THE TRANSFORMATION FROM ORALITY TO LITERACY: STUDYING THE
EFFECT OF ORALITY IN AL-JAHIZ’S *AL-BAYAN WA AL-TABYEEN*.

A Dissertation
Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Faiz Saleh Alasmari

August 2022
THE TRANSFORMATION FROM ORALITY TO LITERACY: STUDYING THE EFFECT OF ORALITY IN AL-JAHIZ’S *AL-BAYAN WA AL-TABYEEN*.

By

Faiz Saleh Alasmari

Approved July 15, 2022
ABSTRACT

THE TRANSFORMATION FROM ORALITY TO LITERACY: STUDYING THE EFFECT OF ORALITY IN AL-JAHIZ’S AL-BAYAN WA AL-TABYEEN.

By
Faiz Alasmari
August 2022

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Anthony M. Wachs.

The transition from orality to literacy is the focus of this dissertation. Studying orality and literacy in Western Academic scholarship focuses on the transitional phase (transition from orality to literacy) of the Western transitional. This project widens the focus of the transitional phase and analyzes the transitional phase of the old traditional Arabic culture. The dissertation analyzes both oral and transitional phases of the old Arabic culture. It studies the unique characteristics of these two phases (oral and transitional). Isnad was the main feature of the Arabic transitional phase. Isnad is a chain of narrators who convey sayings. Every narrator in this human chain should be reliable and creditable. Unlike narration known in the primary oral cultures, isnad conveys literate knowledge in the time of orality. Al-Jahiz’s Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen is a book that is studied to find out the characteristics and the boundaries of the transitional phase. The project seeks to determine the characteristics of the transitional phase as a
phase that is not only a bridge between orality and literacy through studying the transitional phase of the Arabic culture and analyzing one of the transitional works, namely *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*.
DEDICATION

To Saleh Alasmari and N Nehaiah Alasmari, my parents

To Fatema Alasmari, my wife

To Saleh and Watan, my children
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to acknowledge the people who helped me to make this dissertation. Their supports were generous and great. The first person who has the main and biggest role in making this dissertation is Dr. Anthony M. Wachs. Dr. Wachs’ comments and guidance facilitated the way for this dissertation. His consistence encouragement and support helped me to overcome many difficulties.

In addition, the prayers, wisdom, and encouragement of Saleh Alasmari and Nehaiah Alasmari, my parents, helped me to deal with the difficulties that I faced during the writing of my dissertation. They were the side that assisted me to balance several important aspects of my life besides writing the dissertation.

I must thank Fatema Alasmari, my wife. Her role in my life resulted in many achievements. One of them is making this dissertation a reality. She insisted to live with me overseas and rejected several opportunities that could improve her future. She left everything behind to provide me with the most comfortable atmosphere during my journey to the Ph.D.

Also, I want to thank the community of the Communication and Rhetorical Studies for their aim during the past four years. The faculty of the department provided me with advice that improve my research ability. What I gained during these four years in my journey in the Ph.D. is beyond what I imagined.
# Table of Contents

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................................... v
DEDICATION........................................................................................................................................ vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS...................................................................................................................... viii

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 1
   The Old Traditional Arabic Culture and the Study of Orality and Literacy ......................... 1
   Orality, Literacy, Philosophy of Communication, rhetoric, and Media Ecology ................ 10
   The Statement of Problem and the Questions of the Project .................................................... 17
   The Divisions of the Project ............................................................................................................. 30

Chapter One: Orality and Literacy in Traditional Arabic Culture ................................................... 36
   General Introduction to the Ignorant Age .................................................................................... 37
      Orality in the Arabian Peninsula in the Ignorant Age .............................................................. 47
      Writing in the Ignorant Age ...................................................................................................... 59
   Islam and Literacy ......................................................................................................................... 66
   The Spread of Writing and the Beginning of the Authorship ..................................................... 81
   Summary ........................................................................................................................................ 90

Chapter two: Al-Jahiz’s Life, Works, and Philosophy .................................................................... 93
   Al-Jahiz’s Historical Moment ......................................................................................................... 94
      The Al-Mu’tazilah School of Islam ............................................................................................. 99
   Al-Jahiz’s Life ............................................................................................................................... 104
   Al-Jahiz’s Works and Philosophy ............................................................................................... 108
   Al-Jahiz thought About the Impact of Orality and Literacy on People: ................................ 121
   Summary ....................................................................................................................................... 126

Chapter Three: The Impact of Orality and Literacy on the People’s Life .................................... 128
   Media Ecology ............................................................................................................................... 129
   Orality and Literacy ...................................................................................................................... 133
      Sound vs Sight ............................................................................................................................ 135
      Oral Memory ............................................................................................................................. 141
      Rhetoric ..................................................................................................................................... 145
   Transition from Orality to Literacy ............................................................................................... 150
   Summary ....................................................................................................................................... 155

Chapter Four: Thought, Knowledge, and the Medium of Communication ............................... 158
   Knowledge, the Medium of Communication, and the Characteristics of the Human Beings’ Thoughts and Expressions ..................................................................................... 160
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consciousness and Unconsciousness</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain and Language</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge, Thought, and Language</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isnad: Literate Knowledge in the oral Phase</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Literate Person in an Oral Culture</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five: Art of Orality and the Art of Literacy: Rhetoric and Eloquence</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Introduction to Al-Jahiz’s Theory of Rhetoric in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification and its Importance</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silence</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flaws of Speech</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significations and Meanings</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orator</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accordance</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orality and Literacy in Al-Jahiz’s Theory of Rhetoric</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Six: The Style of Al-Jahiz’s Authoring</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Introduction to Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Structure of Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Division and the system of Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redundancy and Digression</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isnad and Citation</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Thought vs. Analytic Thought</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Style of Language of Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Formulaic Language</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Words and Expression</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agonistic Language</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive Language</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Cited</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Orality and literacy are discussed by many scholars. This project hopes to find a place between their works although I know, as a student and at the beginning of my research life, what I will write cannot be compared to their contribution. However, in this dissertation, I try to look at orality and literacy from Arabic culture and attempt to find out what is unique in this culture that can add to orality and literacy. The question is what is the importance of using orality and literacy to study Arabic works?

The Old Traditional Arabic Culture and the Study of Orality and Literacy

Orality and literacy open researchers’ eyes to a new way to see and study the literature, society, and life of the oral and literate societies and cultures. Orality and literacy offer a new way of understanding the intellectual movements and thoughts of oral and literate cultures, the difference between orality and literacy, the difference between oral and literate people, and the importance of the dissertation.

Orality and literacy are used as a method to understand the mind and the behavior of oral and literate people which lead to knowing the causes that contribute to forming oral or literate cultures. This understanding is important because it leads to a better understanding of these kinds of cultures and societies. There are different factors that shape and form cultures, societies, and thoughts. One of them is the medium of communication that a certain culture or society uses as a main medium of communication. Walter J. Ong divides cultures into three types of cultures which are oral or oral-aural, script, and electronic (The Presence 17). However, in several works, Ong focused on orality and writing. The importance of the study of the history of the word itself with relationship to the history of communication is to see the “relationship of man to man, of
man to society, of man to his entire life-world, which includes his religious state, in new and refreshing detail” (15). For him, “by communications we understand here not simply new gimmicks enabling man to “contact” his fellows but, more completely, the person’s means of entering into the life and consciousness of others and thereby into his own life” (15). In this sense, orality and literacy do not only help to reveal some unique aspects about oral and literate societies and cultures, but they also show the reasons and the logical causes of the characteristics of those cultures and societies. They answer the “why” question about what can be seen as acceptable or logical. That means that there is a relationship between knowledge and the medium of communication that is used to produce and transform this knowledge. Harold Innis emphasizes that using a certain medium of communication over a long time determines the character of the knowledge that is communicated. For him, the emergence of a new medium will lead to the emergence of a new civilization (34). For this, he points to the importance of studying the characteristics of the medium of communication because it “has an important influence on the dissemination of knowledge over space and overtime” (33). In short, there is a link between the medium of communication (or the technology of communication) and the kind of knowledge. And to find the difference between gaining knowledge orally or literately, it is important to study both orality and literacy.

In academic research, orality and literacy are mentioned together to explain each other in which the realization of the characteristics of orality can be seen clearly when it is compared to literacy. “A deeper understanding of pristine or primary orality enables us better to understand the new world of writing, what it truly is, and what functionally literate human beings really are” (Orality and Literacy 78). In fact, there is no scholar who discusses orality without mentioning literacy and vice versa. To explain the oral societies and cultures, Ong explains the
characteristics of the literate societies. For example, he mentions that “[o]ral communication unites people in groups. Writing and reading are solitary activities that throw the psyche back on itself” (*Orality and Literacy* 69). The books about orality and literacy are written for literate people. For this, the existence of literacy in describing orality is important because it shows the readers the difference between the way of thinking that they use as literate and the way of thinking that oral people always use. Using orality and literacy as a method to study a culture helps to find reasons and answer for several issues and questions with a respect to other disciplines such as anthropology.

Orality and literacy are used for several purposes such as studying societies, literature, and cultures. They study several aspects that relates to the thought produced by the human mind and the behavior of human beings in a certain society and culture. For example, Leonard Shlain in his *The Alphabet versus the Goddess: The Conflict between Word and Image* focuses on the status of women in the oral ages and the literate ages. For him, the change made in the women’s status causes by the emergence of the alphabet. Ong mentions that “[i]n an oral culture, restriction of words to sound determines not only modes of expression but also thought processes” (*Orality and Literacy* 33). In *The Presence of the Word*, Ong points to orality and literacy as dimensions beyond the socioeconomic explanations to account for which can be used to look at the overt hostilities of earlier cultures (200). This points to the importance of studying orality and literacy of the traditional and some modern cultures which leads to understand how people think.

The realization of the difference between orality and literacy leads to the realization of the difference between oral people and literate people. Walter J. Ong in the *Orality and Literacy* describes the effects of the hearing and reading on people, he writes:
Because in its physical constitution as sound, the spoken word proceeds from the human interior and manifests human beings to one another as conscious interiors, as persons, the spoken word forms human beings into close-knit groups. When a speaker is addressing an audience, the members of the audience normally become a unity, with themselves and with the speaker. If the speaker asks the audience to read a handout provided for them, as each reader enters into his or her own private reading world, the unity of the audience is shattered, to be re-established only when oral speech begins again. Writing and print isolate. There is no collective noun or concept for readers corresponding to ‘audience’ (74).

This points to the importance of the appropriateness of the medium of communication for the audience. Also, it implies the impact of each medium on the audience. Studying the impact of the medium of communication on a specific author or person can be used as a key to understand him/her.

What is mentioned above is about the importance of orality and literacy for academic research. However, what remains is to explain the importance of the project. Focusing on the study of the transformation from orality to literacy (writing) is important for several reasons. First, it shows how long and why orality impacts the cultures and societies although cultures and societies adopted writing. Second, this focus opens researchers’ eyes to the unconscious change that the writing made. Third, by focusing on the transformation from orality to literacy, one can be aware of the need to transform from literacy to electronic. Fourth, it shows the importance of studying orality and literacy of different cultures to this field, such as Arabic orality and literacy. Finally, the focus on this transformation helps to understand how the early literate people understand and realize the difference between listening/speaking and reading/writing and the impact of them on people and society, such as Al-Jahiz. Literacy indicates to writing and printing. The importance for the project is to focus on the shift from orality to writing.

To study the impact of the transformation from orality to literacy, this project seeks to focus only on the transformation from orality to writing without mentioning print. To do so, this
project chooses to study the transformation from orality to writing in old traditional Arabic culture for several reasons. First, there is not enough research on this field in Arabic academic studies. Second, the majority, if not all, of oral Arabic traditions were collected and written when Arabs began to learn how to write and read. Third, today, people are speaking the same language that was spoken in oral time. This point is important because researchers can notice the change that made in the language and the formulas oral language. Fourth, the language of the Qur’an, the Islamic holy book, is Arabic which means the Arabic language became holy, too. The change in the sacred language is not easy. Qur’an has ways of reading: publicly, loudly, such as in praying (Muslims pray five times a day and read Qur’an from memory); and privately. In the latter way of reading the Qur’an, there are two ways, reading it from memory and from Mushaf (a written or printed scripture). Finally, studying the transformation from orality to writing in Arabic culture opens researchers’ eyes to other aspects of orality and literacy. In Arabic culture, there are some issues that emerged only in this culture such as Isnad and Sanad. Sanad is a list of authorities who have transmitted a report of a statement, action, or approbation of prophet Muhammad, of one of his Companions, or of a later authority; its reliability determines the validity of a hadith. Although Sanad is known for hadith (Prophet Muhammad’s statement, action, or approbation), it is used in literature and history. Sanad has its own purpose which would be explained in the dissertation. Studying the shift from orality to literacy requires an example such as a book written in that phase.

To study the transformation from orality to writing in Arabic culture, the project focuses on Al-Jahiz’s Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen for several reasons. First, Al-Jahiz is known as an Arab author who spent his life in reading and writing. He wrote in zoology, literature, theology, psychology, etc. That means that writing and reading are the main part of his life. Second, in his
early life, he learned by hearing and reading. According to Muhammad Obaid Allah, Al-Jahiz, in his early life, depends on orality to gain his knowledge. In Al-Basra, he learned by listening to well-known scholars. In addition, he learned eloquence from Arabs whose their Arabic language is considered pure. The long experience with learning by listening led him to have his own way of narration (20). “His own way of narration” indicates a complex issue or approach that would be explained in the project. Third, Al-Jahiz was aware of the change made by writing on people’s way of thinking and expressing as he shows in his *Al-Hayawan* (Animal) and in *Tham Akhlaq Al-Kuttanb* (Condemning the Ethics of Writers). For example, in *Al-Hayawan*, he mentions that a human cannot know until he listens frequently and should read more than listen (1: 55). In addition, in the same book, he states that if you read books, you will gain a long joy, form your own character, become a good eloquent and writer, and gain a good attitude in the public and respect from kings. In addition, you will learn in a month what you cannot learn by listening in a year (1: 51). Fourth, in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, Al-Jahiz focuses on some literary genres that were known, in Arabic culture, as oral genres such as poetry and rhetoric. Fifth, in the time of Al-Jahiz, the storytelling, collecting oral stories, compositions, debates, translation flourished (Obaid Allah 18). According to the five reasons, Al-Jahiz who lives in an era of the beginning of the dissemination of writing and reading and who gain his knowledge by both listening and reading can be a good case to see and study the transformation from orality to literacy in Arabic culture. This project tries to find place between works that analyze Al-Jahiz’s theories, philosophies, and works.

*Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is one of the greatest books in Arabic culture. Ibn Khaldun, an Arab sociologist, philosopher, and historian, mentions that the basic principles and pillars of rhetoric discipline are four works: *Adab Al-katib* by Ibn Qutaybah, *Al-Kamil* by Al-Mubarrad,
Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen by Al-Jahiz, and Al-Nawadir by Abu ‘Ali Al-Qali Al-Baghdadi. All other books depend on these four and are derived from them. The works of recent writers on the subject are numerous (Ibn Khaldun v3 340). Despite its importance and hundreds of books and academic papers written about Al-Jahiz and his works, there are not adequate research focused on his rhetoric. The majority of the works discuss only part of his rhetorical theory.

The works discuss Al-Jahiz’s rhetorical theory can be divided into two categories. The works in the first category are works that discuss Al-Jahiz’s rhetoric in the context of focusing on rhetoric in his era. Some of these works analyze his rhetoric in a separate chapter such as Al-Asr Al-‘Abbasi Al-Thani [The Second Abbasid Era] by Shawqy Daif. In part three of Daif’s book, the author discusses Al-Jahiz as a writer in the second chapter. This chapter begins by describing Al-Jahiz’s early life and education. Then Daif focuses on Al-Jahiz’s intellectual life and his relationship with well-known politicians and scholars. After this introduction, the author moves to describe Al-Jahiz’s writing and works. In fact, Daif states explicitly his purpose of discussing Al-Jahiz. His intention is not to focus on Al-Jahiz but to show only some of the debates, stories, and letters that he mentioned in his works (596). In sum, Daif’s book is to describe Al-Jahiz’s life and works more than studying them. In addition, there is another book written by Daif and discusses Al-Jahiz which is Al-Fan wa Mathahebuh fi Al-Nathr Al-‘Arabi [The Art and its Schools in the Arabic Prose]. In this book, Daif discusses Al-Jahiz in two chapters. In chapter six of part three, Daif focuses on Al-Jahiz’s early and intellectual life. The title of chapter seven indicates the way of analyzing Al-Jahiz. The title is “Jahizian Style: Realism, Digression, Sound Coloring, and Mental Coloring” (160). Sound coloring means changing the style of writing depending on the purpose of writing and the audience. Also, mental coloring indicates that Al-Jahiz wrote about every discipline at that time. Daif mentions that Al-Jahiz wrote about every
general topic, either a book or a letter. He wrote about plants, animals, human beings, people’s life, seriousness, humor, white people, black people, teachers, slavery, children, love, wine, religion, literature, thieves, miserliness, etc. (161). In sum, the chapter analyzes Al-Jahiz’s writing depending on the topics mentioned in the title.

However, the second kind of discussing Al-Jahiz rhetorical theory, which is under the first category, does not focus on Al-Jahiz’s theory. These kinds of books analyze traditional Arabic rhetoric and use multiple theories to support their claims. One of the books written in this way is Al-Khataba: Ausolha-Tareekha fi Azhr ‘Asorha ‘end Al-Arab [Rhetoric: Its Origins and History in its most Flourishing Era in Arabs]. By Muhammad Abu-Zuhrah. In this book, Abu-Zuhrah discusses the rule of rhetoric in Arabic culture. One of the chapters is about the difference between oral and written rhetoric. In this chapter, Abu-Zuhrah does not use orality and literacy theory to analyze the two kinds of rhetoric. He depends on his understanding of the difference between these two kinds of rhetoric. However, books in this category discuss Al-Jahiz’s rhetoric in a traditional way which means that they do not use a theory or a school of thought but depend on the authors’ way of understanding the text.

Most of the works of the second category focus on part of Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric. For example, Mafhom Al-Sorah fi Ketab Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen ‘end Al-Jahiz [The Concept of Image in the Book of Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen of Al-Jahiz] by Muhammad Al-‘Annaz focus on the concept of rhetorical image. This concept is an Arabic concept and is used with literature. In traditional Arabic literature, rhetorical image is analogy, metaphor, and metonymy. However, Al-‘Annaz’s work traces rhetorical images in Al-Jahiz’s Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen. Although the title of the book seems similar to works that analyze Al-Jahiz in a traditional method, this book focuses on an aspect that traditional researchers do not focus on which is the context of the
rhetorical image. However, another book that looks at part of Al-Jahiz’s rhetoric is *Al-Ab’ad Al-Kalamiah wa Al-Falsafiah fi Al-Fikr Al-Balagy wa Al-Naqdy ’end Al-Jahiz* [*Verbal and Philosophical dimensions in the rhetorical and critical thought of Al-Jahiz*] by Abdulhakeem Rady. Rady’s Analysis of Al-Jahiz’s rhetoric is not to study his rhetoric but to find out his philosophy of creating the rules of his own rhetorical theory.

In fact, analyzing every book written about Al-Jahiz’s rhetoric would take more than what is needed in this project. The majority of the works analyze his commentaries, critical, and rhetorical thought. The most important works in this category are *Al-Bayan Al-‘Arabi men Al-Jahiz ela Abdulaqaher* [*Arabic eloquence from Al-Jahiz to Abdulaqaher*] (1932) by Taha Huseen, *Al-Naqd Al-Manhajy ’end Al-Jahith* [*The Systematic Criticism of Al-Jahiz*] (1960) by Dawood Saloom, and *Mfaheem Al-jamaliah wa Al-Naqd fi Adab Al-Jahiz* [*The concepts of aesthetic and Criticism in Al-Jahiz’s Literature*] (1974) by Mishal ‘Asi. In fact, works on Al-Jahiz’s rhetoric cannot be counted in this introduction. But the most important work about Al-Jahiz’s rhetoric for this project is what analyzes Al-Jahiz’s work from the theory of orality and literacy.

