

## **Does memorization without comprehension give foreign language learners a foothold into the language?**

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Jeremias (1982) and Hakuta (1976) proposed that memorization provides the learner with language material beyond their current proficiency. That is, learners have available to them utterances which they can produce without being aware of their internal structure. Wray (2004, 2008) also found that memorization can play a role in language learning, though she notes that the real extent to which memorization leads to the general understanding of the underlying language patterns is not yet confirmed. Literature on the Chinese school practices of deliberate memorization and imitation also indicates that memorization provides a gateway to language learning (Dai and Ding 2010; Ding 2007). Research on formulaic language in general thus sees a link between memorized language and the emergence of creative language.

Muslims across the world memorize the Quran in Arabic for verbatim recall. Memorizers can be native speakers of Arabic, non-native speakers of Arabic, or non-Arabic speakers. The last category of speakers constitutes an unusual learner population, in that they cannot draw on primary linguistic knowledge to assist their memorisation. This paper will report an investigation into whether memorizing the form of a text (Quran) in an unknown language (Classical Arabic) can lead to sensitivities about and internalisation of some aspects of the language. The method of investigation was a simple sorting task, designed to establish if memorizers had sensitivity to grammatical errors in unseen Classical Arabic sentences.

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