signs. Interaction was locally

managed through practices of body positioning, eye gaze, and pointing in conjunction with spoken and written language. Children displayed increasing competence in the rendering of Qur'anic texts by coordinating their vocal and embodied actions, initially with their teachers and later on their own.

Video playback helped me understand how and why community members relied on multiple communicative modalities to define, perform, acquire, and assess Qur'anic orality and literacy not only while engaged in Qur'anic schooling, but also when talking about it. Starrett (1995) argues that analyses of bodily practices that emphasize less-than-conscious meanings (he refers specifically to Bourdieu's [1977] notion of body hexis) are insufficient for understanding Islamic ritual and pedagogy. For Muslims, he states, 'the em-bodying of ideology is in part an explicit, public, and discursive process, not merely an unconscious and practical one' (Starrett 1995: 964), and this proved true for Maroua Fulbe. While primarily concerned with the vocal rendering of Qur'anic texts, participants spoke in detail about the bodily practices discussed above. Moreover, they described these practices as playing an important role in the development, display, and maintenance of Qur'anic literacy and its associated virtues and relationships.

Maroua Fulbe believed that Qur'anic schooling initiated in the child processes of intellectual, moral, and spiritual development that were essential to becoming a good Muslim and a good person. They understood these processes to be intertwined, mutually constitutive, and multimodal. That is, in 'rote' learning the Qur'an through aural, oral, visual, and manual modes, the child developed an understanding of and commitment to the Word of God, as well as core values of the community. My goal in delineating the practices and beliefs of the Fulbe has been to add to our understanding of Qur'anic schooling a processual account of how children come to be intelligible as (emergent) Muslim subjects in that setting.

Appendix: Transcription conventions

.	Falling intonation contour
,	Falling-rising intonation contour
◦	Talk it precedes is low in volume
::	Lengthening of immediately preceding sound
-	Sudden cut-off of current sound
=	No interval between the end of one turn and the start of the next

(1.0)	Silence, marked in seconds and tenths of seconds
()	Transcriber is uncertain about hearing of material within
<i>underlined italics</i>	Some form of emphasis (changes in pitch and/or amplitude)
SMALL CAPS	Description of nonlinguistic action

Notes

1. In this article I am concerned with what is considered by participants to be traditional Qur'anic schooling, which remains by far the dominant form in northern Cameroon despite a growing movement of 'modernization' of Islamic education.
2. My thanks to Srikant Sarangi, Laura Sterponi, and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful critiques. I am also grateful for the financial support of the National Science Foundation, the Spencer Foundation, Fulbright, and UCLA.
3. One possible way to say in Fulfulde that someone recited incorrectly was *o fewi*, 's/he did not speak the truth (knowingly or not)'.
4. According to Brenner (2001: 19), in much of Muslim West Africa religious knowledge is conceptualized as a hierarchy and the Qur'an itself as having many layers of meaning, which are 'revealed gradually as an individual progresses through successive stages of learning'.
5. Discussion of what constituted a valid form of transmission also came up when participants realized that I had memorized Qur'anic texts from my video recordings and learned their meanings from a book (Moore forthcoming).
6. For several studies of ritual unintelligibility, see the special issue of *Text & Talk* (27–4, 2007).

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