There is only one work that analyzes Al-Jahiz’s work from the theory of orality and literacy. The work is “Al-W’ay be Al-Shefaheyat wa Al-Ketabiat E’nd Al-Arab: Qera’a fi Musanafat Al-Jahiz [Arabs Consciousness of Oral and Written culture: A Reading in the Al-Jahiz’s Writing] by Muhammad Obaid Allah.” It is a journal academic article and was published in *Hawleyat Al-Adab wa Al-Olum Al-Ejtema’iah* [*Annals of Lores and Social Sciences*] in 2014. In this article, Obaid Allah does not focus only on rhetoric but on Al-Jahiz’s works. Al-Jahiz’s works are more than three hundred books. This means that focusing on all these works in an article cannot lead to an accurate conclusion. Some of Al-Jahiz’s works are more than one
volume such as *Al-Hayawan* (seven volumes) and *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* (4 volumes).

However, the article focuses on several issues related to orality and literacy such as oral rhetoric, written letters, calligraphy, sound and silence, etc. However, one of the main differences between the article and this project is that the project focuses only on Al-Jahiz’s *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* and its main topic Al-Jahiz’s rhetorical theory.

The project is guided by three disciplines: philosophy of communication, rhetorical theory, and media ecology. It is a trying to read Al-Jahiz from a new and different perspective. By focusing only on *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, the project hope to add to orality and literacy in which *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is about oral rhetoric and written by one who realizes the difference between oral literary genres and written literary genres, as explained later in this introduction.

**Orality, Literacy, Philosophy of Communication, rhetoric, and Media Ecology.**

The project uses rhetoric, philosophy of communication, and media ecology to deepen our understanding of traditional Arabic culture (early Arabic orality and literacy). Al-Jahiz is the model that this project brings to analyze. Al-Jahiz is one of the first authors in Arabic culture. His awareness of the impact of writing and the difference between listening/speaking and reading/writing, as explained later in this introduction, makes his works appropriate for this study. In this section, there are two meanings of the connection between this project and rhetoric, philosophy of communication, and media ecology. The first meaning indicates the link between orality and literacy, in general, to rhetoric, philosophy of communication, and media ecology. The second meaning is the link between Arabic orality/literacy and rhetoric, philosophy of communication, and media ecology. The second meaning can lead to discussing the characteristic of the Arabic language which this section will try to not go deep into this issue due
to its complexity. The mention of Arabic language in this section is due to the strong connection between rhetoric, Arabic language, and orality and literacy.

In the beginning, it is obvious that rhetoric is part of orality and literacy. It was practiced in the oral cultures and literate culture and even in this age. Ferdinand de Saussure had called attention to the primacy of oral speech, which underpins all verbal communication, as well as to the persistent tendency, even among scholars, to think of writing as the basic form of language. For him, writing is a kind of complement to oral speech, not as a transformer of verbalization (Orality and Literacy 5). However, the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy of communication began from this point which links philosophy to rhetoric. Pat Gehrke positions philosophy of communication alongside the evolution of existential philosophy from the 1950s to the mid1970s, an era characterized by philosophy’s renewed interest in rhetoric (81). Pat Arneson mentions that philosophy, poetic, and rhetoric are joined in one’s daily experience (Arneson 2007). The project needs this connection in which it uses both rhetoric and philosophy of communication to analyze Al-Jahiz’s Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen.

Before showing the connection between orality and literacy and rhetoric, it is important to begin this section by clarifying the relationship between orality and literacy and philosophy of communication. In fact, philosophy of communication inspires this project. In Philosophies of Communication: Implications for Everyday Experience, Melissa Cook and Annette Holba state that communication occurs within tradition, a rationality of existence, a particular social order, between the individual and the community (xvii). In this definition, there is an assertion on tradition, social order, individual, and the community. This assertion meets one of the purposes of the project, in particular, and orality and literacy, in general. The project is a trying to understand Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen according to the datum and the situation of Al-Jahiz’s age.
By doing so, this project will contribute to orality and literacy in two ways. First, it can show the features of Arabic orality and literacy and the difference between them and the orality and literacy that is focused on by most Western scholars. Second, the project can show new issues for both orality and literacy, such as *Isnad*. Moreover, the emphasizing of philosophy of communication on the importance of historical moments makes another strong link between this project and philosophy of communication.

Philosophy of communication points to the importance of “historical moments.” In fact, historical moments are a pillar for philosophy of communication. Historical moments are the “communicative dwellings” that allow for an engagement with texts consistent with philosophical hermeneutics (Arnett and Holba 35). Arnett and Holba mention that philosophical hermeneutics unites three coordinates -the interpreter, the text, and the historical moment (85). And this is what this project needs. Al-Jahiz *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is a historical text (written in the ninth century), and orality and literacy is a modern method. The project is a trying to find out what can be inferred from Al-Jahiz work and contribute to orality and literacy. Ronald Arnett and Annette Holba assert the importance of doing philosophy historically. For them, “[i]n doing philosophy historically, one meets earlier thinkers in a given context and time, seeking to understand the questions they sought to answer” (37). Studying Al-Jahiz’s *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* through orality and literacy is a way to understand both the text and Al-Jahiz. “The discovery of meaning carried from one historical moment to the next permits novel interpretations and re interpretations of previous events that live in current perceptual memory” (43). Therefore, this project is a way to give *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* a new life in the modern era. This new understanding can be connected to rhetoric.
The connection between orality and literacy and rhetoric is central to this project. The main topic for *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyen* is rhetoric. Through rhetoric in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyen*, this project seeks to study the transformation from orality to literacy, sees the unique oral issues in Arabic culture, and answers “why” and “how” questions related to this transformation. However, the connection between orality and literacy and rhetoric is made by Marshall McLuhan. Anthony Wachs in his *The New Science of Communication: Reconsidering McLuhan’s Message for Our Modern Moment* explains McLuhan’s connection between the tradition of trivium and technologies and communication media:

> The tradition of the trivium and the relationship between each of its arts has been intimately connected to the growth of different technologies and communication media. In summary, grammar and rhetoric ruled over dialectic and provided balance within the trivium from the time of the ancient Greeks until the Protestant Reformation (11).

The trivium consists of three arts: rhetoric, grammar, and dialectic. Later in his book, Wachs mentions three types of logos related to the three arts: rhetoric is related to orality (or spoken word); grammar is related to literacy (or writing); and dialectic is related to the inner word as thought (99). This is a general connection between technologies and communication media, on one hand, and rhetoric, on another hand, which is part of the trivium. In addition to this connection, rhetoric is considered, according to Al-Jahiz’s rhetorical theory, an oral literary genre which indicates a connection between the project and rhetoric.

> The relationship between orality and literacy and rhetoric can be seen from the impact of orality and literacy on rhetoric and literature, in general, especially in the transformation from orality to literacy. “The shift from orality to literacy registers in many genres of verbal art” (*Orality and Literacy* 139). An example of that is from Arabic culture. There are different literary genres that emerged after the shift from orality to literacy such as *Maqamat* and *Al-Mowashahat*. The word “Magamt” cannot be translated. However, it is a short story that has a
teller, and its hero is a degenerate and beggar. One of its purposes is to criticize or mock. And its style depends on verbal ornamentation (Al-Jarrah 12). *Al-Mowashhat* is a kind of poetry and has its own metrics, topics, and purposes that are different than the Arabic traditional poetry known in the oral Arabic age. The main topic for Al-Jahiz’s *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is rhetoric. At that time in Arabic culture, rhetoric is an oral literary genre. It is a written lesson for a traditional oral performance. In sum, *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* may show Al-Jahiz’s awareness of the difference between written and oral literary genres.

Literature is used as a tool to reveal the difference between orality and literacy. According to Ong, “[t]he greatest awakening to the contrast between oral modes of thought and expression and written modes took place not in linguistics, descriptive or cultural, but in literary studies ...” (*Orality and Literacy* 6). In fact, rhetoric plays an important to show the difference between orality and literacy. Ong mentions that the root of rhetoric is oral. For him, in Greece, rhetor means public speaker (109). This root of rhetoric can be the justification for neglecting rhetoric in the Enlightenment when literacy began to disseminate. In fact, the relation between rhetoric and orality is not merely a relationship in one or two aspects. Rhetoric is almost everything in oral eras. For example, “In primary oral cultures, even business is not business: it is fundamentally rhetoric. Purchasing something at a Middle East souk or bazaar is ... a series of verbal (and somatic) maneuvers, a polite duel, a contest of wits, an operation in oral agonistic” (68). In short, rhetoric cannot be avoided in academic research that use orality and literacy approach. This strong connection can be seen also when one discusses the connection between orality and literacy, Arabic rhetoric, and Islam.

Arabic culture considers oral literary genres its highest feature. In this culture, rhetoric is not merely literature, but also sacred. *Qur’an* is a kind of rhetoric. *Qur’an* was not written during
the life of the prophet Muhammad. During the life of the prophet Muhammad, *Qur’an* was memorized and spoken from memory. Moreover, even in these days, in praying (Muslims pray five times a day and should memorize some *Qur’an* verses to read them in the praying), no Muslim read *Qur’an* from *Mushaf* (a written scripture), but from memory. In addition, in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, Al-Jahiz focused on rhetoric and issues relate to rhetoric such as silence, voice, sound, holding a cane, psychological and physiological issues, etc. For me, one of the most important connections between orality and literacy and rhetoric is that in the early writing age, words and rhetoric became a science that has its own rules and bases, but in the oral age, rhetoric and words were mostly used for entertainment. However, in the twentieth century, rhetoric does not point only to the oral genre. It has a different shape.

The project studies rhetoric in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* with the respect to two meanings of rhetoric: the traditional meaning and the modern and postmodern meaning. “After the classical period, the bounds of rhetoric expanded, until today they encompass virtually all forms of discourse and symbolic communication.” (Bizzell and Herzberg 2). That means that rhetoric is not only a genre of literature but also a type of communication, as a field. In fact, rhetoric, in modernity and postmodernity, encompasses several academic fields and is studied many fields. Ferdinand de Saussure developed semiology as a study of arbitrary signs devoid of inherent meaning. Independent of Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce laid the groundwork for American pragmatism. He understood semiotics as in line with the trivium, composed of grammar (“conditions of meaning”), logic (“conditions of truth”), and rhetoric (“relations among signs”) (Mancino 13). In this sense, studying rhetoric of Al-Jahiz by a modern method may lead to two results: a new way of understanding Al-Jahiz’s rhetoric and an additional contribution to the
theory of orality and literacy. This contribution is not a contribution of this theory but also to media ecology.

This project has a strong link to media ecology. In fact, both orality and literacy are media communications which is the focus of media ecology. Richard L. West and Lynn H. Turner define media ecology as the study of media, technology, and communication and how they affect human environments (West and Turner 454). The definition implies a connection between media ecology and rhetoric in which rhetoric, as mentioned above, is part of communication. However, in terms of media communications, Walter J. Ong, who consider by Media Ecology Association a media ecologist, divides cultures into three stages: oral or oral-aural, script, and electronic (The Presence of the Word 17). The first two stages are the focus of the project. In The Presence of the Word and Orality and Literacy, Ong details and describes each stage. He focuses on the impact of orality and literacy on people’s way of thinking and expressing. Ong does not only focus on the impact of orality and literacy on individuals but also on the culture and society. Media ecology asserts the link between forming the human mind and media communications. “Our minds and lives are shaped by our total experience ... and a name for this experience is communication. If one tries to examine society as a form of communication, one sees it as a process whereby reality is created, shared, modified, and preserved” (Carey 33). In sum, media ecology is the heart of this project.

In short, philosophy of communication, rhetorical theory, and media ecology guide this project. By using orality and literacy method, this project hopes to point to a new way of understanding orality and literacy (the shift from orality to literacy). To achieve this goal, the project points to some problems and asks questions that it seeks to answer.
The Statement of Problem and the Questions of the Project

This section focuses on what the project can add to orality and literacy through answering questions relates to the transformation from orality to literacy, respectfully through analysis of Al-Jahiz’s thought. To do this, the project focuses on the orality and literacy of Arabic culture for the reasons mentioned above. Orality and literacy of old traditional Arabic culture have their own unique features which may lead to finding out other characteristics of orality and literacy. There are some issues that mentioned in the previous sections such as Isnad and Sanad in Arabic oral age and Maqamat and Al-Mowashahat in the early writing age.

One of the important issues for the project is to find answers to questions related to the transformation from orality to writing. Scholars who contribute to orality and literacy do not write on the impact of writing without mentioning printing. Innis states that “[t]he discovery of printing in the middle of the fifteenth century implied the beginning of a return to a type of civilization dominated by the eye rather than ear” (138). The project is to focus on the impact of writing only and to answer that why does not writing, before the emergence of printing, impact cultures and thoughts as the effect of printing on them? The answer to this question is given by Walter J. Ong, Harold Innis, etc. One of the questions of the project is to ask about the need of the print to have issues and thought such as individualism. It is a question about their answers. The focus of this project on the shift from orality to writing is a trying to pay more attention to this important transformation and determines the reasons of the need of the print to have a greater impact on people’s way of living and thinking. In fact, the shift from orality to writing and then to print is not an easy and quick task. It requires a long time and spread of written knowledge.
One of the important issues that the project is aware of is the difficulty of the shift from orality to literacy. This difficulty may be triggered by a long time of orality. “Human society first formed itself with the aid of oral speech, becoming literate very late in its history, and at first only in certain groups” (Orality and Literacy 2). This means that cultures and stories were formed for a long time depending on the oral characteristics. To reform these cultures according to writing is not an easy task, is not an immediate transformation, and is not a conscious process. It is important and effortless to understand that oral societies and cultures mean that a dominant communication media for the members of these societies and cultures is oral. And literate societies and cultures indicate that a dominant communication media for the members of these societies and cultures is reading, writing, speaking, and listening. In short, if society or culture is formed by a certain communication media, it is not possible or at least difficult to shift the thoughts of the society or culture according to the characteristics of another communication media. Ong states that “[w]e ... are so literate that it is very difficult for us to conceive of an oral universe of communication or thought except as a variant of a literate universe” (2). It is all about the way of forming the thought.

The question is that when can one be described as oral or literate? Does knowing how to write and read make one a literate? Or there are other aspects one should know, understand, and experience. For Ong, “[o]ral formulaic thought and expression ride deep in consciousness and the unconscious, and they do not vanish as soon as one used to them takes pen in hand ... Early written poetry everywhere, it seems, is at first necessarily a mimicking in script of oral performance” (Orality and Literacy 26). Ong answers the second question. However, the first question is one of the important questions for the project. However, the issue begins by discussing thought; how do people think and what is kind of thought they have?
It seems that the issue is by what thoughts are formed because thoughts are responsible to shape cultures, societies, and opinions. Ong provides a close look at the process of writing. For him, writing reshapes thought. It shifts the language into grapholect which is formed “by a deep commitment to writing” (Orality and Literacy 7-8). “A deep commitment to writing” means that a literate person uses writing as the main communication medium to convey knowledge. In this sense, in an oral culture, Ong mentions that restriction of words to sound determines both the modes of expression and thought processes (33). In fact, expression and thought cannot be separated. There is no expression if there is no thought. For this, if one’s thought is built by reading, his expression can be described as literate. Ong focuses on writing more than reading although writing cannot be achieved without reading. In addition, reading is the way to have knowledge and information. The question is that if a literate person gains his knowledge only through listening and conveys what he learned by writing, does this impact his way of writing and thinking? This question is important for the project because it focuses on an era in which writing is considered new communication media. At this age, gaining information and knowledge through reading is not available as much as listening. Al-Jahiz, as mentioned above, in his early life, learned by listening, then he learned to read and write. However, “[p]ersons who have interiorized writing not only write but also speak literately, which is to say that they organize, to varying degrees, even their oral expression in thought patterns and verbal patterns that they would not know of unless they could write” (56-57). It is important to study the transformation from orality to literacy to understand how oral and literate people become oral or literate.
What just mentioned turned the attention to the problem of the little impact of writing on culture and thought compared to the effect of printing and why scholars bring printing to show how literacy impacts culture and thought. For example, in *Orality and Literacy*, Ong writes that:

The fact that oral peoples commonly and in all likelihood universally consider words to have magical potency is clearly tied in, at least unconsciously, with their sense of the word as necessarily spoken, sounded, and hence power-driven. Deeply typographic folk forget to think of words as primarily oral, as events, and hence as necessarily powered: for them, words tend rather to be assimilated to things, ‘out there’ on a flat surface (62).

In this quotation, Ong provides typography -not writing although writing was created long before the emergence of typography, as an opposite of orality. “Eventually, however, print replaced the lingering hearing-dominance in the world of thought and expression with the sight-dominance which had its beginnings with writing but could not flourish with the support of writing alone” (120). But why? This question is not answered by Ong. In addition, Ong mentions that long after writing was deeply interiorized, hearing rather than sight had dominated the older noetic world insignificant ways. For him, manuscript culture in the west remained always marginally oral (119). In Arabic Culture, the early treatises in the early writing age are to write Qur’an, Sunah (prophet Mohammad’s sayings and actions), and the oral traditional literature. The long impact of orality on literate society and culture is one of the important issues for the project.

To find an answer to this problem, the project will try to reread and study the connection between the right and left hemispheres and orality and literacy. Marshall McLuhan (as explained by Anthony Wachs) and Leonard Shlain focus on this connection. However, the problem is about the impact of orality even long after the emergence of writing. Shlain states that “[w]hen written words began to supersede spoken words, the left brain’s dominance markedly increased” (40). What Shlain mentioned is the impact of writing on the brain. Obviously, this impact on the brain triggers an effect on human behavior which he explains by showing the women's status after the
dissemination of writing. For him, any society that acquired alphabetic literacy has become violently self-destructive a short time afterward (377). An example of this is virulent misogyny. In addition to Shlain idea about right and left brains, Wachs mentions that oral culture is impacted by the right hemisphere. In this kind of culture, the world has “a special connection to nature, a connection that left-brain cultures do not understand” (60). In short, oral culture uses the right hemisphere whereas literate culture uses the left hemisphere. This difference leads to another difference which is in the way of thinking and expressing that triggers the difference between oral and literate cultures.

According to the difference between the oral right brain and literate left brain, the change should happen in the culture when the writing emerged and is used as a communication medium. This returns us to the problem mentioned before which is the impact of orality on the writing age. Wachs mentions that “The effects of the phonetic alphabet were actualized slowly because from “the fifth century B.C. to the fifteenth century A.D. the book was scribal product,” which means that the distribution of this technology and the process of change was slow and not on a massive scale” (60). This means that to have a great impact of writing on the society and culture, most people in a certain society or culture should know how to read and write. But although writing cannot make a great impact on culture and people’s thoughts due to its limited dissemination, there were many people who can read and write. This point poses several questions. First, why we cannot see the impact of writing on the way of compositions (As in Al-Jahiz’s Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabeen). Second, how do literate people live in such a culture? The third question is taken when one looks at another culture that can be described as literate before the creation of printing. Fourth, is the effect of orality greater and stronger than the impact of literacy? This can be explained according to the nature of each medium.
However, what just mentioned let me return to one of the first questions mentioned in this section which is how a person can be described as oral or literate. This question is followed by another question which about the impact of oral culture on literate people who live in such culture such as Al-Jahiz. Does oral culture impact the way of writing (especially writing books)? Answering this question may lead to answer another opposite question which is how an oral person lives, thinks, and communicates his thought in a literate culture? This situation exists these days. My mother is illiterate. She told me that she knows by listening to other’s experiences through stories. This means that to be literate means to gain your knowledge through reading. Knowledge is what builds the brain which is responsible for thinking. If knowledge is built by listening, one cannot be literate even though he can read and write. This is my hypothesis which I do not know if it is correct or not. What I believe is that the project is the way to know that. However, several things encourage me to have this hypothesis. First, as mentioned above, Ong assures in several parts of his works that knowing to write and read does not mean a person is literate. Second, Al-Jahiz’s *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* can help to understand how a literate person can think and express his/her thought in an oral society. Third, as mentioned above, Ong asserts that for a person, to be oral or literate is a conscious and unconscious process. In this context, Plato stands against writing in the *Phaedrus* and his *Seventh Letter* although he expressed his idea by writing (*Orality and Literacy* 25). But also, Plato thinks unconsciously as literate which is clear in his organized thought in *The Republic* and other treatises. Also, Aristotle could not go out the impact of orality. According to Ong, for Aristotle, human knowledge “exists in the full sense only in the enunciation ... the enunciation cannot be conceived of solely in terms of visual analogies ...” (*Ramus* 107-108). Third, the chapter three of *The Alphabet versus the Goddess: The Conflict Between Word and Image*, Shlain differentiates
between orality and literacy depending on the brain hemispheres (17-27). Logically, to think by using the left brain is the result of depending on this side of the brain to gain knowledge. If this side is not used for the purpose of gaining knowledge, it cannot be used to think. As mentioned above, Ong mentions the necessity of a deep commitment to writing to shift the language into grapholect (Orality and Literacy 7-8). This shift indicates the shift not only in the way of receiving information and knowledge but also in the thinking (the expressing the knowledge and thought). Fourth, the transformation from orality to literacy takes a long time to shift the culture from orality to literacy. This gradual transformation implies that the new communication medium needs time to be the main medium. The final reason is the difference between oral memory and visual memory. However, if the majority of people are oral and the culture is oral, what kind of thought literate person think, and how he can live in this culture. An example of this literate person is Al-Jahiz.

