291352 - Can I Read the Quran in English During Prayer?

the question

I have been a revert for 2 years now and am very dedicated to perfecting my prayer and recitation of the Quran. But as of recently I was only made aware of differences of opinion regarding praying and recitation in my first language of English, as I am not fluent in Arabic, only basic greetings and a few Dua'a. What are the correct practices and views for a non-Arabic speaking believer in terms of praying and recitation and more importantly are my previous prayers (which I have fully recited and performed in English) and recitations of the Quran invalid as I performed them In English?

Summary of answer

It is not permissible for a Muslim to recite the Quran in English during prayer. According to the majority of jurists, recitation of the Quran must be in Arabic because translations are just interpretations of the meaning of the Quran, not the actual Quran. If a Muslim cannot recite the Quran in Arabic, he must learn Al-Fatihah and other short verses. Until then, alternative phrases of Dhikr may be used as a temporary measure.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The Importance of Reciting Al-Fatihah in Arabic

What the Muslim must do is memorize Surat Al-Fatihah, because no prayer is valid without it, as is narrated in Al-Bukhari and Muslim from `Ubadah ibn as-Samit (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “There is no (accepted) prayer for the one who does not recite the Opening of the Book (Al-Fatihah).” (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 756 and Muslim, 394)

In the Hadith about the one who prayed badly, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “When you stand to pray, say Takbir [“Allahu akbar”], then recite whatever you can of the Quran.”(Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 757 and Muslim, 397)

Does a Translation of the Quran Count as the Quran?

It is not valid to recite Quran in any language other than Arabic, because when the Quran is translated, it is no longer Quran; rather it is a Tafsir (explanation) of Quran. Hence the majority of jurists are of the view that it is obligatory to recite Quran in Arabic in prayer, and that recitation is not valid except in Arabic.

The Difference of Opinion Among Scholars

This is in contrast to the view of Abu Hanifah (may Allah have mercy on him), who regarded it as valid to recite in a language other than Arabic, but his two companions – Abu Yusuf and Abu Muhammad – restricted the permissibility of doing so to one who is unable to learn Arabic.

It says in *Tabyin Al-Haqa’iq Sharh Kanz Ad-Daqa’iq* (1/110):

With regard to reciting in Farsi, it is permissible according to the view of Abu Hanifah.

Abu Yusuf and Muhammad said: It is not permissible if the person is able to recite in Arabic, because the word Quran refers to the text that was revealed in Arabic, as Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): {Indeed, We have made it an Arabic Quran} [Az-Zukhruf 43:3] and {Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an} [Yusuf 12:2]. This refers to the language of the Quran. (End quote)

Ibn Qudamah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: It is not acceptable to recite in any language other than Arabic, or to replace any of its phrases with another Arabic phrase, regardless of whether a person can recite in Arabic or not. This is the view of Ash-Shafi`i, Abu Yusuf and Muhammad.

Abu Hanifah said: That is permissible. Some of his companions said: It is only permissible for one

who does not speak Arabic. He quoted as evidence the verse in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): {And this Quran was revealed to me that I may warn you thereby and whomever it reaches} [Al-An`am 6:19]. And it is not possible to warn any people except in their own language.

Moreover, Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): {an Arabic Quran} [Yusuf 12:2] and {In a clear Arabic language} [Ash-Shu`ara' 26:195]. Moreover, the Quran is a miracle in both its wording and its meanings, and if it is changed it is no longer Quran or like Quran; rather it is a Tafsir (interpretation) of it, and if its explanation were like it, that would mean that they would be able to bring something like it, but Allah challenged them that they would not be able to bring a Surah like it.

What to Do If You Can't Recite in Arabic

If a person is unable to recite in Arabic, then he must learn, and if he does not do that when he is able to, then his prayer is not valid. If he is not able to do that or he fears that the time for the prayer will end, and he knows one verse of Al-Fatihah, then he must repeat it seven times. …

If he is not able to recite any part of it, and he has memorized anything else of the Quran, he should recite something of equivalent length, if he is able to, and it is not acceptable for him to do anything else, because of the report narrated by Abu Dawud, from Rifa`ah ibn Rafi` (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "When you stand to pray, if you know anything of the Quran, then recite it, otherwise praise Allah [say "Al-hamdu Lillah (praise be to Allah)"], proclaim His oneness [say "La ilaha illallah (None is worthy of worship but Allah)"] and magnify Him [say "Allahu akbar (Allah is Most Great)"]." That is because such words are similar to the meaning of Al-Fatihah, so that is more appropriate. And he must recite as many phrases as the number of verses of Al-Fatihah.

If he cannot recite anything of the Quran and cannot learn before the time for the prayer ends, then he must say "Subhan Allah, wal-hamdu Lillah, wa la ilaha illallah, wa Allahu akbar, wa la hawla wa quwwata illa Billah (Glory be to Allah, praise be to Allah, there is none worthy of worship

but Allah, Allah is most great, and there is no power and no strength except with Allah), because of the report narrated by Abu Dawud, who said: A man came to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and said: I cannot memorise anything of the Quran; teach me of it what will be sufficient for me. He said: “Say: ‘Subhan Allah, wal-hamdu Lillah, wa la ilaha illallah, wa Allahu akbar, wa la hawla wa quwwata illa Billah (Glory be to Allah, praise be to Allah, there is ne worthy of worship but Allah, Allah is most great, and there is no power and no strength except with Allah).’” The man said: This is for Allah; what is there for me? He said: “Say: ‘Allahumm ighfir li, warhamni, warzuqni, wahdini, wa `afini (O Allah, forgive me, have mercy on me, grant me provision, guide me and pardon me).’” (End quote from *Al-Mughni*, 1/350)

With regard to reciting more than Al-Fatihah, it is not obligatory.

With regard to the Takbir (saying “Allahu akbar (Allah is most great)”) , Tasbih (saying “Subhan Allah (Glory be to Allah)”) and Tashahhud (the words recited when sitting in the prayer), it is obligatory to learn these words and recite them in Arabic; if one is not able to do that, that he may recite them in his own language, according to the majority of jurists.

What About Past Prayers Recited in English?

With regard to what you have been doing of praying and reciting Quran in English, there is the hope that you will be rewarded for it and will not be blamed for it, because you were unaware of the ruling, and taking into account the view of those scholars who regard it is valid to recite in a language other than Arabic.

But from now on, you have to stop reciting Quran in prayer in any language other than Arabic, and you must learn Al-Fatihah and some short Surahs or verses that you are able to learn, and recite them in your prayer.

There is no reason why you should not read a translation of the meanings of the Quran outside of prayer; in fact you should do that, so as to increase your understanding and gain knowledge.

For more details, please refer to the following answers: 125619, 308392, 149319, 262254, 20953

And Allah knows best.