Common Tajweed Errors

The two most common tajweed mistakes made by non-Arabs are the timings of the vowels, and medd letters, and in the articulation points of the letters. The first type of mistake has been addressed in the first of what will be, insha' Allah many tidbits; please see the tidbit lesson link. The second type of mistake, that in the letters themselves, is a major problem that needs to be addressed by all non-Arabs, whether they are Westerners, Europeans, Africans, from the Indo Pakistani subcontinent, or from Eastern Asia. At the outset, the letters that occur in Arabic that are not common in other languages would be what one would imagine to be a problem, but in fact, there are letters in Arabic that are similar to other languages, but do not share the same articulation points with their counterparts.

The letters that occur in Arabic, that are not common in other languages are:

The articulation points of all the Arabic letters will be described later, insha' Allah in a future tidbit lesson.

Letters that have similar sounds in other languages, but in fact have different articulation points are:

The first two (starting from the right), use the tip of the tongue from the top side and what lies opposite from the tip of the tongue from the gum line of the two top front incisors. Many different languages have similar letters, as in English there is "d" and "t", but they articulate these letters at a posterior position in the mouth from what the Arabs use as an articulation point. The result is an incorrect pronunciation of these letters when reading Qur'an.

The ra' and lam are two letters that non-Arabs have some difficulty in pronouncing correctly. The ra' uses the tip of the tongue and the top of the tip and the gums of the two top incisors, but the trick to the ra' is actually hitting the gum. Many Muslims try to pronounce the ra' without touching the tongue to the gum. Some mistakenly use the throat, like the French do in the French "r". The Arabic lam has the widest use of the tongue of any other letters, but uses only the end of the sides of the tongue until it ends at the tip, which then hits the gums of the front upper eight teeth.

The above are just brief summaries of the letters, and as stated before, insha' Allah soon a tidbit lesson will be posted with all the articulation points discussed in detail.

A third mistake incurred by Arabs and non-Arabs alike is in making proper stops and starts. There is more than one aspect to this mistake. The first aspect is that the proper way to stop on a word is by putting a sukoon, or absence of a vowel on the last letter of the word. It is not allowed to stop using the harakah, or vowel on the last letter of the word. The second aspect of stopping is that of stopping at a place that doesn't contradict the meaning intended by Allah, the Exalted. The same mistake can occur when starting up after stopping and taking a breath. One cannot just start on the next word arbitrarily, instead the meaning needs to be considered, and the start should be on a word that portrays the correct and complete meaning, even if the reciter needs to go back two or three words. The stop and start will be explained in detail, insha' Allah in future tidbit lessons.

One note that is of utmost importance. It is vital that the Muslim learn the Arabic letters and vowels and recite the Qur'an using them, NOT a transliteration. Transliterations do not take into account the various letters that sound similar to the untrained ear, but are very different in pronunciation. The Qur'an is the word of Allah, revealed to man as a guidance, and we have to be extremely careful to read it, as best we can, with proper pronunciation. Reading a transliteration can lead to changing the meaning of the Arabic Qur'an by mispronouncing letters.

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