One of the important issues for the project is the impact of culture and society’s main communication media on the literate person. Previously, in this section and other previous sections, this introduction mentioned that there is a connection between writing and printing when scholars write about the impact of literacy. An example of that is what One states in his The Presence of the Word: “Writing, and most particularly the alphabet, shifts the balance of the senses away from the aural to the visual, favoring a new kind of personality structure, and alphabetic typography strengthens this shift …” (8). The reason for this connection is obvious when one thinks of printing as an extension of writing. But the question is that what is the impact of a dominant communication media on the thought and the expression of a literate person? Ong mentions that Greeks authors’ way of composition is different than the way of composition we know today. Greek and Roman authors did not absorb writing and its features. Aristotle’s
treatises were collected after his death. And Cicero traveled to Greece to learn Greek philosophy (*The Presence of The Word* 55-56). Al-Jahiz, as mentioned, learned by both listening and reading. This can give me a chance to look at the impact of both orality and literacy on his works. In fact, studying the life of Al-Jahiz poses a question about the extent of human awareness of the influence of the communication medium. Is there an influence in the subconscious so that a person, regardless of his knowledge and education, cannot control it?

Determining the conscious and unconscious impacts of orality and literacy (writing) is one of the issues that the project seeks to achieve. James Cary mentions that the word “communication” implies the most common, mundane human experience. For him, this means that the activities called communication “are so ordinary and mundane that it is difficult for them to arrest our attention” (19). That means that literate people or oral people act, think, or express according to the characteristics of the dominant communication medium. Some of these actions, thinking, or expressions are made unconsciously according to the impact of the dominant communication medium. An example of this is mentioned in this section about the opinion of Plato about writing. In addition, this explains the reason for writing a book according to oral style such as what the style of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. One of the important points in this context is the rule of the culture on forming orality and literacy. In other words, does the character of the orality differ from culture to culture? At least, some of these cultures’ characteristics are different from each other.

The majority of the research on orality and literacy are written according to the common characteristics of oral societies and cultures. Many of these researches depended on the Greeks epics such as the efforts of Milman Parry and the analysis of his works by Walter J. Ong. The result of these researches could not be accurate for other cultures such as Arabic culture. For
example, Innis mentions that a “complete system of writing becomes the possession of a special class and tends to support aristocracies” (4). In fact, this is not applicable to Arabic culture.

Reading and writing, in Arabic culture, is one of the first order by Islam, the main religion in Arabic cultures. The first verse in the Qur’an that the prophet Mohammad said is:

$\text{Read! In the Name of your Lord Who has created (all that exists). He has created a man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood). Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. He has taught man that which he knew not (96:1-5).}$

These verses are a call for all Muslims to learn how to read and write (becoming literate). It is a call to shift society and culture from orality to literacy. According to this, the result that Innis inferred cannot be applied to Arabic culture. For this, the project turns its attention to Al-Jahiz to find out what it can add to orality and literacy by analyzing Al-Jahiz’s Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen. The result the project might conclude can and cannot be applied to different cultures.

Returning to the previous question which is does the impact of orality and literacy on the culture and thought differ from culture to culture? Scholars who contribute to orality and literacy provides characteristics of orality and of literacy in general although some of them points to the importance of the difference in culture. Ong points to the cultures differing in the exploitation of the various senses “and in the way in which they relate their conceptual apparatus to the various senses. It has been a commonplace that the ancient Hebrews and the ancient Greeks differed in the value they set on the auditory” (The Presence of the Word 3). In this context, Ong explains the relationship of sound and of the word itself to the human life-world varies. “Sound and the word itself must thus be considered in terms of the shifting relationships between the senses. These relationships must not be taken merely abstractly but in connection with variations in cultures” (6). According to this, studying Al-Jahiz can open our eyes to orality and literacy from
different perspective due to the lack of research about Arabic culture by using orality and literacy.

As mentioned in the previous section, there is not adequate research about Arabic culture and literature from an orality and literacy perspective. According to Muhammad Obaid Allah, the phenomenon of Arabic culture still needs to be studied from an orality and literacy perspective. For him, Arabic culture developed a coexistence between orality and literacy. Orality did not exclude or minimize literacy and vice versa (15). And this can be seen in some popular binary linguistic oppositions such as listening/writing, narration/record, tongue/pen, speech/book. Some of these binary linguistic oppositions were known from the early Arabic oral traditional era. In the *Qur’an*, for example, there is a chapter named “The Pen.” In fact, *Qur’an* promote the spread of writing. Less than one century after the rising of Islam, writing was used by many people. Al-Jahiz was born at the beginning of the composition in Arabic culture.

Al-Jahiz’s age is the best era to study the overlap between orality and literacy. In addition, Al-Jahiz is one of the most important authors, philosophers, and thinkers in traditional Arabic cultures for reasons mentioned in the first section. Authorship began, in Arabic culture, at the beginning of the eighth century AD (Al-Raf’ay 1:218). Al-Jahiz was born in the second half of the eighth century (776 AD) and he died in the second half of the ninth century (868 AD) which means that Al-Jahiz is one of the first authors in the Arabic cultures. However, in the introduction of Al-Jahiz’s *Al-Hayawan*, the editor of *Al-Hayawan*, Abdulsalam Haroon, mentions that Al-Jahiz’s age is the golden age of Arabic culture; it is the era of sciences, literature, and arts that were exhibited and taught in educational institutions in Basra, Bagdad, Kufa, Córdoba, and every Islamic city. At that time, authorship and translation flourished in every place (4). This intellectual environment may encourage Al-Jahiz to write his books. He
wrote three hundred and sixty books on various topics (5). But, unfortunately, the majority of these books were missed.

At Al-Jahiz’s age, the way of composition depended on collecting the stories, poetries, and rhetoric of the oral age. However, Al-Jahiz’s style of composition is unique. He did not only depend on this way. He, according to the editor of Al-Hayawan, tries to create his own ideas and makes his writing understandable for ordinary people (7-8). The majority of ordinary people at that time were oral people. For this, his way of composition may mix both oral and literate styles. In addition, this is what makes Al-Jahiz’s works suitable for the project. He was aware about the impact of writing on people.

Al-Jahiz was not only aware of the difference between listening and writing and also speaking and reading but also knows their impact on people and culture. In the first volume of Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen, Al-Jahiz mentions that voice is the tool of pronunciation and speaking. The movement of the tongue is not pronunciation or speaking unless it is associated with voice. Letters cannot be words and speech unless they are composed gathered to produce words (he means meaning and words). Hand and head gestures are to produce a perfect speech and rhetoric (79). This Al-Jahiz’s idea implies the importance of orality for a person to produce written rhetoric, letters, or a book. In addition, Al-Jahiz points to the difference between orality and literacy in use. For him, when one hears a story from an oral person, he/she should retell the story in the same linguistic style that he/she heard it the first time. If the listener retells the story in a different style such as literate style, the story will lose its purpose, goal, and attraction. On the other hand, if a man hears a story from a literate person, he should retell that story with the same style (1: 49). Al-Jahiz’s idea implies his awareness of the difference between orality and literacy. This consciousness made him aware of the appropriate medium for messages.
Al-Jahiz realized the difference between the impact of the sound and the impact of the writing on the sender, the receiver, and the message. According to these impacts, he points to the purpose of both media. In *Al-Hayawan*, Al-Jahiz mentions that one’s understanding of the meanings of people’s talks is not perfect because he/she will forget the meaning of the speech before the sound vanishes. For this, the meaning of the oral speech should be simple. The complicated meaning and ideas should be written (1: 47-48). In addition, Al-Jahiz points to the difference between the audience of oral speech and the reader of books. For him, to teach people and to guide them, reading a book is better than giving them a speech because if one tries to guide them by speech, the audience may pretend that they know, understand, or agree; they may over-complain, become racist against the speaker. For Al-Jahiz, with oral speech, people or the audience seek to prevail and win the argumentation; and there will be a desire for ostentation and shyness of acknowledging the wrong and following the truth (1: 84). One can infer that these characteristics are the characteristics of the oral people. Also, mentioning these characteristics to describe the oral audience implies that the readers do not have these characteristics. However, this analysis of Al-Jahiz opened his eyes on the impact of writing on nations and civilization.

Al-Jahiz was not only aware of the impact of the orality and literacy on the people and the message (speech, rhetoric, letters, and books), But he also links between civilizations and literacy. In *Al-Hayawan*, he states that on the earth, there are no great nations that have a great civilization and a generation that controlling and fairly ruling a part of this earth without writing. The existence of kingdoms, sultanates, and religions indicates the existence of a perfect book and good calculation (*Al-Hayawan* 1:71). This connection between literacy and improvement that Al-Jahiz mentions indicates the awareness of Al-Jahiz of the need for literacy to organize people,
nations, and civilization. Writing which represent education the responsible to build a great civilization.

Al-Jahiz, also, realized the connection between orality and literacy, especially in education. For him, a human being cannot know until he listens enormously. And his books should be more than his/her listening (Al-Hayawan 1:55). Although reading, for Al-Jahiz, is more important than listening in which one should read more than listen, listening is the starting point and cannot be neglected. This consciousness of the importance of listening and reading for education is built upon an awareness of the difference between the personality of oral people and literate people.

Al-Jahiz points to the impact of reading on the personality of human beings. In Al-Hayawan, he states that if one reads a book, he achieves a long time of enjoyment (He may point to an enjoyment after reading), forms his personality, becomes a good rhetor and a great writer, gains a great linguistic style, improves his self-esteem, excites his emotion, and acquires the respect of the public and the friendship of the kings. What one cannot know by listening in a year, a reader can know in a day without fear of negative competition, tiredness of finding a good scholar to listen to, attending to one (scholar) who sees his knowledge as goods to only gain money, learning from ill-mannered person, and avoiding the learning next to hateful people, comparing oneself to foolish people (1:51). Al-Jahiz shows books as a pure space from many negative issues associated with the listening. But the question is that does this means that Al-Jahiz stands against orality? The answer is no.

As noted, the majority of Al-Jahiz’s ideas about orality and literacy is from his Al-Hayawan. In Al-Hayawan, Al-Jahiz was akin to writing more than listening whereas in Al-Bayan was Al-Tabyeen, he focused on orality more than writing. According to Mustafa Nasif, In Al-
Hayawan, Al-Jahiz went out from the world of hearing and listeners to the world of reading and readers. It is not wonder if we say that Al-Hayawan takes root the new rhetoric which is to be read more than heard (56). The focus of the project is on his book Al-Bayan was Al-Tabyeen because it, as described, oral more than literate. It could be easy for Al-Jahiz to write as writer and harder to write as oral person.

However, what is mentioned about Al-Jahiz’s ideas around the impact of listening/reading and speaking/writing is only an example to show the importance of Al-Jahiz to the project. In addition, Al-Jahiz’s Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen can be a good example of books in the transferring phase from orality to literacy because Al-Jahiz, as showed, paid attention to both listening/reading and speaking/writing. It is obvious that when Al-Jahiz wrote Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen, described as oral, he meant to be oral, not literate. This point is important for the project to see different aspects relate to orality and literacy such as the unconscious impact of writing on literate people who live in oral society and culture. The questions that may be asked are that was Al-Jahiz aware of these unconscious impacts of writing? How did Al-Jahiz view orality? Does he try to modify some of the rules of oral literature to be suitable for literate people? The project will seek to answer these questions. The project focuses on Arabic culture, Al-Jahiz, and orality and literacy.

The Divisions of the Project

The project is divided into six chapters. The first Chapter is about Arabic orality and literacy. The second chapter is about Al-Jahiz’s life, works, and philosophy. The third and fourth chapters are to explain the main theory in the project. The fifth and sixth chapters are to analyze Al-Jahiz’s Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen. Moreover, the chapters of the project focusing only on oral and literate aspects. The chapters are:
Chapter One: Orality and Literacy in Traditional Arabic Culture.

It is important for the project to show the orality and literacy of Arabic culture because the book that I will analyze in the project is an Arabic book.

This chapter focuses on what was called the era of Ignorance or Ignorant era. The Ignorant era indicates Arabic culture before the emergence of Islam which was an oral culture. It is known in the West as Pre-Islamic era. The chapter focuses on some of the literary genres, especially rhetoric and the stories that were told by storytellers. Some of these rhetoric and stories were mentioned in Al-Jahiz’s Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen. In addition, the chapter will analyze the social life of this era to see the impact of orality on the social order. Moreover, the chapter will consider the different Arabic sub-cultures and the various religions that were known at that time and how minorities lived in the Ignorant era, especially religious minorities. Finally, the chapter traces the system of writing at that time and will try to show why writing was not spread.

In addition, this chapter focuses on the relationship between Islam, orality, and literacy. It will focus on two aspects: the impact of Islam on the spread of writing and the shift of the Arabic language from a concept of a mere language to a sacred language. In the first aspect, the chapter will analyze some of the Qur’an verses and chapters that imply language, orality, and literacy. In addition, the first aspect is to show how some Islamic religious figures promote or stand against writing such as the prophet Muhammad and his companions. The second aspect is to show the impact of considering the Arabic language sacred on the spread of writing. In this aspect, there will be an analysis of the social order and the way of using the language. In addition, one of the important issues in this aspect is to figure out the reaction of Arabs when other people from other
cultures with other languages engaged Islam and the Arabic world. It is a focus on the first movements to save the sacred language as called.

The chapter is trying to determine the beginning of the first books in the Arabic culture and how and why they are composed. The focus is not only on when and what is the first books, but also the chapter will analyze the writing style of some of these books and tries to find the effect of both orality and literacy on the style of the writing. Also, the chapter would discuss issues that only relate to Arabic culture such as Isnad, Maqamat and Al-Mowashahat. Finally, the chapter seeks to answer a question about the reasons leading to the need for composition.

Chapter two: Al-Jahiz’s Life, Works, and Philosophy.

Al-Jahiz’s Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen is the main work for this project. For this, this part is necessary because it focuses on issues that impact Al-Jahiz’s intellectual life such as his learning and general life.

“Man is the son of his environment.” This phrase is an Arabic famous phrase that means the environment impacts people’s way of living and thinking. For this, this chapter focuses on the political life, intellectual movement, social life, educational system, and religious conditions on Al-Jahiz’s age. Although the focus of the chapter is on different topics, it will discuss and analyze issues related to orality and literacy. For example, when this chapter discusses religions in Al-Jahiz’s age, it will focus on the impact of the orality and literacy on changes made on the religion.

As mentioned in the title of the chapter, this chapter focuses on two aspects: Al-Jahiz’s life and works. In his life, the concentration is on his educational life and intellectual movement because these two components are related to orality and literacy although this chapter will pay attention to the other sides of his life. However, as mentioned in the previous section, Al-Jahiz
was aware of the importance of reading/writing and its impact on people’s life. For this, this chapter discussed his ideas about listening/reading and speaking/writing. In addition, although the chapter gives an overview of Al-Jahiz’s treatises and philosophy, the close analysis would be on treatises that discuss issues related to orality and literacy such as *Al-Hayawan*.

In addition to Al-Jahiz’s life and works, this chapter focuses on Al-Jahiz’s ideas of writing/reading and listening/speaking and their impact on people’s life and the culture. Focusing on his consciousness of the difference between orality and literacy shows two important aspects. The first aspect is to see the writing style of Al-Jahiz, does he change his writing style depending on the potential audience/readers? The second aspect is to understand the unconscious impact of the writing on Al-Jahiz that he could not control and change while he was writing to oral people. *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is about rhetoric which was known as an oral literary genre at that time. The book was written for oral people, as will be mentioned later in chapters five and six. Therefore, *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is the best example to show the ability of Al-Jahiz to write an oral lesson for oral people.

**Chapter Three: The Impact of Orality and Literacy on the People’s Life.**

This chapter is to show the literature of orality and literacy. It is to explain orality and literacy as discussed by scholars such as Marshall McLuhan, Walter J. Ong, Harold Innis, James Carey, and others. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the theory. The chapter focuses on some issues related to the project’s topic such as the shift from orality to literacy, the Western scholars’ understanding of the Arabic oral and literate culture, the characteristics of orality and literacy, issues related to the relationship between different cultures and orality and literacy, etc.

**Chapter Four: Thought, Knowledge, and the Medium of Communication.**
The fourth chapter is to discuss issues that the project thinks that they are not focused on in the works about orality and literacy. It tries to provide answers to questions mentioned in the previous sections. In addition, it focuses on aspects related to Arabic culture. In addition, the chapter is a trying to discuss the hypothesis mentioned in the previous chapter which is focused on the dominant medium to gain knowledge and its impact on the way of thinking and expressing.

Chapter Five: Art of Orality and the Art of Literacy: Rhetoric and Eloquence.

The fifth chapter of the project focused on issues that Al-Jahiz discussed which are related to orality and literacy. The title of the chapter mentions the word “art” before orality and literacy because, in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen, Al-Jahiz called eloquence and rhetoric art which are the main topic in the book. The book will explain the rule that Al-Jahiz made for rhetoric and eloquence. It tries to find the oral and literate aspects of these rules. These rules will be compared to the rules of the era of ignorance to clarify the similarities and the differences. And then the chapter will discuss the difference and why they are different. Rhetoric was known in the oral era (era of ignorance). That means that it is an oral literary genre for Arabs. The question for this chapter is that does Al-Jahiz modified some of its rules to be performed by both oral and literate people?

Chapter Six: The style of Al-Jahiz’s Authoring.

Chapter six is to answer questions regarding the way of writing Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen. The style of speaking is different than the style of writing a book. This chapter is to find out, depending on the characteristics of speech and writing, the style of the book. In addition, the chapter will begin by determining the audience of the book. If Al-Jahiz writes the book for the public, which was oral public, his style of writing would be oral. But if he wrote his book for a
certain educated people or group his style of writing would be literate. However, the chapter will look for what kind of issues the book discussed. Some issues cannot be discussed orally; they did not gain attention until writing was spread. Like literacy, orality has an impact on people’s way of thinking and expression. The main task of this chapter is to find out what has the most impact on the style of Al-Jahiz in writing Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen. The chapter will focus on both his way of expressing and his way of thinking.

The contribution of this project to the discipline can be seen from several perspectives. First, focusing on Arabic oral culture and some of its characteristics may open our eyes to some aspects of orality that cannot be seen in another culture. In addition, the project can contribute to the discipline by applying the theory of orality and literacy and showing its capacity of applying it to different cultures. Because the Arabic language is considered by Arabs as sacred by Islam that supports literacy as shown earlier, the project seeks to see the impact of the outside factors on the shift from orality to literacy. In research about orality and literacy, transition from orality to literacy is hard, and oral people resist this shift. In Arabic culture, the most important aspect in people's life is Islam. Does Islam or religion, in general, overcome the unconscious impact of orality which triggers to resist the shift from orality to literacy? Finally, the project’s topic is focusing only on the shift from orality to writing. This narrow focusing on this shift may lead open more questions and points to several issues related to the shift from orality and writing.
Chapter One: Orality and Literacy in Traditional Arabic Culture

This chapter provides a brief explanation of the intellectual movements in Arabic culture, in which speaking/listening and writing/reading are the main part of these movements. The main topics of this chapter are the Ignorant era (pre-Islamic era), the impact of Islam on the spread of writing, and the spreading of writing and the beginning of compositions. The focus of the project on both Al-Jahiz and old traditional Arabic culture, on one hand, and communication and media ecology, on another hand, makes this chapter necessary and important at the outset of the project. Al-Jahiz is considered one of the most important writers in the old Arabic traditional culture. But to understand Al-Jahiz, it is important to study the culture that he belongs to. In addition, by studying the orality and literacy of Arabic culture, the project looks for the unique elements of the Arabic culture that this project analyzes to contribute to the theory of orality and literacy. This chapter is not only a general introduction to the old Arabic traditional culture but also is a study of the status of the orality and literacy of this culture to help the reader of the project to understand Al-Jahiz’s way of composition, of thinking, and expressing. Al-Jahiz built his thought according to the traditional Arabic mind and Islam. Therefore, this chapter is a way to understand the history and the basis of Al-Jahiz’s thoughts.

The majority of the approaches and methods used in the theory of orality and literacy were built according to the Western cultures. This chapter opens a window to the Arabic culture. The chapter is to provide researchers with a brief explanation of the orality and literacy of Arabic by focusing on the history of writing and reading on this culture. This window may help the interested researchers in media ecology to understand orality and literacy from a new and different point of view. The chapter analyzes the unique elements of orality and literacy of the old traditional Arabic culture. In particular, this culture has a foothold in both orality and
literacy. These elements, as the chapter hopes, may contribute to the theory of orality and literacy.

There are several ways to see the importance of the history of the old traditional Arabic culture for this project. First, studying the history of the Arabic culture shows how the culture transformed from orality to literacy. In addition, at the time of transferring from orality to literacy, the Arabic language was considered a sacred language. This consideration, as this chapter explained later, impacted the rabid of the transformation from orality and literacy. Finally, as shown in this chapter, because the Qur’an supports literacy, literacy becomes a kind of worship. However, this chapter would begin with the history of the oral Arabic culture (called the Ignorant Age).

General Introduction to the Ignorant Age

One of the challenges that this project or any research concerning old traditional Arabic culture is the lack of information about pre-Islamic Arabic history. Saad Abdullah Al-Sowayyan attributes this lack of information about the old Arabic history to the absence of writing in the pre-Islamic era (45). But before discussing the issue of ambiguity in Arab history, the character of the old traditional Arabic culture should be explained. Is all the old traditional Arabic history unknown? A brief answer to this question is no. To detail this answer, the chapter focuses on the history of Arabs and what “Arab” means.

The Ignorant era, as Arab people called it, or pre-Islamic era, as known in Western scholarship, indicates a maximum of two hundred years (370-571) of Arabic history before the emergence of Islam. Islam began in the seventh century. According to Al-Jahiz, the oldest Arabic poem is dated one hundred and fifty years before the existence of Islam (Al-Hayawan 1:47). Although Al-Jahiz determined the oldest Arabic poem, this determination means that it is
the oldest known history of the Ignorant Age because the oral Arabic history is a collection of poems\(^\text{1}\). Historians analyze the poems to understand the community, economy, and religion of the oral Arabic culture. The history of events during this time is known. The existence of writing after the emergence of Islam helps to save the history of Islam and Arabic culture at the time that Islam emerged in, the seventh century (Al-Sowayyan 45). And the period before Islam is known, in Arabic culture, as the Ignorant Age. The history of Arabs before the Ignorant Age is not known although some Arabic scholars mention and discuss some historical issues that lead to revealing part of Arabic history before the Ignorant Age. But what is mentioned about the history before the Ignorant Age is not taken from the stories and poems of the Ignorant Age but from foreign resources.

Because the history of old traditional Arabic culture was not written in the Ignorant era, there is no agreement about the root of Arabic culture and Arabs. Mustafa Sadeq Al-Raf’ay in *Tareekh Adab Al-Arab* [The History of Arab Lores] mentions that Arabs are one of the Semitic peoples (1:38). This means that the Arabic language is a Semitic language. However, some orientalists trace the history of the word “arab” in the old Arabic language and other Semitic languages, such as the Assyrian language. The word “Arab” was found in an Assyrian text in the time of Shalmaneser III (885-823 BC). The word means nomadism. It is a description of a group of people who were ruling an area close to the borders of Assyria (Ali 1:16). To differentiate between Arabs before the Ignorant era and Arabs of the Ignorant era, historians divide Arabs into defunct Arabs and remained Arabs (Al-Raf’ay 1:39). “Defunct Arabs” are defined as those Arabs who existed and disappeared far before the emergence of the “remained Arabs.” “Remained Arabs” refers not only to the Arabs of the Ignorant Age, but also Arabs before the Ignorant era.

\(^\text{1}\) The history of many oral cultures was transmitted by poems such as the history of oral Greek culture which is transmitted by Homer and his epics (the oral Homeric stories).
Moreover, there is another division of defunct Arabs: ‘arebah Arabs (lived in Yemen) and musta’rebah Arab (the progeny of Ishmael who is the first son of Abraham) (Al-Raf’ay 1:39; Ali 1:294). The ‘arebah Arabs were born Arabs, but the musta’rebah Arabs learned Arabic language from the ‘arebah Arabs. These distinctions between these old Arabs pose the question about the possibility of having an Arabic civilization which, as most civilizations, depended on written knowledge to build the civilization. In addition, knowing that there were people who were not Arabs and became Arabs after learning Arabic from the arebah Arabs implies that the arebah Arabs had what attracted the mustarebah Arabs to be Arabs. What attracted people in every age is the high quality of living. The high quality of living may indicate the existence of education which usually writing part of the system of education. Knowledge and education are inseparable as well as civilization and knowledge.

The existence of Arabs before the Ignorant Age poses a question about a possible civilization that the Arabian Peninsula witnessed. According to Nasir Al-Deen Al-Asad, the old Arabic inscriptions indicate well-organized states. The inscriptions belong to Minaean Kingdom (dating back to the 10th century BCE-150 BCE.), Kingdom of Sheba (between the 8th century BCE and 275 CE), and Himyarite Kingdom (fl. 110 BCE–520s CE) in Yemen. Also, in the north-western region of the Arabian Peninsula, there were inscriptions of Lihyan Kingdom (700-107 BC) and Thamud (from eighth to fourth centuries B.C.). In what is known today as Jurdon, there are inscriptions of the Nabataean Kingdom (from 4th century BC to 106 AD) (11). These inscriptions were written before the Ignorant era. Al-Asad assures that these Arabic civilizations were extinct a long time before the existence of the Ignorant era. These civilizations disappeared with the beginning of the Gregorian calendar (1 AD) (12). This means that these civilizations began before the existence of Jesus Christ. In addition, these civilizations did not exist at the
same time, and they belong to the defunct Arabs. Historians determine the defunct Arabs. Some of the defunct Arabs are ‘Ād (unknown its time but mentioned in some inscriptions written in the eighth century B.C.), Thamud (from eighth to fourth centuries B.C.), Tasam and Jadees (unknown their time but they are mentioned in a Greek inscription dated in the fourth century B.C.), Sheba (between the 8th century BCE and 275 CE and mentioned in II Chronicles 9:1-12 in the Bible and in the Qur’an 50:14) (Ali 1:295). Some of these civilizations are mentioned in the Qur’an such as ‘Ād (89:6) and Thamud (41:17). However, there is a lack of information about these ancient civilizations. But the Ignorant Age is the most pre-Islamic era written most about in the Islamic Middle Ages. For this, there is an abundance of information about its history compared to the defunct Arabs. The geographical environment is the joint point between the defunct Arabs and the ignorant Arabs (the Arabs of the Ignorant Age) which does not change over time².

To describe the geographical environment of Arabs, one should determine the era first because the location of Arabs differs depending on the era. For example, today, the location of Arabs is from Morocco to the Persian Gulf including Fertile Crescent and the Arabian Peninsula. However, what is important for this section is to determine the location of the Ignorant Arabs because most of the environments of the Ignorant Arabs were desert which is a place that does not have more than sand and what cannot be used to improve writing.

The Arabian Peninsula is the location of Ignorant Arabs. The Arabian Peninsula is in the Southwest of the Asian continent. It is bounded by the Fertile Crescent on the north, the Persian Gulf on the east, the Red Sea on the west, and the Arabian Sea on the south. These areas, at that time, are at the middle between several nations (Al-Asad 4) such as Roman empire and Persian

---

² Jawad Ali in his Al-Mufassal fi Tareekh Al-Arab Qabl Al-Islam [Detailed in the History of Arab before Islam] provides a detailed history of both Arabs before the Ignorant age and the Ignorant Age.
empire. The Arabian Peninsula is known as a desert land. In fact, its geographical environment is varied.

The Arabian Peninsula consists of desert, mountain, green lands, etc. For example, Yemen’s weather is not hot as the Empty Quarter (one of the biggest deserts in the world). The temperature of Yemen is mild and moderately rainy, it has high mountains (Ali 1:289). Unlike other parts of the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen has different kinds of stones that people used to build their houses and stores (15:6). Al-Raf'ay divides the Arabian Peninsula into five parts: Yemen (south of the Arabian Peninsula), Tuhamah (the Red Sea coast), Al-Hejaz (mountains west of the Arabian Peninsula), Najed (at the middle to the east of the Arabian Peninsula), and Al-Yamamh or Al-Arodh (an area between Yemen, Tuhamah, Al-Hejaz, and Najed) (1:37-38). Although these geographical environments are varied and different, the commonality between people living in these areas is Arabic language.

The varied geographical environment of the Arabian Peninsula may indicate the varied dialects of Arabic language that people used in these wide locations. In fact, all Arabs of the Ignorant age spoke the Arabic language. Muhammad Jarir Al-Tabari (839-923) mentions that although all the people living in the Arabian Peninsula in the Ignorant era were called Arabs, their tongues and pronunciation were different (1:9). Al-Tabari does not mean that there were non-Arabic speakers in the Arabian Peninsula, but he means that there are many forms or ways of speaking the Arabic language. Arabic linguists mention that there are many dialects of the Arabic language. Some of the dialects of Arabic languages are *Shakshakah, CasCasah*, and ‘An’anah. One should speak the Arabic language to understand the difference between these dialects. However, the question is that what dialect that Arabs used as a formal dialect when they communicated with each other.
Quraish’s Arabic language is considered the formal Arabic language. Quraish is a tribe that lived in Makkah (a holy city in both the Ignorant Age and in Islam and the hometown of prophet Muhammad). For Al-Raf’ay, the reason for making Quraish’s Arabic language the formal language is that Ishmael (Abraham’s son) is considered the founder of the Arabic language and he was living in Makkah (1:75-76). In fact, there is no evidence that proves this theory. Old Arabic historians have other assumptions about the origins of the Arabic language. For example, for them, Ya’rob is the founder of the Arabic language (Ali 1:14). The commonality between these theories is that the Arabic language is old as the history of human beings. In sum, the Arabic language is the language of the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula. However, language can impact the culture of certain societies in a certain era, especially when they speak the same language and live in the same geographical environment as what happened with the Ignorant Arabs.

The Ignorant Age’s literature, poetry and rhetoric, are the only sources of information about the system of society and the culture of the Ignorant era. For Al-Sowayan, if the poetry is a reflection of the real-life, its interpretation is not only a linguistic function but a complete intellectual work and comprehensive ethnographic monitoring of the culture of the society that produced this poetry. Al-Sowayan assures that Ignorant poetry is the mirror that reflects the Bedouin society and the culture of the desert (14). In addition to considering poetry the only source about the society and the culture in the Ignorant age, it is an unseparated part of the Ignorant culture and society, unlike the literate culture because poetry, in the Ignorant Age, is the source of knowledge, entertainment, and history. In the literate culture, knowledge can be conveyed by writing, painting, and orality. In addition, history, in the literate ages, can be read and listened. In sum, Ignorant poets produced poetry for the Ignorant people and, later, history
for the literate people (historians use the Ignorant poetry as a source of the history of the Ignorant Age). This idea poses a question about what the Ignorant literature could reveal about the Ignorant society and culture.

The various geographical environment, mentioned above, of the homeland of Ignorant people may indicate different societies and cultures. Historians divide the society of Arabs of the Ignorant era into *ahl wabar* (people of lint) and *ahl madar* (people of clay) (Al-Asad 10; Ali 7:271; Ibn Al-‘Ebri 158). People of lint are nomads or called the Bedouins. They are called people of lint because they used the lint to make their tents (their homes). And the people of clay are the townsmen. They are named people of clay because they used clay to build their houses. Also, Al-Asad divides the Ignorant people into kings and non-kings. The non-kings are divided into people of lint and people of clay (10). Al-Asad means by kings and non-kings that kingdom and non-kingdom. The non-kings are tribes that did not have a governing system. However, Dividing Arabs into kings and non-kings points to some kingdoms in the Ignorant Age.

Arabs of the Ignorant Age did not live only in tribes, there was another kind of system which is a kingdom or similar to the kingdom. In the north of the Arabian Peninsula, there were two Arabian kingdoms: *Al-Manatherah* and *Al-Gasasenah* (Al-Asad 16). These two kingdoms had more organized system of ruling than the people of lint and people of clay. This organized system enabled them to make a direct and official contact with the Roman empire and the Persian Empire. But the kingdoms are not the majority of the Arabs at that time. Most of the residents in the Arabian Peninsula were the people of lint and people of clay.

The people of lint and people of clay have similarities and differences. The people of clay were living in villages and depended on agriculture and trade for a living. However, the people of lint lived in the desert and depended on their livestock for a living such as camels and sheep
(Al-Asad 10). To feed their livestock, they needed to adopt the nomadic lifestyle, moving from place to place, looking for water and pasture. Both the people of lint and people of clay depended on their unique system to rule their life. The life of both the people of lint and people of clay were busy. They did not have time to make an organized system which could result in developing an educational system depending on the writing. The geography of the Arabian Peninsula does not have adequate sources for living. For this, the Arabs, at that period, spent all their efforts on finding food and water besides protecting their tribes from external invasions. Writing in this kind of environment was not priority. Orality is the best medium of communication in this type of life. This type of life and its strong connection to orality indicates that writing is akin to a stable style of life more than a nomadic style of life.

The system of ruling in the Ignorant era was not complicated and depended on relatives. The nomads used the family system to control the tribe (Al-Sowayan 484). In fact, blood kinship is the basis that determines the tribal membership and their social position in the tribe (Al-Sowayan 522). In addition, there is no specific location for the tribe because they moved around the year, looking for the water and the pasture, as mentioned. This system of ruling is the system of people of lint. However, people of clay did not move, they have their own homeland. Tribes of people of clay are bigger than the tribes of people of lint in which each tribe had its own clans and different families (Ali 9:178-179). But in both people of clay and people of lint, they depended on consultation for the ruling. They asked elderly and wise people about their opinions before they took action. Therefore, the system of governing in the Ignorant era assumed the anticipation of all the tribal members. The interest of any member of a tribe means the interest of the whole tribe. Duraid Ibn Al-Summah (530-630), an Ignorant poet, in one of his poems, he says:
And I am only from a Ghazia, if it goes astray, 
I will go astray, and if it rightly behaves, I will be guided by a Ghaziya (62).

Ghaziya is the name of Ibn Al-Summah’s tribe. According to this Ignorant Age logic, the members of a tribe do not have a choice, they should follow what the tribe decides although it is not right. And people who do not obey will be expelled and called Al-Sa’aleekh (tramp or wretched).

Al-Sa’alookh (the singular of Al-Sa’aleekh) is a word that cannot literally be translated into the English language and means that a person who is not controlled by any tribal system. The majority of the Al-Sa’aleekh are braves, knights, and generous and depend on invading others for a living. According to Ali, they are people who acted against their tribal policy. Their tribes do not help them (18:167-168). If a person decides to be a Sa’alookh and is killed, his tribe will not fight for revenge from his killer. In addition, when he invades other tribes, they will not reinvade his original tribe for revenge because they know his tribe abandons him. In sum, in the system of governing in the Ignorant Age, people did not have the freedom to express their opinions. Acting against the tribal policy triggers what is called Al-Sa’aleekh. A question that may be asked related to the lack of freedom in the Ignorant era is about religion. Were the Ignorant Arabs free to choose their religion? Unexpectedly, the Arabian Peninsula in the Ignorant era knew different kinds of religions and beliefs.

The lack of freedom in the Ignorant era may indicate a lack of religious freedom. But the fact is that the Arabian Peninsula in the Ignorant Age experienced different religious practices. In general, nomadic life is exposed to destruction due to the potential of drought, hunger, and invasion. For this reason, it is a mundane working life that its members do not have enough time to think about matters of the unseen (Al-Sowayan 49) such as life after death, the creator of the world. The Ignorant people did not believe in life after death (the resurrection).
The Arabian Peninsula in the Ignorant era knew idolatry, Judaism, Christianity. Jawad Ali divides idolatrous people into two categories: worshiping the idols as God and worshiping idols to bring them closer to God (11:34). However, there were Arabs who believed in the resurrection, they are the Jew Arabs and Christian Arabs.

Although there were Jews and Christians in the Arabian, they were a minority. For Jews, they were mentioned in the Ignorant poetry. They lived in particular places in the Arabian Peninsula such as Yatheb (called Al-Median, the city of the Prophet Muhammad), Yemen, and Al-Yamamah. The majority of them were merchants who loaned money with high interest (Ali 12:87). Unlike Judaism, which came to the Arabian Peninsula with merchants, Christianity was disseminated in the Arabian Peninsula by missionaries (12:163). They came to the ordinary people with only one purpose which is the dissemination of Christianity. On account this, it was more acceptable than Judaism among the Arabs. The Arab Christians had their own system of living, worship, and ruling such as the Churches’ systems that missionaries built (12:214). Al-Asad summarizes the status of Jews and Christians in the Arabic Peninsula. For him, Arab Jews and Christians were tribes that converted from Idolatry to Judaism and Christianity and settled in specific places in the Arabian Peninsula (7-8). In sum, although the majority of the Ignorant people were idolatrous, other religions found their place among them. The way of dissemination of Judaism and Christianity at that time in the Arabian Peninsula poses questions about the way of receiving information and the intellectual movement style.

In sum, historians depend on Ignorant poetry to analyze the history of the Ignorant Age. The poetry that they depend on was not written because the wide majority of the Ignorant Arabs were illiterate. The life of the Ignorant Arabs sought to secure three needs: food, water, and security. Although this kind of life does not consider writing a priority, Arabs, especially Arabs
before the Ignorant Age, knew writing. The writing, in the Ignorant Age, was rare. The existence of writing in the Ignorant Age, regardless of its rareness, requires a focus on the mediums of communication in the Ignorant Age.

Orality in the Arabian Peninsula in the Ignorant Age

Studying orality and literacy reveals the situation of the intellectual movement in the Ignorant era. In addition, it helps to understand the culture of the Ignorant Age. Although the Ignorant Age is known as an oral age, it is important to focus on both orality and writing in this era. Studying writing and its situation in the Ignorant era requires a beginning of describing the orality of the Ignorant era. In fact, orality and literacy helps historians to understand not only the characteristics of the culture and the society of the Ignorant age but also what led to these characteristics.

The majority of Arabs in the Ignorant era were illiterate. Al-Raf’ay mentions that writing was abnormal in their social life (244). Although some Arabs were literate, writing was not a social phenomenon in the Ignorant era. They depended on their memory to live and recall their stories and poetry (243). In fact, it is the most important valuable thing in their life. Memory and language are inseparable in the life of Ignorant Arabs. Therefore, Arabs sent their children, toddlers, to nomadic tribes to learn the pure Arabic language (Al-‘Azemi 89-90). The nomadic tribes in the Ignorant era were considered the source of the pure Arabic language. In Al-Hayawan, Al-Jahiz distinguishes three styles of the usages of the Arabic language which are poetry, assonance, and prose (7:216). All these types are considered oral and relate to poetry and rhetoric. With the entering of the oral formulation theory (by Milman Parry) into the academic field, several researchers studied the Ignorant literature according to this theory.
Milman Parry’s oral formulation theory was applied first to Western oral literature. Its components were built according to Western literature. But can this theory be applied to the oral Arabic language? The answer to this question, according to Al-Sowayan, is no (21). For Al-Sowayan, researchers who studied the Ignorant literature according to the oral-formulaic theory did not do the fieldwork which is important to understand the Arabic language (21). The result that the researchers conclude is the doubt of the existence of the oral Ignorant literature (47). In addition, one of Al-Sowayan’s objections is that Milman Parry, the founder of the oral-formulaic theory, was interested in studying the Greek epics and Yugoslavian epics which are different than the oral Arabic literature (60). Al-Sowayan is an anthropologist. This explains why he focuses on the importance of the fieldwork. In addition, Al-Sowayan does not mention the difference between the Western epics and Ignorant poetry. There are no epics in Arabic literature. The epics are much longer than the Ignorant poetry. The longest Ignorant poems are called *Al-Mu’allgat* (explained later in this chapter). The length of these poems is between 45 to 121 verses. This length is nothing compared to the epics. In addition, depending on the length of the epics, the recallers of the epics need a special technique to memorize and resing the epics due to their length. This technique is not required in the Arabic culture because the poems are short compared to the Greek epics. Also, epics use inexperienced stories (myths) and more than one story in each epic. But in the Ignorant poetry, a poem is created to express one event. The event usually is known by the public and happened in the same period. When an Ignorant Arab wants to memorize a poem, he would only focus on the words and the metric of the poem (the latter is to make memorizing easy). He knew the events of the story. Knowing the event that a poem is about makes the memorization process easier because the event helps that person to know the
order of the verses. James Monroe, in his “Oral Composition in Pre-Islamic Poetry: The
Problem of Authenticity,” and Michael Zwettler, in his The Oral Tradition of Classical Arabic
Poetry: Its Character and Implications, studied Arabic literature according to the theory of oral
formulaic. For Al-Sowayan, both Monroe and Zwettler do not consider the overlapping between
oral and written literature and the difference between Arabic poetry and Western epics. For him,
Arabic poetry and Western epics are different literary genres (64). In sum, the oral-formulaic
theory cannot be applied to Arabic literature or poetry due to the huge difference between the
literature that it depends on to build the theory and Arabic literature. Arabic poetry of the
Ignorant era is considered the most valuable Arabic literary genre due to the great position of
poetry among the Arabs, in general, and the Arabs of the Ignorant era, in particular.

At the beginning of showing Arabic poetry and its importance to the oral performance, it
is important to point to the meaning of the word she’r in the Arabic language which is translated
as poetry. Before mentioning the meaning of she’r, it is helpful to point to the meaning of
“adab” which is translated to English as “literature.” In Western culture, literature is linked to
writing. For this, there is a line between “literature” and “writing” (also belles letters and other
literary words) the root of these words is “letter” (Al-Sowayan 36). However, in Arabic culture,
‘adab, translated as literature, does not have a link to writing. It comes from “tadeep”
discipline), “tahtheeb” (refinement), and “yadob” (calling for good morals). In this meaning,
‘adab is closer to the word “lore” more than “literature” (Al-Sowayan 36). This indicates that
literature is linked in Arabic culture to orality more than literate. She’r, translated as poetry,
linked in Arabic culture to feeling. The literate translation of a sha’er (a poet) is a feeler, and

---

3 Eric A. Havelock in his Preface to Plato explains the way of maintaining knowledge and information in the oral
culture. For him, oral people think memorable thoughts. He means that oral people think in mnemonic patterns.
They use rhythm and try to use the logical sequence of events to remember words (87-96, 131-132, 294-296).
she’r (poetry) is feeling. In addition, poem, poetry, and poet share the same root. But in the Arabic language, the root of qaseedah (poem) is qasad which means the right way, easy, justice, meaning, approaching a thing, opposite of profusion (Ibn Manzor 3:353-354). And depending on the meaning of the root of qaseedah, a poem in the Arabic language is called qaseedah due to its perfection and its accurate metrics. In addition, it is called qaseedah because it is intentionally approached (Ibn Manzor 3:354). In sum, ‘adab, she’r, and qaseedah were named in the ignorant era which indicates that Arabic poetry is oral. In fact, the performance of an Arabic poem is called singing. Because the Ignorant culture is oral, poetry becomes the most valuable thing in their life.

For Arabs, the Arabic language is not merely a way of communicating. They used it as a standard to assess and evaluate a person. Poetry, as mentioned, is the highest level of using the Arabic language. In the Ignorant Age, when a person becomes a poet, his tribe celebrates him by making traditional food for everybody and dancing. Other tribes come to the celebration to congratulate them (Ibn Rasheeg 1:49). The reason for this celebration is that poetry is a way to record the glories of the tribe and its lineages. In addition, poetry is easy to memorize and recall. Omar Ibn Al-Khatab, a companion of Prophet Muhammad, said poetry is the only knowledge of Arabs (Al-Jumahi 1:24). In fact, poets were considered the people of knowledge which means the most intellectual people at that time⁴ (Amen 1:55). Ali mentioned that in the Ignorant era, poetry had a dangerous role. It was used as a weapon in which it encourages and motivates the fighters of the tribe (Ali 17:69) and satirizes the opponents. Therefore, Poetry, for Ignorant Arabs, is the source of knowledge. For them, poetry is a talent and cannot be learned. For this, they believed that the devil (the conception of the devil in the Ignorant era is different from its

⁴ Havelock points in different places in his Preface to Plato to poems and poets as the holders of the knowledge in the primitive oral culture (145-146, 171).
understanding in the tradition of Judaism and Christianity, the devil, in the Ignorant era, can be a wise creature and a symbol of ugliness and evil at the same time) is the source of this knowledge.

The highest position that poetry had in the Ignorant era makes the Ignorant Arabs believe that there is an outer power that provides poets with this talent. According to Ali, the doctrine of the Ignorant Arab about poetry is that poets take inspiration from the devil when they sing poems. For them, every poet has his own devil (17:118). This idea implies how the Ignorant Arabs value poetry. They saw poetry as an ability that human beings cannot obtain by themselves. In addition, attributing poetry to the devil means that its language's style is higher than the language of any other literary genre such as rhetoric. Also, although poetry is inspired by the devil, there are different categories of poets depending on the quality and ability to use the language in the poetry. In *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, Al-Jahiz mentions that poets, for Ignorant Arabs, were divided into four levels. The highest level called *fohol* (stallions), a poet and a narrator of poetry at the same time. The second level was for poets who were called the *Khentheth* (castrated horses). The poet is what poets called in the third level. In the last level, there were poets described as *sha’aror* (cannot be translated) (1:9). However, to any level a poet belongs, there were ways to sing poems for the public, ways of performance.

What assures the orality of poetry in the Ignorant era is the style of performance-linked with singing poems to the public. In this context, Al-Sowayan mentions that oral literature, in its nature, is not written and read alone in isolation from the audience. Rather, it is created to be performed in forums (26). In the Ignorant era, the audience did not only listen to poems or rhetoric, but they also verbally and physically interact with the performer. Many of their reaction is a criticism such as what happened with Tarafah Ibn Al-Abd (an Ignorant poet) and Al-Mutalamis (an Ignorant poet). Ibn Al-Abd was in a king’s court while Al-Mutalamis was singing
his poem in front of the king. In one of the verses of the poem, Al-Mutalamis attributed a character or a description of a female camel to a male camel. When Ibn Al-Abd heard this description of the male camel, he said that "استنوق الجمل" (a male camel becomes a female camel) (Al-Askari 1:49). However, one of the styles of performance is to act in a way that people understand that a poet is going to sing his poem. For example, a poet should stand up to sing (Ibn Rasheeg 1:26). In addition, they have to wear special clothes (Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen 3:115). Also, a poet may climb a high place, or ride his camel so that the listeners understand that he is the vocalist or the singer. In the case of singing a satire poem, a poet puts an oil or similar product of hair on half of his/her hair, loosens his loincloth, wears one shoe (Al-Soyoty 2:474). But if a poet cannot follow these rules, he can ask his narrator or teller to sing the poem instead of him (Ali 17:86). These rules indicate that the poetry in the Ignorant era is oral. In addition, the lifestyle of poets also confirms the orality of the poetry. They traveled to sing their poems.

In the Ignorant era, the Arabian Peninsula had varied subcultures. Each culture had its own Arabic language. But for poetry, they use Quraish language, as mentioned above. In fact, the unity of the language of the poetry indicates that the poets who sing a poem in the Quraish language want his poem to be heard around the Arabian Peninsula. According to Ali, although the Ignorant poets are from different tribes with different accents, the language of their poetry is united (17:79). For this, traveling was part of the Ignorant poets' life. Abu Faraj Al-Isfahani (897-967) mentions that poets traveled from place to place (1:10). Poets traveled to gain money and gold when they praise kings and lofty people (Ali 17:107). In addition, they moved to what is called souq (singular of aswaq) because it was the destination of all Ignorant Arabs.

One of the phenomena in the Ignorant era that points to how deep orality in the Ignorant community and culture is what is called souq. A souq is a place where Arabs gathered for several
purposes. The literal translation of souq is market. But “market” does not give what souq meant in the Ignorant era. In the Ignorant Age, a souq is a place where Arabs met and exchanged commodities. In addition, it was a cause of their unity. Also, it was to converge their different languages, and with that, it was a literary assembly where poets and orators used to gather, sing, and give rhetoric (Al-Saegh 102). The Ignorant Arabs had multiple souqs. Al-Raf’ay mentioned that every month they set up a souq in a certain place. For example, in the Rab’a Al-Awal (the third Arabian month) the souq was located in Dumah Al Jandal (an ancient city in northwestern Arabian Peninsula), then they moved to Hajar (a city in Bahrain, east of the Arabian Peninsula), etc. (1:83). However, the most famous souq was called Okaz.

To explain the role of the souqs on the wide-spreading and the impact of oral poetry, it is important to describe Okaz souq as an example. According to Al-Raf’ay, Okaz is the most important Arabic souq in the Ignorant Age. It was established in 540. In this souq, poets sing their poems, and orators give their speeches (84). This intellectual event was associated with trade exchange and political forums. In Taj Al-‘Aros men Jawaher Al-Qamoos [Crown of the Bride from the Jewelry of the Dictionary], Al-Zabidi mentions that Arabs gathered in Okaz to listen to the new poetry (5:69). When Al-Nabigha Al-Thobiany (an Ignorant poet, 536-604) came to Okaz, the organizers built a dome for him. Poets come to his dome to sing their poems. His role was to give feedback and judge the poems. In addition, poets who were considered from the highest level that Al-Jahiz described and mentioned early in this chapter, acted as judges (Al-Sh’ar 1:261). The judgment was according to the judge’s rules and his way of understanding poetry. Poets were interested and sought to gain the praise of the judge to make their poems known. When a poet becomes known, his poems would be valued and memorized for a long time, such as al- mu’allaqat.
Al-m’allaqat (plural of mu’allaqah) is seven poems created in the Ignorant era. For Arabs, they are the best Ignorant Age’s poetry. The literal meaning of mu’allaqah is “hangings.” Why they were named “hangings” is controversial. Ibn ‘Abd Raboh (860-940) mentioned that the seven mu’allaqat are named mu’allaqat because they were written by gold water and hung on Al-Ka’aba (an ancient stone structure that was built and re-built by prophets), which is located inside the Grand Mosque in Makkah. It is the holiest place for Arabs in both the Ignorant Age and Islamic Ages) (6:118). But this story was rejected by many scholars such as Ibn Al-Nahhas (Yaqot 10:266), Shawqy Dayf (Tareekh Al-Adab 141), and Mustafa Sadeq Al-Raf’ay (799). Regardless of the reason for naming them mu’allaqat, the important is that these poems were considered the best poems in the Ignorant era. However, the poets of these seven poems were known as slaves of poetry because they do not sing their poems to the public until they revise them. Arabs believed that this revision is a serving of the poem and saw the similarity between serving the slaves their masters and serving the poets their poems.

The Ignorant poets took care of their poems and their way of singing them. They varied on how they created poems. In Al-Sh’ar wa Al-Shu’ara, Abdullah Muslim Ibn Qutaybah mentions that there were mannered poets and primitive poets. The mannered poets revise and edit their poems before they sing them to the public (1:22). Obviously, primitive poets sing their poems without revising or editing. In addition, they were eager to explain their poems to the audience. During the oral recitation of their poems, they explain some of the vocabularies of the poems, comment on places and names mentioned in the poem, tell the story that led to creating the poem (Al-Sowayan 27). In fact, the style of primitive poets and the explaining of the poems are oral styles. Poets explain the poetry because they unconsciously know that there is not enough time for the listener to analyze the poem. This style is the opposite of the style of the
mannered poets. The question is how an oral person revises and edits a poem that is not written. The poems of this kind of style are longer than the poems of the primitive style (the primitive style is a poems that sung without revising, the poet does not carefully use the word of the poem). Does he recall every verse and think about its words and meaning? What is more important whether this kind of revising and editing is possible? Previously in this chapter, poets who were considered from the highest level judge of the poems of the poets. But their judgment, according to what is written in the old Arabic traditional books about stories of the Ignorant Age, is not an analysis of the poem. They were quick and fleeting notes or criticisms. Unfortunately, the way of revising the poems was not mentioned. This point would be discussed later in chapter four. However, in Arabic poetry, especially Ignorant poetry, there are forms and ways used to create poetry. Poets had to follow these forms to create a poem. They are called prosody.

One of the features of Ignorant poetry is what is called *wazn* (meter) and *qafiah* (rhyme). They have a strong link to orality. In the Ignorant Age, poets did not know what prosody meant. They created poetry instinctively. In the Ignorant Age, there were fifteen meters (in the Arabic language called the seas of poetry). Poets created their poems according to the metrics of these meters. Each meter has its own topics. For example, a lament poem cannot be created in any kind of meter. It can be created according to the rules meter like *al-kamel* (complete meter). The sound of this meter helps to convey the feeling of sadness. According to Al-Raf’ay, the meters that the Ignorant poets used are compatible with the meaning of the poems. If one studies the meter of poetry in the Ignorant Age, he/she would find that each meter has its own topics (636).

---

5 Media ecology is to study language as a communication medium and how it impacts human environment (West and Turner 454). Meter and rhyme are part of language. They are a way of using language. In fact, Leonard Shlain states that “[a]ll spoken languages fall within a narrow range of meter” (42). For Shlain, writers do not use meter because reading does not show and present the rhythm of the words (42). In this sense, meter and rhyme have a connection to the human environment.
There is a link between the meters and music. The meters of poetry are known in Arabic culture as musical meters due to their organized rhythm. These meters reinforce the orality of Ignorant poetry because they depend on listening. The musical meters can only be realized by hearing. If there is a problem in the harmony of the musical meters, the listeners to the poem can notice the difference in the musical sound. Each Arabic meter has its unique musical sound. When a verse does not use its meter in the right musical sound, Arabs call the verse a broken verse which means it breaks the logical and expected musical sound. Poetry is the most important entertainment at that period. For this, there were what are called narrators who memorize poems to recall them for the public or in a private meeting.

Narration flourished in the Ignorant era. It was not only to memorize and narrate stories and poems but also was used for different purposes such as genealogy. Most Arabs, in the Ignorant era, value genealogy, not only of human beings but also of their animals. There were people known as genealogists. Arabs came to them to gain knowledge (Al-Raf’ay 355). However, for poetry, some poets, especially distinguished poets, had their own narrators, accompanying them everywhere to listen to their poems and memorize them to resing them to others (Al-Asad 238-237). By narration, poems of the Ignorant era lived to the era of the spreading of writing. In fact, the narration was a way to become a poet. According to Ali, when an ignorant person wants to be a poet, he begins by memorizing poems, especially famous poems until he is known as a narrator (17:100). After memorizing poems, his mind would learn meters of the poetry. It is learning through experiments. If poems were written, he cannot be a poet. However, narrators were not only to narrate poems, they were narrating rhetoric, also. They

---

6 The interest in genealogy is not only on oral Arabic culture but also some other oral culture. In *The Literate Revolution in Greece and Its Cultural Consequence* Havelock points to the role of some oral Greek poets to narrate ancestry of people of their time (214-216).
narrated what they believed is valuable. Although rhetoric was not valued as poetry, Arabs paid attention to it and its way of performing.

As an oral society, rhetoric was an inseparable part of their life. Rhetoric is easier than poetry because the latter requires meters as mentioned. Although poetry, in the Ignorant era, was valued more than rhetoric, rhetoric was considered a fine kind of using language. According to Ali, it was another aspect of the intellectual movement in the Ignorant era. At this age, orators had a high position due to their eloquence and their ability to defend their tribes and speak by their names (16:405). This shows how deep the impact of language is in the Arabs of the Ignorant era. Speech was the only way to impact public opinion and put a tribe in a great position. Al-Jahiz divides the rhetoric of Arabs in the Ignorant era into tall and short speeches depending on the situation of the rhetoric (Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen 2:7). However, the topics of oratory in the Ignorant Age were an incitement to fight, reconcile, messages to other tribes and kingdoms, congratulation, condolence, asking for help, solving a problem, and splurge (Ali 16:409-410). These topics show the importance of rhetoric for Arabs in the Ignorant era in which it was used in different and important events. The use of rhetoric in these important events means it had a great impact on the listeners. Its importance made them set up rules for performing rhetoric.

In the Ignorant era, the relationship between people, tribes, and sects was represented by language, especially rhetoric. Even wars were begun by speech or poetry. For this, rhetoric and its performer should have skills and know the rules of the performance. Arabs preferred the orator to have a strong and loud voice and to have the ability to impact the feeling of the audience (Ali 16:406). Al-Jahiz mentions that, in the Ignorant Age, holding a stick was a sign of making a speech (Al-Bayan 3:117). For the style of the rhetoric, he also points to redundancy as
a feature of the rhetoric of the Ignorant orators (3:117). Redundancy, in an oral culture, is required due to the characteristics of orality. Words exist to vanish at the same time. For this, redundancy is to assure the delivery of the message or the meaning to the audience. In addition to the redundancy, Arabs used assonance in their rhetoric although it was not required (Ali 16:408). For Mustafa Nasif, assonance provides the orator reverence and the ability to control the speech. In addition, assonance helps to improve memory. It is the core of the rhetoric of the oral culture (43). Rhetoric was a way to communicate officially and formally with the public. It was oral communication. However, Ignorant Arabs also depend on oral language to communicate informally between themselves, they used stories as a way to entertain themselves and enjoy their day and learn from the experiences of others.

As in similar oral cultures, stories, in the Ignorant Age, were the curriculum of learning. Havelock points to the importance of stories in the oral culture and how oral people memorize them. For him, “The psychology of oral memorization and oral record required the content of what is memorized to be a set of doings.” (Preface 171). Stories were a way to gain knowledge and know how one can live. The story is a manifestation of the Ignorant thought. It was popular in the Ignorant era (Ali 16:5). Communication is necessary for human beings. In oral ages, oral language was the main way of communicating in these ages. For this, oral people used language for different purposes such as a tool to fight, peace, happiness, sadness, etc. In the Ignorant Age, the story was used for several purposes. The storytellers narrated stories of myths from different nations and cultures. They depended on history as a source of their stories (16:8). Although the common between poetry, rhetoric, and stories are language, the style of each type is what differentiates it from the other.
What was mentioned above about poetry, rhetoric, and story and their importance in the Ignorant Age shows how orality was deep in the Ignorant Age. Orality was not only among the ordinary of the Ignorant Arabs (represented by story) but also among those who were seen as the source of knowledge (poets and orators). Orality was the source of both knowledge and entertainment. The Arabian Peninsula was next to the Roman empire and the Persian empire. These two empires were literate, reading and writing permeated the society. Books were composed in the Roman empire not only at the time of the Ignorant Age but also before it. For example, at the end of the fourth century, Augustine wrote his Confessions and other books. In addition, David Shotter mentions that there was an education system for the normal young Romans (340). In the Persian empire, children had an educational system (Briant & Daniels 264). But why were Arabs not impacted by them? This question turns the attention of this chapter to the status of writing in the Ignorant Age.

Writing in the Ignorant Age

Writing in the Ignorant Age is a controversial topic. Some scholars and historians, such as Jawad Ali, Nasir Al-Deen Al-Asad, and Muhammad Nabeeh Hejab, believe that writing was spread in the Ignorant era. But the majority of scholars and historians think that although writing was known in the Ignorant Age, it was not broadly spread. It was rare. Some of those scholars are Saad Abdullah Al-Sowayan, Mustafa Sadeq Al-Raf‘ay, Muhammad Huseen Mahasnah, Al-Jahiz, and the majority of the scholars of the old Arabic culture. Al-Sowayan defends the idea that the Ignorant era was non-primitive oral (321-331). Non-primitive oral means that writing existed in the Ignorant Age although it is known as oral age. In fact, the idea that the Ignorant Arabs were illiterate is not new. It began with the emergence of Islam.
As mentioned early, Arabs’ life built on orality, although most valuable things in their life (poetry and rhetoric) are writable, they did not write them. Prophet Muhammad assured that Arabs in the Ignorant era were literate. For him, Arabs of the Ignorant era were illiterate, they could not read and account (Al-Bukhari 460). In addition, the Qur’an describes the Ignorant Arabs as illiterate before the emergence of the prophet Muhammad (2:20; 2:75; 62:2). Prophet Muhammad lived most of his life in the Ignorant Age which means that he described what he saw and experienced. Also, scholars at the beginning of the Arabic civilization described the Ignorant era as an illiterate age such as Al-Jahiz (Al-Bayan 3-28), Ibn Abd Raboh (4:242), and Muhammad Murtaza Al-Zabidi (8:191). These are the opinions of Arabs who lived in both the Ignorant Age and the beginning of the Islamic Age. What is important is that they do not deny that Arabs knew of writing. In fact, the majority of them assured that there were some Ignorant Arabs who write and read, but they were few. For this, there is not enough information about the status of writing in the Ignorant Age.

Before analyzing the status of writing in the Ignorant Age, it is important to give a brief history of the origins of writing in the old Arabic culture (before the Ignorant Age.) The issue of the origin of Arabic writing is controversial. Some scholars, such as Ibn Faris (941-1004), think that the origins of Arabic writing go back to Adam (Ibn Faris 7). Others think that it began with Ishmael (Abraham’s son) (Al-Asad 24). Ali Ebrahim Muhammad summarizes the theories of the origins of Arabic writing. For him, there are four theories with different points of view. The first theory is called tawqifiah theory (“tawqifiah” is an Arabic conception and cannot be translated. It is to describe knowledge that is provided by a religious text, Qur’an or Hadeeth, and is not based on evidence). In this theory, writing is taught by Allah (the God). The second theory is called the Himyaritic theory. This theory assumes that the origin of Arabic writing is Al-Musnad writing.
(known in the West as Ancient South Arabian script) that was used in the Himyaritic kingdom (flourished 110 BCE–520s CE). The third theory is called the Hiryah theory. In this theory, Al-Hirah (an ancient city in Mesopotamia) is the origin of Arabic writing. The last theory is called Nabataean theory or the modern theory. The theory makes the Nabataean writing the origin of Arabic writing (31-48). For Al-Asad, the last theory is the closest theory to the truth. Al-Asad depends on Nabataean inscriptions as evidence that shows the connection between the Nabataean writing and the Ignorant writing (107). In addition, Muhammad Nabeeh Hejab mentions that there are inscriptions in Al-‘Ula (the capital of the ancient Libyanites (Dedanites) and Hegra (an archaeological site located in the area of Al-‘Ula) that prove that Arabic writing was taken from Nabataean writing, and the latter was taken from Aramaic writing (49). This debate about the origins of Arabic writing is important because it may pose a question about the reason for not developing the writing in the Ignorant Age although Arabic writing existed before the beginning of the Ignorant Age. In addition, if Arabic writing was spread before and during the Ignorant Age, the Ignorant Age would not be described as a primitive oral culture. But the origins of Arabic writing cannot be determined for certain. What is important is the status of writing in the Ignorant Age.

Although the Ignorant Age is known as an oral age, writing existed at that period. But the writing was rare. For example, Laqit ibn Ya’mor Al-Eiadi (d. 380) wrote to his tribe a poem to warn them that the Persian ruler prepares his army to invade them. The first two verses are:

What is in the paper is a greeting
To Eiad who are living in the Arabian Peninsula
Khosrow I is coming to you
Do not let your trade take your attention away from this danger (Al-Sh’ar 1:195).

“Eiad” is the tribe of the poet, and Khosrow I is the Persian ruler. Stories mentioned writing in the Ignorant era are rare and cannot help historians and researchers to describe the Ignorant Age
as a literate age. In fact, the spread of writing in the Ignorant Age is controversial. For Hejab, writing was spread among the Ignorant Arabs for the affairs of trade and politics (47). In fact, the examples that he provided were not adequate to describe the Ignorant Age as literate age. Jawad Ali who tries to prove that the Ignorant Arabs were literate mentions that there is nothing in history that mentions that Ignorant Arabs who lived in the Levant were able to write and read. His response to this is that not mentioning that in the history is not evidence that they were illiterate (15:112). In fact, Ali provides stories from Ignorant history that mention that there were literate Arabs. For example, in the fifteenth volume, he states that there were members of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj (Arabian tribes) who were able to write and read. Then he cited Al-Balathry who mentioned that writers in Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj were few (114-115). There are two issues with the names of the writers that he provided in his varied examples. First, they had lived in different times. Second, many of them had lived in the Islamic Age. Third, names of writers were recorded because they were few. They were unique in the Ignorant Age because they have what is not common at that time. Finally, compared to the number of Arabs in the Ignorant Age, they were few. Moreover, Ali mentions that all writings that were found were in the language of prose (15:250). “The language of prose” means a sentence or few sentences. The question is that if writing was spread at that time, why did not the Ignorant Arabs write poetry which is the most valuable use of language? The answer could be because the writing was not widespread. Also, Ali mentions that some of the Arabic words that relate to writing and reading are taken from other languages such as qalam (pen) which is taken from Greek (15:253). If the Ignorant Arabs took care of writing and depend on writing in their daily life, why do they need other languages to borrow words that relate to writing and reading? The answer may be that writing was not an

---

7 borrowing words from other languages may indicate “[t]he linguistic relativity hypothesis, the best-known contemporary version of which is referred to as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, posits that people’s understanding of
important part of their life, and most of them did not need it and did not see its need in their place. But although the writing was not spread, it existed. Al-Baladry mentions that before Islam there were seventeen persons in Quraish who knew how to read and write (475). Quraish was the most developed tribe in the Ignorant Age. In this most developed tribe in the Ignorant Age, there were only seventeen individuals who could read and write. This small number of writers poses a question about the need for writing in the Ignorant Age. Although writing was rare what is the purpose of writing?

What can be inferred from the above is that writing was not part of the intellectual life of the Ignorant Age. And this is why the Ignorant Age is described as an oral age. Although it was marginal and secondary, the Ignorant Arabs used writing for several purposes. They wrote some of their alliances and treaties (Ali 15:268). Al-Asad provides six topics which are considered the topics written about in the Ignorant Age. They are religious texts (by Jews and Christians), vows, alliances, treaties, what relate to their trade, individual letters, contracts between the slaves and their masters (61-76). In fact, the history of the Ignorant Age does not support that writing on these topics was known in the Ignorant Age. Al-Asad depends on one or two stories that mention writing about a certain topic and marks the whole Ignorant era as a literate age. For example, when he mentions the contract between a slave and his master, he states that we do not know enough about this topic. Also, he mentions that the Ignorant Arabs wrote poetry (76) although Ali assures that historians and scholars did not find even one written poem from the Ignorant Age (17:406) although Ali defends the idea of spreading of writing in the Ignorant Age. But one of what supports the lack of writing in the Ignorant Age is the types of writing tools in the Ignorant Age.

the world, their cognitive processes and behavior, correspond to features of the lexicon and grammar of the language that they speak” (Tulviste 215-216).
If writing was known in the Ignorant Age, the Ignorant Arabs would develop writing tools. They wrote on animal skin, cloth, some plants such as palm fronds, bones, stones (Al-Asad 77-88), wood, some types of metals, clay. (Ali 15:258). These materials indicate that writing was not valued in the Ignorant Age. Harold Innis divides media into time-biased and space-biased types. The former includes animal skin, cloth, palm fronds, bones, stones, wood, etc. For Innis, although these materials are to convey messages to many generations, it is to reach limited audiences. In addition, the time-biased type prefers small communities and traditions (7). In the Ignorant Age, there was a connection between Arabs and other literate civilizations such as the Roman and Persian empires. If writing was valued by Arabs, they would borrow the good materials from these empires. In addition to the materials, Arabs used knives, sharp materials, coal (15:255), and wood (Al-Asad 97) as pens to write. These tools are to write on the material mentioned above. The question is that scholars and anthropologists found inscriptions of Arabs and people who lived in the Arabian Peninsula before the Ignorant Age, why did not they find inscriptions of the Ignorant Arabs although they came far after those people? The answer would be that writing was not part of the attention of the Ignorant Arabs.

The reason for describing the Ignorant Age as an oral culture although writing existed at that period is not only because the writing was rare, but because the culture of the Ignorant Age does not have the characteristics of literacy. For Walter J. Ong, “Oral formulaic thought and expression ride deep in consciousness and the unconscious, and they do not vanish as soon as one used to them takes pen in hand ... Early written poetry everywhere, it seems, is at first necessarily a mimicking in script of oral performance” (Orality and Literacy 26). The story mentioned about the status of the community, some of them mentioned above, indicate that the Ignorant Age had the characteristics of the orality. However, the issue of oral or literate
community begins by discussing thought; how do people think and what is kind of thought they have? Ong provides a close look at the process of writing. For him, writing reshapes thought. It shifts the language into grapholect which is formed “by a deep commitment to writing” (7-8). “A deep commitment to writing” means that a literate person uses writing as the main communication medium to convey knowledge. In this sense, in an oral culture, Ong mentions that restriction of words to sound determines both the modes of expression and thought processes (33). In fact, expression and thought cannot be separated. There is no expression if there is no thought. Because the Ignorant stories and poems show that the culture of the community is oral, one can describe the Ignorant era as an oral age. The writing was not spread at that age. The majority of stories that support the spread of writing in the Ignorant Age can be classified into two categories. First, these stories are few and cannot be taken as evidence to support the spread of writing in the Ignorant Age. Second, many of the writers are considered Muslims although they had lived in both eras (Ignorant era and Islamic era).

In sum, writing existed in the Ignorant Age. There are stories and poems, mentioned above, show that there were Arabs who knew how to read and write. The chapter does not describe them as literate persons but “people who knew how to read and write” because the chapter infers that although they knew writing, they are attributed as oral people due to their oral characteristics. In addition, the connection between Arabs and their literate empires (Roman Empire and Persian Empire) did not impact the status of writing in the Arabian Peninsula because their lifestyle did not promote and did not need writing. The lifestyle of the Ignorant Arabs changed with the emergence of Islam. The change happened not only on the lifestyle but also to the thought the way of thinking. When the lifestyle changed, the status of writing changed.
Islam and Literacy

Islam emerged in 610 in the Arabian Peninsula, in an oral culture. Its emergence was the starting point to change the Arabs status from a nomadic lifestyle to a civilized lifestyle. For Saleh Ahmed Al-Ali, the advent of Islam was a watershed event in the history of the Arabs and their intellectual development. It emphasized the importance of knowledge and science, urged more education, and called on man to use sight, reason, and thought to study the conditions of human beings in the past, present, and future, and to contemplate and reflect on the phenomena of the world (12). These calls can be seen in the Qur’an and the Hadeeth.

The first instruction of Islam promotes literacy. When prophet Muhammad narrated the story of the beginning of Islam, he did not mention that Gabriel, the angel, told him you are a prophet and the messenger of Allah (the God), as Muslims believe. Instead, he asked him to read although he is illiterate. The story is recorded by Al-Bukhari. In Al-Bukhari’s book, Aisha, one of Prophet Muhammad’s wives, said that prophet Muhammad used to go in seclusion in the cave of Hira where he used to worship (Allah alone) continuously for many days before his desire to see his family. He used to take with him the journey food for the stay and then come back to (his wife) Khadija to take his food likewise again until suddenly the Truth descended upon him while he was in the cave of Hira. The angel came to him and asked him to read. The Prophet replied, “I do not know how to read.” The Prophet added, “The angel caught me (forcefully) and pressed me so hard that I could not bear it any more. He then released me and again asked me to read and I replied, ‘I do not know how to read.’ Thereupon he caught me again and pressed me a second time till I could not bear it any more. He then released me and again asked me to read but again I replied, ‘I do not know how to read (or what shall I read)?’ Thereupon he caught me for the third time and pressed me, and then released me and said:
Then Allah’s Messenger returned with the Inspiration and with his heart beating severely. Then he went to Khadija Khuwailid, his wife, and said, “Cover me! Cover me!” She covered him till his fear was over and after that he told her everything that had happened and said, “I fear that something may happen to me.” Khadija replied, “Never! By Allah, Allah will never disgrace you. You keep good relations with your kith and kin, help the poor and the destitute, serve your guests generously and assist the deserving calamity-afflicted ones.” Khadija then accompanied him to her cousin Waraqa Naufal Asad ‘Abdul ‘Uzza, who, during the pre-Islamic Period became a Christian and used to write the writing with Hebrew letters. He would write from the Gospel in Hebrew as much as Alla(h) wished him to write. He was an old man and had lost his eyesight. Khadija said to Waraqa, “Listen to the story of your nephew, O my cousin!” Waraqa asked, “O my nephew! What have you seen?” Muhammad described whatever he had seen. Waraqa said, “This is the same one who keeps the secrets (angel Gabriel) whom Allah had sent to Moses. I wish I were young and could live up to the time when your people would turn you out.” Muhammad asked, “Will they drive me out?” Waraqa replied in the affirmative and said, “Anyone who came with something similar to what you have brought was treated with hostility; and if I should remain alive till the day when you will be turned out then I would support you strongly.” But after a few days Waraqa died and the Divine Inspiration was also paused for a while (Al-Bukhari 7-8). Obviously, this story of the very beginning of Islam promotes literacy. It is a clear call to transform people from orality to literacy. This story has several connotations. First, in Islamic tradition, the angel, Gabriel, was sent by Allah to Prophet Muhammad. Allah, according to Islamic tradition, knows everything. That means he knows that Muhammad is...
illiterate. For this, in this case, the call for reading is asking for the impossible. In Islamic tradition, Islam is not only for Arabs, but also for all people. This means that the asking for reading in the story is not only a call for Prophet Muhammad to read but it is a call for Muslims to read. Second, in the story, there is a connection between reading and the name of Allah. This connection may point to the sanctity of literacy. And the society of Allah is an educated society. Third, there is a connection between knowledge and pen. This connection can be understood as that knowledge and writing cannot separate. Finally, the first and second verses link reading with the creation of human beings. Then both, reading and the creation of human beings, are linked to knowledge. The link may point to the importance of writing to understand the existence of human beings. In fact, Qur’an, in several verses, assures the importance of knowledge which in this story is linked to writing (3:7; 10:94; 39:9). The link between writing and knowledge is explained by Ong. For Ong, with the emergence of writing,

the greater age of Latin rhetoricians around the turn of the Christian era ... was succeeded by the age of great Latin grammarians ... Rhetoricians were concerned primarily with the spoken language. Grammarians focused on writing ... The rise of grammarians to prominence signaled a marked shift away from an oral economy of speech to a written economy as Latin fell under total chirographic control. Writers of the language determined not only how it should be written but also how it should be spoken (The Presence 78).

With the help of writing, rhetoric becomes part of grammar. Grammar can be seen as the knowledge of rhetoric (how to speak and write). Rhetoric became knowledge when writing enabled grammarians to study the system of rhetoric. However, the Qur’an mentions writing, connected in the Qur’an to knowledge and God, as a way of organizing people’s life.

In the Qur’an, people are encouraged to write the important matters. The longest verse in the Qur’an is called the verse of debt (2:282). In this verse, there are several issues related to the relationship between human beings. What matters in the verse is that the Qur’an encourages
people to write these issues. The issues are about covenants, pacts, debts, and treaties. The verse begins with the encouragement of writing a contract between the lender and the borrower. The verse assures to write the debt no matter its amount. The reason for that is stated in the verse:

You should not become weary to write it (your contract), whether it be small or big, for its fixed term, that is more just with Allah; more solid as evidence, and more convenient to prevent doubts among yourselves, save when it is a present trade which you carry out on the spot among yourselves, then there is no sin on you if you do not write it down. But take witnesses whenever you make a commercial contract. Let neither scribe nor witness suffer any harm, but if you do (such harm), it would be wickedness in you. So be afraid of Allah; and Allah teaches you. And Allah is the All-Knower of each and everything (2:282).

The end of the verse links the writing with both knowledge and Allah. In addition, the verse places the written contract between the lender and the borrower as an eternal witness. This makes writing reliable. Also, the verse values the writer and gives him protection. The interest of the Qur’an in writing can be also seen in an entire chapter called “The Pen.”

One of the most important topics related to writing is chapter sixty-eight. This chapter is titled The Pen. The first verse in the chapter is “Nun. [an Arabic letter and no one knows why the chapter begins with this letter]. By the pen and by what they (the angels) write (in the Records of men)” (68:1). “By the pen” and “by what they write” are swearing. Allah swears by the names of pen and writing. According to Ibn Kather (1300 – 1373), they are Allah’s swearing. This swearing is to make people understand and realize the grace of writing. By writing, knowledge and science can be achieved (8:187). According to the Islamic tradition, Allah only swears by great things and turns the attention importance of these great things (Ibn Uthaymeen 10:613). This means that the Qur’an places reading in a high position. Because, for Muslims, the Qur’an is holy, the pen and writing, the Qur’an values, are sacred. These verses mentioned above are only a few examples of how the Qur’an encourages literacy. There are many other verses that
point to the importance of writing in the Qur’an. However, another issue that is important is the meaning of the word “Qur’an.”

The word “Qur’an” has a direct link to writing. To determine the literal meaning of the Qur’an, one should determine the root of the word. In the Arabic language, the origin of the majority of words consists of only three letters. The Qur’an consists of five letters which are qaf ق, ra راء, alf mamdodah ألف ممدودة (two letters merged in one sound and written as one letter), and nun نون. To know the root of this word, there is what is called a meter. The meter is a word that consists of three letters: fa ف, ‘ayn عين, and lam ل. The sound of the meter is fa’al. To know the meter of the Qur’an, one should pronounce the meter (fa’al) in a way that the sounds of both Qur’an and fa’al are identical. They should be identical in the sound not in the letter. This way is called the meter of the word Qur’an. The meter of Qur’an is fa’alan. Then one should compare the origin form of the meter (fa’al) to the meter of the word “Qur’an” (fa’alan) to determine the extra letters. The extra letters are the last two letters (a and n), which means in the word Qur’an the extra letters are the “a” and “n.” That means the root of the Qur’an is Qra. The “u” letter in the word Qur’an is not a letter in Arabic culture, it is called a movement and is not written as a letter like in English but as a symbol (٤). In Lesan Al-‘Arab [Tongue of Arabs], Ibn Manzor (1233-1312) mentions that the word “qra” means to recite what is memorized or written (13:336). This is the literal meaning of the word “Qur’an.” But, in the Islamic tradition, the meaning of the Qur’an as the holy book is that the words of Allah revealed to Prophet Muhammad in the Arabic language, the miraculous, worshiping by reciting it, transmitted with mutawatir, written in the masahif, beginning with Al-Fatiha and ended with Al-Nas (Mahasnah 34). In this definition, mutawatir means the Qur’an is transmitted by a huge group of people. The meaning of mutawatir will be explained later in this chapter. However, masahif is the name
of the written Qur’an. Masahif is the plural of Moshaf. “Al-Fatiha” and “Al-Nas” are two chapters in the Qur’an. “Al-Fatiha” is the first chapter; and “Al-Nas” is the last chapter. Like the Qur’an, the Hadeeth promotes the dissemination of writing. But the situation of this promotion is more complicated than the situation of the supporting in the Qur’an.

Prophet Muhammad’s support of writing is controversial due to the different contradictory sayings of Prophet Muhammad about writing. Al-Khateeb Al-Baghdadi (1002-1071) wrote a book called Taqeed Al-‘Elm [Restricting the Knowledge]. In one of the book’s sections, Al-Baghdadi focuses on the hadeeths (in the Islamic tradition, hadeeth is the sayings and the acts of Prophet Muhammad) that forbade writing. But in another section, the author provides hadeeths that encourage writing. Then he concludes that Prophet Muhammad did not ban writing, but he discouraged it for one reason. He did not want anything to be written besides the Qur’an because people may think that every written text is part of the Qur’an (57).

Therefore, there are hadeeths that discourage writing and, also, there are hadeeths that support writing and the dissemination of writing.

Although there are hadeeths that discourage writing, they are fewer than hadeeths that support writing. One of them is that Prophet Muhammad asked his companions to not write his sayings and actions. And he asserts that anyone who wrote anything besides the Qur’an, he/she should erase it. Then he permitted retelling his saying and action (Al-Qushairy 2298-2299).

Muhammad Huseen Mahasnah states that Prophet Muhammad was afraid of mixing the Qur’an with Hadeeths. In addition, the tools of writing were rare (70). For this, Muslims, at that time, depended on narration not writing to transmit hadeeths. when one came to Abu Said Al-Khudri (612-693), one of Prophet Muhammad’s companions, to write the hadeeth that Al-Khudri memorized, Al-Khudri asked him to not write hadeeths because Al-Khudri did not want people
to value hadeeths as Qur’an. Al-Khudri told him that when Prophet Muhammad spoke with us, we memorized his sayings. Al-Khudri asked him to memorize not write the hadeeths that he narrated (Al-Baghdadi 36). Therefore, the forbidding of writing had its purpose which is to keep the Qur’an pure without change. This purpose becomes clear when one studies the hadeeths that promote and encourage writing.

Although Prophet Muhammad was illiterate, he encouraged education and promoted and motivated his companions to be literate and to learn other languages. After the first battle between Muslims and Quraish (an Arabian tribe), Muslims captivated many fighters from Quraish. Captives had to pay Muslims money to free themselves. But captives who could not pay and are literate, Prophet Muhammad told them that they can free themselves after teaching ten Muslim children reading and writing (Ibn Saad 2:20; Al-Maqreezi 1:100-101). It happened at the beginning of establishing the Islamic State which means that they needed money. In addition, Prophet Muhammad motivated Zayd ibn Thabet (one of his companions) to study Torah (Ibn Saad 1:187). Also, Prophet Muhammad asked Zayd ibn Thabet to learn the Syriac language (Mahasnah 129). Writing, for Prophet Muhammad, is the way to knowledge.

Prophet Muhammad saw the connection between knowledge and writing. As much he encouraged writing, he also encouraged the gaining and the spreading of knowledge. He said for his companions that you should use writing to retain knowledge (Al-Soyoty 2:303). It is an awareness of the problem of the loss of knowledge if it is not written. In this meaning, the use of writing is only to maintain knowledge. This connection does not indicate that the use of writing result in knowledge. Prophet Muhammad requires his companions to write his ideas or, as in Islamic traditional thought, the revelation (Mahasnah 44). Hadeeths that encourage gaining knowledge are more than can be mentioned in these pages. For example, he asked his
companions to travel to gain knowledge. He said that Muslims should seek knowledge even unto China. In addition, he stated that Muslims should seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave (Mahasnah 11). Prophet Muhammad depended on writing to document his thoughts and the revelation as mentioned.

The importance of writing for Prophet Muhammad can be seen in his organizing of the writers’ tasks. Two of his companions (Ali ibn Abi Talib and ‘Othman ibn ‘Affan) were the writers of the revelation. If they were absent, there were two other substitutes. In addition, two companions were writers of the Prophet Muhammad’s needs. The needs of people were written by two companions. And there were two companions whose task was to write rules to organize people’s life and relationships. Also, Zaid ibn Thabit was the writer of Prophet Muhammad’s messages to kings. The spoils taken from wars were written by a companion. Prophet Muhammad appointed one of his companions as a substitute to any of the absent writers mentioned above (Ibn Sayed 2:316). This substitute was the general writer of Prophet Muhammad and was known as the Writer (Al-Mas’ody 246). These tasks of writers show how Prophet Muhammad values writing. In addition to these tasks, Prophet Muhammad asked one of his companions to teach Muslim kids reading and writing (Ibn Hazm 37). And he allowed a Christian person to teach Muslim children reading and writing (Ibn Saad 3:258). Asking his companion to teach the children and allowing the Christian person to teach the kids may point to his plan to expand the circle of benefiting from writing and his eagerness to spread it. At that time, there was no difference between men and women. Learning of writing was available for both genders.

Prophet Muhammad encouraged the learning of writing for both males and females. According to Al-Baladry (820-892), there were women who can read and write such as Al-
Shaffa Abdullah Abd Shams (Al-Baladry 477), one of Prophet Muhammad’s companions. Prophet Muhammad asked her to teach one of his wives reading and writing. In addition, his wife was also taught by another woman called Ruqayah Al-Namlah (Al-‘Asqalani 4:333). They were not the only three women who were literate, but also there were other women who were mentioned by Jawad Ali. He mentioned other four women (15: 138). Prophet Muhammad’s companions did not only follow his way of appreciating writing, but they sought to develop writing.

Following the steps of Prophet Muhammad, his companions were interested in writing. In the time of Prophet Muhammad and after his death, the tools of writing were not available. And what was available could not help to have a well-organized writing system. For example, after the death of Prophet Muhammad, Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq, a companion and the first calif in Islam, collect the pieces that the Qur’an was written on. He ordered Zaid ibn Thabit to collect these pieces. Ibn Thabet did not accept any pieces unless the owner of the piece had two witnesses who could testify that the piece was written in front of Prophet Muhammad (Mahasnah 45-46). And this collection of the Qur’an was the first complete Mushaf. The third calif, ‘Othman ibn ‘Affan, ordered the Qur’an to be copied. He made several copied and sent them to different Islamic cities (Mahasnah 50-49). These two stories show the beginning of organized writing in Islam in which the Qur’an (more than 600 pages) is collected in one place called Mushaf. But the question is that how the focus of the interest on writing the Qur’an may impact the spread of writing. Hadeeths are also important for Muslims and are considered sacred texts. To save Hadeeths from changes, what is called Isnad emerged.

Isnad is one of the most unique features of Arabs’ orality. Isnad can be translated as narration. But the word “narration” is not the exact meaning of isnad. Also, there are isnad and
sanad. However, isnad as a term is a list of authorities who have transmitted a report of a statement, action, or approbation of prophet Muhammad, of one of his Companions, or of a later authority; its reliability determines the validity of a hadeeth. Although sanad is known for hadeeth (Prophet Muhammad’s statement, action, or approbation), it is used in literature and history. According to Mahasnah, any hadeeth consists of two parts sanad and matn. Sanad is the chain of the names of the narrators. And the matn is the saying, action, or approbation of Prophet Muhammad (79). For example, in Sahih Al-Bukhari [The Authentic of Al-Bukhari], Muhammad Ibn Isma’ael Al-Bukhari writes that:

Amr Ibn Khaled (a narrator) told us that Al-Laith (a narrator) told us what he heard from Yazid (a narrator) who was told by Abi Al-Khair (a narrator) who was told by Abdullah ibn ‘Amr (a companion and a narrator): a man asked the Prophet, “What sort of deeds or (what qualities of) Islam are good?” The Prophet replied, ‘To feed (the poor) and greet those whom you know and those whom you do not know (13).

Amr Ibn Khaled, Al-Laith, Yazid, Abi Al-Khair, and Abdullah ibn ‘Amr are the narrators of the hadeeth. This is what is called sanad. It is a chain of narrators. The last narrator is Al-Bukhari who wrote the hadeeth. He was born in 810. And the first narrator who heard the hadeeth from Prophet Muhammad is Abdullah ibn ‘Amr and was dead in 683. There were 127 years between the death of the first narrator and the birth of the last narrator. The hadeeth was transmitted by narrators from the first narrator to the last narrator. Therefore, the isnad is an oral process to save the authenticity of hadeeths.

Isnad was created to maintain the authenticity of hadeeths. At the time of Prophet Muhammad and a while after his death, isnad was not required because the time was close to the time of Prophet Muhammad (Saad 10). But after the murder of ‘Othman ibn ‘Affan, a companion and the third calif in Islam, at the end of 656, Islamic scholars were afraid of the impact of liars and forgetness on the authenticity of hadeeths (10). For this, they sought to ensure
the authenticity of the narrators of hadeeths (20). Iraqi scholars were the first Islamic scholars who sought the authenticity of Isnad (Saad 43). This process was the beginning of the emergence of what is called isnad. However, isnad continued to flourish until the spread of writing. When hadeeths were written, the narration of hadeeth stopped. Both during the oral time and after the writing of isnad, Islamic scholars developed the isnad to improve its function.

The authentic hadeeths depend on isnad to be trusted and accepted by Muslims and Islamic scholars. For this, depending on the level of authenticity of sanad, hadeeth scholars divide hadeeth into three main categories: correct, good, and weak (Mahasnah 79). The condition of the correct hadeeth is that the sanad is connected, and all the narrators are reliable (Mahasnah 80-79). The connected sanad means that there is no time gap between two or more narrators. The good hadeeth is similar to the correct hadeeth. The difference between them is that, in the good hadeeth, one or more of the narrators are less reliable than the narrators of the correct hadeeth. The weak hadeeth is a hadeeth that misses one or more conditions of the conditions of the good hadeeth (80). In addition to this category, there is another category which is to judge the hadeeth depending on the isnad regardless of the previous category. In this category, hadeeths are divided into mutawatir and ‘Ahad (Al-Soyoty 1:113). The mutawatir hadeeth is narrated by a large number of narrators. Due to their large number, it is impossible for them to agree to narrate a liar hadeeth. And ‘Ahad hadeeth is narrated by one person in each level (1:114). For example, one of the Prophet Muhammad’s companions narrates a hadeeth. Then he tells only one narrator, and the narrator tells another one narrator, and so on until it is written. Al-Raf’ay provides another category that contains only mutawatir from the previous category. He provided twelve types of hadeeths. The most important type is al-musnad which is its narrators are connected. If there is a time gap between one or more of the narrators, it is called mursal (282-283). In sum, there are
conditions to accept a hadeeth. Depending on these conditions, hadeeth can be analyzed to understand Islam. Categories mentioned focus on hadeeth and sanad. And also, there are conditions related to the narrators.

Looking for the reliability of the narrators is the most important condition to judge the hadeeth. Islamic religious scholars focus on the history of narrators to determine reliable narrators. Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq, a companion and the first calif in Islam, is the first person who makes conditions. He had not accepted a hadeeth unless the narrator provides a witness who testifies that the narrator heard the hadeeth directly from Prophet Muhammad (Al-Raf’ay 245-246). The conditions of narration developed later and became strict. Eiad Musa Al-Yahsubi (1083-1149) advises people who want to become narrators to know the narrators who want to listen to. In addition, for him, a new narrator should know the different categories of hadeeths (3-5). In fact, isnad became a field of knowledge. There are several disciplines that attracted scholars to focus on to ensure a hadeeth is correct, good, or weak.

What is mentioned above about isnad shows how the isnad is complicated. This complicated process turned the isnad from only a way to know how a hadeeth is transmitted and who are the narrators of the hadeeth to a field of knowledge. According to Mahasnah, to know the correct hadeeth the following field of knowledge appeared: the knowledge of the names of men, the knowledge of jarh and ta’deel, the knowledge of the abrogating and the abrogated, and the knowledge of the hadeeth’s strangeness, the knowledge of causes of hadeeth (76-77). The knowledge of the names of men is a knowledge that focuses on the history of the narrators such as their date of birth, date of death, their names, their titles, their lineages, their homelands, their travelings, their teachers. The knowledge of jarh and ta’deel consists of two parts: jarh and ta’deel. The jarh is to determine the narrators who are not reliable and due to their lack of
reliability, the hadiths that they narrate are judged as weak or liar hadith. The *ta’deel* is to determine the reliable narrators. The knowledge of the abrogating and the abrogated is to determine hadiths that abrogate other hadiths. The knowledge of the hadith’s strangeness is a knowledge that focuses on the meaning of the strange words that people do not know. Also, it explains the hidden meanings of hadiths. The knowledge of causes of hadith determines the causes that make a hadith weak although it looks like a correct hadith. All these disciplines emerged in the written age, and there are many books that written on these disciplines. In fact, *isnad* did not stop at the beginning of writing, not only because of the lack of writing equipment but also due to what is called *tasheef*.

With the spread of writing, books became another source of knowledge besides the *isnad*. But this new source was not accepted as *isnad* for reasons. At that time, Arabic writing was not developed yet. For example, in the Arabic alphabet, there were letters that have the same symbol such *bā* (b), *tā* (t), and *thā* (th). All these letters are written as (ـ) (later, they are differentiated by dots. *Bā* becomes ـ, *tā* becomes ـ, *thā* becomes ـ). For this, a mistake happened in the narration. Some of the mistakes change the meaning of the message. According to Al-Raf’ay, at that time, Islamic religious scholars of the *jarh* and *ta’deel* may say about a narration: he is reliable but some of his narration is taken from books (262) which means that his narration cannot be a correct hadith. And this is called *tasheef* which is a word taken from *sahefah* (a script) and means reading a word mistakenly. This happened not only in hadith but also in literature. For this, literature depended on *isnad* as the hadith.

*Isnad* is not only for hadith, but it was also used in several fields of knowledge such as Arabic language and Arabic literature (rhetoric and poetry). For Muslims, hadith is sacred, but the literature is not. For this, *isnad*, in hadith, gains intensive attention. In addition, the
grammar of the Arabic language which is the only language of hadeeth was elicited from the literature of the oral age because at that time Arabs did not engage with people who speak different languages which means that their Arabic language is pure. The need for oral Arabic literature requires reliable texts which can be gained through reliable narrators. According to Jalal Al-Deen Abdulrahman Al-Soyoty, a person who transmits the Arabic language is required to be reliable whether he/she is a man, a woman, or a slave as in isnad in hadeeth because, by language, one can interpret the hadeeth (1:138). Al-Asad mentions that narration had existed in literature since the Ignorance Age. For this, it is different from the isnad of the hadeeth (255). For Al-Asad, unlike in the isnad of the literature, the isnad of hadeeth is connected to Prophet Muhammad (258). But what is important for this chapter is not the similarities and the differences between the isnad of hadeeth and the isnad of literature, but only the existence of the isnad of the Arabic literature. Because of the interest of this project in orality and literacy in the Arab culture, the project views isnad as an oral approach created to do the task of writing due to the lack of the equipment of writing. In another word, the oral mind created an oral tool (isnad) to preserve oral knowledge. And this task is the task of writing.

As mentioned, Arabs of the Ignorant Age used narration to orally transmit their poems and rhetoric due to the lack of writing. Al-Raf’ay differentiates between the narration that oral Arabs depended on and the isnad. For him, isnad is the testimony of the time about the scientific connecting between the narrator of the text and the narrated text to prove the truthfulness of the knowledge. And this cannot happen without making narration a field of knowledge. Oral Arabs did not have this purpose or even think in this way. Narration becomes a field of knowledge after the rise of the Umayyad Caliphate (662-750). The beginning of the isnad of Arabic literature emerged with Hammad Al-Rawiah (714-771), an Arabic narrator and scholar, Abi ‘Amr ibn Al-
‘Ala (687-770), an Arabic narrator, grammarian, and scholar, and others. And this is the beginning of the Arabic literature’s isnad (256). Al-Asad determines the seventh century as the beginning of the second phase of narration of Arabic poetry and calls it the knowledge of narration. In this phase, Al-Asad mentions that the narration has two pillars: reading from books and listening to the narrators (189-190). But the problem with the narration of Arabic literature is that it is not connected to the Ignorant poet or the orator. There was a time gap between the narrators of the second phase and the poets and the orators. In addition to this problem, there is a link between the narration of Arabic literature and genealogy which makes the situation more complicated.

The connection between poetry and genealogy is strong in Arabic culture, especially in the Ignorant Age. As previously mentioned, Arabs bragged about their poems. Tribes celebrated when one of their members became a poet because he/she can immortalize and eternize the name of his/her tribe. For this, people should know the lineage of the poets to know whom he/she praises in his/her poem. Because of this, according to Al-Asad, the genealogists were Arabic literary narrators (215-216). The tribalism or the strong loyalty to the tribes makes the situation more complicated in which some of the narrators created stories and poems and attributed them to poets from their tribes to praise their tribes. In addition, genealogists, in the Ignorant Age, depended on their memory to memorize both the lineage of tribes and their stories, speeches, and poems.

In sum, the rise of Islam promotes the spread of writing. The Qur’an connected between writing and knowledge which means knowledge can be gained with the help of writing. Due to the lack of the equipment of writing, Muslims depend on narration to maintain hadith. The spread of writing, the narration became a field of knowledge called isnad. The eighth century is
the beginning of the compositions in Arabic culture. Authorship flourished after the development of Arabic writing and the availability of writing equipment. The emergence of some issues in the oral Arabs culture such as making the Arabic language a sacred language, *isnad*, and connecting between Islam and writing is the phase of transition from orality and literacy. Anthony Wachs in his *The New Science of Communication* traces the transition from orality to literacy in old Greece. He mentions that before the phonetic alphabet, poetry played an important role to maintain the knowledge of the oral culture. With the rise of the phonetic alphabet, the musical nature of Greek education, poetry is one of its manifestations, changed in the fifth century (108). The transformation from orality to literacy requires new way of education and styles of transforming the knowledge. In the Arabic culture, the rise of *isnad* implied the need for the shift from orality to literacy because Arabs use an oral approach to do the task of writing.

**The Spread of Writing and the Beginning of the Authorship**

Although the spreading of writing rapidly happened, in the old Arabic culture, due to the promotion of Islam to writing, Arabic culture did not shift to be literate culture. According to Al-Sowayan, after the use and spread of writing, the oral style of creating and performing poetry continued (34). This means that the Arabic culture resisted the change from orality to literacy. However, For Al-Sowayan, the shift from orality to literacy does not happen merely when a person or a society knows how to read and write. But reading and writing should be the main channel for communication (36). In fact, before writing, Arabic culture was established according to orality. There are several examples to prove that. Al-Sowayan mentions that literature, in the Western, is linked to writing. In the Western tradition, the root of the word “literature” (also belles letters and other words) is “letter” which means a written letter or an alphabetic letter. But in Arabic culture, *‘adab* (literature) does not have this relationship to
writing. It has a link to discipline, politeness, and refinement. It has a relation to call for ethics. In this sense, ‘adab can be translated as “lore,” not literature (36). In Lesan Al-‘Arab [Tongue of Arabs], Ibn Manzor mentions that ‘adab means that one disciplines his kids, and also means calling people to food (1:206). Obviously, the literal meaning of ‘adab has a strong link to orality in which the literal meanings indicate an oral act. Building the meanings on orality makes the shift from orality to literacy difficult. Ibn Faris who was born in 941 and was dead in 1004, mentions that not Arabs, in the Ignorant Age, were like people of his age, some of them were literate (36). This means that in the tenth century, not all Arab were literate. Orality was common in his age. To know and study the age of the beginning of the spread of writing in the old Arabic culture, one should analyze the efforts of scholars to promote writing and how they dealt with language.

At the beginning of the spread of writing, Arabs began to analyze the Arabic language. They turned their attention and efforts to the oral Arabic language to write it, analyze it, and deduce to the Arabic grammar and other linguistic issues. One of the issues that they analyzed is the relationship between the words and their meanings. Al-Soyoty mentions that there are different opinions about this issue. One of them is that each meaning should not have a word signifying it because meanings are unlimited whereas words are limited because words consist of letters that are limited (1:41). In addition, Arabic scholars at the beginning of writing studied the reason for choosing words to indicate their meaning. In other words, are words created depending on their mental images or based on the external identities? (1:42). In fact, this question exemplifies two different opinions. In addition to the words and their meanings, Islamic scholars at the beginning of writing sought to deduce the grammar of the Arabic language. The reason for this is that there were many people from other cultures who spoke different languages
engaged Arabs, especially with the expansion of Islam and the Islamic state. This engagement between Arabs and other cultures changed the way of speaking Arabic. Arabic linguists studied the Arabic language to make the Arabic grammar (Al-Afgani 8; Al-Raf'ay 212; Ali 17:36). It was in the seventh century (Ali 17:36). Also, Arabic prosody was one of the important issues that relates to writing and analyzing the oral Arabic language. Al-Khalil ibn Ahmed Al-Farahidi (718-791) studied oral Ignorant poetry to understand the unique characteristics of the poetry (Al-Sowayan 14). He inferred the metrics and the poetical seas (explained early in this chapter). In addition to this effort, Al-Farahidi made the first Arabic dictionary (Mahasnah 173). But all these analyses of the Arabic language were made after a wonderful work of gathering the pure Arabic language from its pure environment.

To study and analyze the Arabic language, Arabic scholars needed to determine the pure Arabic language which is not impacted by the new lifestyle, especially in the Fertile Crescent, Persia, and Rome where Arabs’ language changed due to the engagement with other people from these cultures. Arabic scholars depended on listening to narrators who lived in the desert of the Arabian Peninsula. In this place at that time, people did not mingle with others which means their Arabic language is still pure. According to Al-Sowayan, the relationship between the early Arab linguists and oral poetry was not built by reading, but by listening to the narrators (72). Listening to the narrators in the desert of the Arabian Peninsula means that the scholars traveled to this place to listen to the pure Arabic language.

The fieldwork was the way that Arab linguists used to gain the pure Arabic language. At the beginning of the field works, according to Al-Sowayan, Arab linguists listen to Arabs of the desert peninsula who came to Basra and Kufa (two cities located in Iraq) for trade. Al-Sowayan calls this phase the first phase (68). In the second phase, Arab linguists traveled to the desert of
the Arabian Peninsula to listen to Arabs (68). They found Arabs who lived in both the Ignorant era and the Islamic era (69). Each Arab linguist created his own methodology. For example, Al-Asma’ay (740-828) did not only gather poetry, rhetoric, and Arabic words, but also, he was eager to determine the location of the texts, the age of the narrators, poets, and orators, their names, their identity, and tribe (70). In sum, traveling to the desert of the Arabian Peninsula did not only enable the Arab linguists to listen to the pure Arabic language, but it also helps them to study the environment and know the nature that the language was practiced in. All these poetry, rhetoric, and stories that gathered from the desert of the Arabian Peninsula were written and analyzed. This indicates the development that Arabic writing gained.

Tracing and collecting the pure Arabic language imply that the writing, at that time, gained intensive attention, and its equipment was developed. Al-Asad mentions that there are texts that prove the wide availability of papers at the beginning of the spread of writing. There were shops only for papers (135). Not only papers but also pens were developed. In fact, some scholars went beyond the development of writing equipment and explained the optimal way to use pens such as Abu Hayan Al-Tawheedi (923-1023). In *Thalath Rasaeel le-Abi Hayan Al-Tawheedi* [*Three Letters of the Abu Hayan Al-Tawheedi*], Al-Tawheedi explains types of Arabic calligraphy, types of pens, the way of sharpening pens, the way of holding pens, the advantage of writing, the link between writing and knowledge, etc. This focus on how to use the equipment of writing had happened after the development of Arabic writing.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there were letters in the Arabic alphabet that share one symbol such as bā (b), tā (t), and thā (th) which share (ـ) as a symbol for all of these letters. The development of Arabic writing requires solving this problem. The solving of the problem, also mentioned earlier, was by using dots to differentiate between these three letters. In addition,
Ali Ebrahim Muhammad mentions that Arabs created what is called movements to facilitate the pronunciation of words (239). The movements are four: *fatha* (ُ), *kasrah* (ُ), *dammah* (ُ), and *sokon* (ُ). These movements are put above or under each letter of a word to know how to pronounce it. To explain this issue to English readers, I will make a movement on an English word which is “movement.” Instead of movement, in the English language, English writers use letters. In the word “movement,” the “o” and the second “e” are called a movement of the first “m” and the second “m.” If one tries to write the word with the Arabic movement it would look like ُmُvُmnt. However, this development of writing happened when Arabs saw the need for writing. This development was needed because many of the Arabic words have different ways of pronouncing. Each way of pronouncing indicates a different meaning.

Writing became an occupation at the beginning of the spread of writing. Al-Asad provides names of writers whose job is to copy books (136-137). In addition, beginning of the Umayyad Caliphate, there was what is called the letters’ office. Its task is to write letters to kings and to organize writing affairs (Hejab 54-61). This means that there was a way to write letters. The office of letters worked to develop the form of writing letters. And, obviously, the office requires trained writers. If the writing of letters was developed at that time, it is a fortiori the development of books and what relates to books such as libraries.

The interest in libraries was one of the characteristics of the beginning of the spread of writing. At that time, libraries were an integral part of the life of Arab culture. And the interest in them was unique at that time. Beginning of the seventh century, there was an intellectual club that had a public library (Al-Asad 141). Establishing a public library was not only a task of the rulers or the governments, but there were individuals who established a public library. Some caliphs, princes, and rich men and women instituted public libraries with several facilities such
as comfortable chairs and tables and bibliographies. The libraries were managed by several employees who are the manager, monawlon (people who bring books), copiers (people who copy the original books), translators, mojalidon (employees who bind books), book organizers, and slaves (to clean libraries) (Mahasnah 155-156). One of the greatest libraries was Bayt Al-Kikmah library [the house of wisdom] established by Haroon Al-Rasheed, Abbasid Caliph, in 786 in Baghdad (Mahasnah 156). The interest in books and their affairs was not exclusive to the nobles but rather was an obsession for intellectuals and writers as well.

One of the most important turning points in the history of Arabic writing was books written to develop writing itself. Arabic scholars tried to organize Arabic writing by composing huge books on this topic. one of the books is Subh Al-A’asha fi Ketabat Al-Ensha [The Morning of the Dim-Sighted in the Writing of Script] by Ahmed Al-Qalqashandi (1355-1418). The book consists of fourteen volumes. The book is about Arabic writing. Al-Qalqashandi analyzes the history of writing and its use from the beginning of the rise of writing in the Arabic culture. In addition, Abdullah Muslim ibn Qutaybah (828-889) wrote Adab Al-Kateb [Writer’s Guidance]. In this introduction of this book, ibn Qutaybah mentions that the purpose of the book is to fix the mistake of the speakers and writers (14). He focuses on the difference between writing and speaking. Also, ibn Qutaybah explained the way of composing books. The last example is the book of Al-Soyoty which is Al-Muzher fi ‘Olom Al-Lugat wa Anwaeha [The Bloomed in the Sciences of Language and Their types]. The book is located in two volumes and divided into fifty chapters. In the book, Al-Soyoty explains how writers become good writers. In these books, authors do not only discuss issues related to writing, but also, they focus on issues related to listening and speaking, especially listening to gain knowledge. This means that they see writing as a way to gain knowledge. As mentioned, knowledge and writing are inseparable. With the
strong existence of orality at that time, listening and speaking were still good ways to gain knowledge. This connection between writing and knowledge and also orality and knowledge is exemplified in Al-Jahiz's way of writing. As mentioned in the introduction, Al-Jahiz wrote his books to both oral people and literate people. In addition, Al-Jahiz was aware of the impact of the writing on people and culture. And this is what makes Al-Jahiz the case of this project.

Education, at the beginning of the spread of writing, faced a struggle between orality and literacy. Orality did not only continue between ordinary people but also it was used as a way to gain knowledge. According to Al-Sowayan, from the first generation to later generations, the poetical narration was oral (72). In fact, they prefer oral narration over reading. In the Middle Ages of Europe, reading meant reading aloud (McLuhan 82). In fact, freeing a community from the characteristics of the orality at the beginning of the literate age is not an easy process. For McLuhan, “[r]eaders continued to read aloud after the beginning of word separation in the later Middle Ages, and even after the coming of print in the Renaissance” (85). Scholars, in the Arabic traditional culture, did not admit one’s knowledge in a certain field of knowledge unless he gains the knowledge orally (322). For students at that time, they need to be admitted by a scholar to become a teacher or a considerable scholar. However, this does not mean that reading from books for education was not available. Reading existed at that time and was used for education.

Reading for education was a controversial issue at the beginning of the spread of writing due to the misunderstanding that reading can cause. If one gains his knowledge by only reading, scholars do not consider him knowledgeable person. He would not be called a scholar, but suhafy (Al-Asad 180) (from sahifah which was explained earlier in this chapter.) However, there was a way of using books as a way of gaining knowledge, and it was accepted. The way is to read a
book in front of a scholar. For example, Al-Asma’ay (740-828) read collections of Ignorant poets in front of his scholars (Al-Soyoty 1:160). Therefore, knowledge was gained by both listening and reading. But the only condition to gain knowledge by reading is to read a book in front of a scholar to fix mistakes. And this way of reading was not only in the Arabic culture. Marshall McLuhan suggests that writing in the Middle Ages was not only oral but also did not separate from rhetoric. For him, writing in the Middle Ages was seen, in the education system as a way of oral training (94). Both ways, listening and reading loudly, indicate orality as the main way to gain knowledge. This means that authors composed their books for oral reading or oral intellectual community.

The first phase of compositions in the Arabic culture was to write the oral texts. Scholars depended only on narration as the only source of these texts, as mentioned earlier. This phase is called *tadween* (recording). According to Al-Sowayan, in this phase, orality had a strong existence (33-34). The existence of orality in this phase can be justified by that the writing was not to write the writers’ thoughts but to write the oral texts. Also, narrators, the holders of the knowledge at that time, were more than the writers which mean that knowledge was oral. However, authorship took place after the beginning of the recording phase and during the recording phase. In the authorship phase, scholars analyzed what was collected in the recording phase. Ibn Sallam Al-Jumahi (756-845) in his *Tabaqat Fohol Al-Shu’ara* [*Layers of Stallions Poets*] created his own school of criticism. He categorizes the poets of the Ignorant Age depending on the quality of their poems. Al-Jahiz, in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* analyzes oral rhetoric to create his own rhetorical theory. The third phase is about books that do not necessarily depend on the oral traditional literature or religious texts such as *Al-Hayawan* of Al-Jahiz. In this book, Al-Jahiz focuses on animals and their characteristics by interpreting their
actions and sounds (Nasif 55). The last phase is the phase of translation. At the beginning of the spread of writing, Muslims saw their need for knowledge from other cultures such as Greek culture, Persian culture, Indian culture, and Chinese culture. Some caliphs used books as a way to stop the war with other nations. One of the conditions of peace between Haroon Al-Rasheed and the Romans after his victory over them was that they should hand over the Greek manuscripts to the Muslims. And his son, Al-Mamun did the same thing after he defeated the Emperor of Byzantium (Mahasnah 154). In addition, as mentioned earlier, there was a department of translation in the public libraries to translate books from other cultures besides the efforts of individuals. All these four phases impact different aspects of the Islamic culture at that time. There were different kinds of arts that emerged due to the impact of the spread of writing such as al-mowashahat.

The beginning of al-mowashahat is a controversial issue. However, what matters for this chapter is that al-mowashahat was created at the beginning of the spread of writing. However, al-mowashahat is a poetical art established by Arabs in Andalus (Spain) before the end of the eleventh century (Raheem 31) although some scholars point to Ibn Abd Rabuh (860-940) as the first poet who wrote or said al-mowashahat. According to this opinion, the beginning of al-mowashahat was in the ninth century. However, what the causes for the creation of al-mowashahat is controversial. One of the opinions is that the old Arabic poetical metrics were not enough and limited. For this, Arabs find another way to write their poetry (Al-Zayat 314). When a receiver listens to one who performs a poem, the performer controls the musical sound of the poem. But when a person reads a poem, he controls the musical aspect of the poem in his mind regardless of his way of reading the poem. Other scholars believe that the singing revolution that
happened in Andalus was the cause of creating *al-mowashahat*. Whatever the reason is, there is a link between orality and literacy and the creating of *al-mowashahat*.

**Summary**

This chapter focuses on the orality and literacy of the old Arabic traditional culture. The pre-Islamic Age is divided into the ancient Arabic age and the Ignorant Age. Historians and anthropologists use inscriptions of states and kingdoms of the ancient Arabic age as proof of the existence of writing in that period. However, in the Ignorant Age, although writing has existed, this age cannot be described as literate culture because the writing was rare, and the characteristics of the culture were oral. Poetry at that time was the only source of knowledge. But the rise of Islam brought a huge change in the Arabic culture. The language of the *Qur’an* (the Islamic holy book) is Arabic which altered the Arabic language from a mere language to a sacred language. In addition, Arabs created *isnad* to convey oral knowledge. *Isnad* is an oral approach that did the task of writing due to the lack of writing equipment. Also, Islam did not support writing but also made a link between writing and knowledge. When writing was widely spread in the eighth century, Arabs saw the need for developing and improving the Arabic writing system. They added dots and movements to the Arabic words to differentiate the similar letters. In addition, they developed writing styles. There were books composed to make the writing rules. Writing became an occupation at the beginning of the spread of writing. The spread of writing flourished compositions in different fields of knowledge. In addition, the translation of books from different cultures took place. These two activities, the composition and the translation, gained the support of the caliphs. They established libraries and new types of jobs to manage the intellectual movement. However, although the writing was widespread, the education and orality did not separate. Learning happened by listening and loudly reading. In sum, Islam was the
turning point of Arabs from orality and literacy. This shift was rapid. The Arabic society, after
the spread of writing, did not shift to literacy. In fact, it seems that the intellectual movement was
the only component of the Arabic culture that shifted to literacy. This brief story of the old
traditional Arabic culture shows how this culture transferred from orality to literacy.

The overview that this chapter provides about the orality and literacy of the old
traditional Arabic culture helps to understand not only the status of the orality in the Ignorant
Age but also the process of transferring from orality to literacy in this culture. The project
focuses on Al-Jahiz’s *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* to study the transformation from orality to
literacy in Arabic culture. What is needed to understand the impact of orality and literacy in Al-
Jahiz’s thought and way of composition is to know the status of orality in the Arabic culture
before transforming from orality to literacy. In addition, there is a need for explaining the
process of transforming from orality and literacy. This chapter does not only show the orality and
the transformation from orality to literacy but also how the Arabic culture changed after the
widespread of writing. Also, the chapter shows what is unique in the Arabic culture, such as
*isnad* and *al-mowashahat*, that media ecologists can analyze to add to the theory of orality and
literacy. In sum, this chapter is used as a way to understand how Al-Jahiz promoted the shift
from orality to literacy.

Al-Jahiz, who lived at the very beginning of the spread of writing in the Arabic culture,
contributed to the transformation from orality to literacy in two ways. First, he understood the
impact of writing on people's way of thinking and expressing, as will be explained in the second
chapter. Second, studying his way of writing helps to understand the impact of writing, at his
time, not only on him but also on the Arabic culture at that time. The second way is the focus of
chapters five and six of this project. However, to provide an accurate understanding of Al-Jahiz’s
thoughts, The next chapter focuses on Al-Jahiz’s era, life, thoughts, and the status of orality at his time.
Chapter two: Al-Jahiz’s Life, Works, and Philosophy.

Al-Jahiz’s philosophy and thoughts are the focus of this chapter. But to help the Western readers of this project to understand Al-Jahiz’s thoughts and philosophy, there is a need for a brief explanation Al-Jahiz’s life and the historical moment. As Ibn Khaldun writes, “[m]an is the child of customs, not the child of his ancestors” (484). The nature his early life, way of learning, and way of living can help to determine the extent of the impact of orality and literacy on Al-Jahiz. Also, analyzing of Al-Jahiz’s age and life will help to contextualize Al-Jahiz’s philosophy and the cause of his way of thinking. Therefore, this chapter introduces Al-Jahiz’s age, life, works, philosophies, and consciousness of the impact of writing on people’s life.

Understanding Al-Jahiz’s life, philosophy, and works, especially his awareness of the impact of writing on people’s personalities, will contribute to a deeper understanding of how literate people who lived in an oral culture (in the transitional phase) absorbed writing. The studying of life and the thoughts of these people clarifies and answers questions about how a certain medium of communication begins to impact people and cultures. Understanding the life, ways of thinking, and the form of expressions of literate people during the transitional phase from orality to literacy also can contribute to understanding and contextualizing the transformation happening today from literacy to the secondary orality, and answers the following questions: who are the first affected people? how do they live in their society? Focusing on Al-Jahiz’s life, philosophy, and works help to answer these two questions. In addition, the chapter explains one of the main parts of the project which is specific Arabic thoughts from the Arabic transitional phase. Also, the chapter concentrates on Al-Jahiz’s life, philosophy, and works to provide an overview of his way of thinking in order to analyze Al-Jahiz’s Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen, which is the main case for the project.
Al-Jahiz’s Historical Moment

Al-Jahiz lived at the beginning of the Abbasid Caliphate, which lasted from 750 until 1517, and this is important because it provides the situation of intellectual and social life of that time which impacted Al-Jahiz’s way of thinking and expressing. His life was from the second half of the eighth century to the middle of the ninth century. According to Jameel Jaber, this period was the peak of the Abbasid Caliphate. At that time, the rule of the Abbasid Caliphate reached from what is known as the Middle East to India (20). Although the caliphate depended on Arabic culture, it benefited from other cultures, such as Greek culture and Persian cultures. In addition, this period witnessed the rise of the main Sunni Islamic schools (Maliki school, Hanafi school, Shafi’i School, and Hanbali School). Also, in this age, there were many well-known philosophers such as Al-Farabi, Al-Kindi, Ibn Sina (known in the West as Avicenna), to name just a few. (Mardam 45). The Abbasid Caliphate was the age of that produced the majority of well-known Arabic writers, scholars, and poets. In fact, there were different movements (social movement, political movement, intellectual movement, etc.) that impacted the Abbasid Caliphate.

The Abbasid Caliphate did not only open Arab society to other cultures, but it also promoted an acceptance of the people of other cultures. People from Greece, Rome, Persian, India, China engaged with Arab culture just as Arabs engaged these cultures. This moment was one of many unique moments in history that promoted multicultural interaction. The engagement was not only at the cultural level but also at the political and governing level. According to Ezzat Al-Saied Ahmed, some Persians, at the beginning of the Abbasid Caliphate, had high positions in the Abbasid government. But this engagement in political life ended when Abbasid Caliphhs realized the threat Persians posed on the Abbasid regime. Persians established what is called
Sh’obbiah (a racist campaign, thought or ideology against Arabs) which sought to destroy the Abbasid Caliphs and reestablish the Sasanian Empire. For this reason, Al-Mu’tasim (796-842), the eighth Abbasid caliph, planned to turn his attention from Persians to Turkish people (*Falsafat Al-AkhlAQ 57*). Therefore, governing positions were not exclusive to Arabs or Muslims, and people from different cultures and religions who had high-ranking positions in the Abbasid Caliphs. This engagement of the other cultures in political life may imply the status of freedom during the age of Al-Jahiz which also opened a window to the literate civilizations such as Rome and Persia. The freedom of thought gave people from other cultures a motivation to engage Arabs' life because they could practice their religion and could express their thought without fear.

In Al-Jahiz’s age, the boundaries of freedom and other socio-politico-cultural elements were not static. These cultural elements changed depending on the thoughts of the caliph. Al-Jahiz lived under the rule of ten caliphs. The level of freedom differed according to the thoughts of each caliph. But in general, the engagement with other nations, cultures, and religions created a strong ground for freedom (Jaber 20). Freedom was not an absolute concept. It depended on the belief of the ruler. For example, Al-Mahdi (744-785) and his son Al-Hadi (764-786), the third and fourth caliphs, punished people for heresy (Jabri 83). In addition, Haroon Al-Rasheed (766-809), banned any religious debate regardless of its topic (Ibn Al-Murtada 31). But this restriction changed at the time of Al-Mamon (786-833), the seventh Abbasid caliph. According to Jabri Shafeeq, when Al-Mamon became a caliph, every kind of speech, thought, and ideology were allowed. He, as a caliph, discussed scholars and debated atheists (83-84). Although the Abbasid Caliphs was an Islamic state, people from other religions argued and publicly invited Muslims to convert to their religion (87). But the history of Al-Mamon witnesses his aggressive attitude
against the objectors of an issue called *Khalq Al-Qur’an* (the createdness of the Qur’an). He tortured and lashed people who did not believe that the Qur’an is a creature\(^8\) (85). But in general, freedom during the age of Al-Jahiz was protected by caliphs although there were issues that complicated this freedom. But these issues did not impact the public sphere, especially the education and intellectual spheres. In fact, education flourished at that time.

In Al-Jahiz’s time (under the ruling of the ten caliphs that Al-Jahiz contemporized), education was available everywhere. It was a time of taking care of knowledge. Although intellectual life was at its beginning in the Islamic civilization at that time, it gained the attention of the Islamic caliphates. The first step for students was to learn writing and reading and the essential knowledge such as Arabic grammar and morphology, math basics, and the Qur’an was what is called *kuttab* (Al-Sandobi 26). *Kuttab* was located in mosques and teachers’ homes. Teachers sat in a corner of a mosque or in a room of their home and their students sat around them to learn from them. The root of the word "*kuttab*" is *katab* (writing) which means to give a student knowledge related to reading and writing. In addition, it means that the first step for students is to learn to read and write. *Kuttab* can be translated as writers. However, *kuttab* was widespread in Al-Jahiz’s time. Most linguist scholars went to them to teach students (Jabri 59). Although *kuttab* was the first step to learning reading and writing, the majority of knowledge was taught orally. The existence of *kuttab* and the books at Al-Jahiz time may indicate that education was a literate process. But, in fact, oral education was more important than literate education. In the first chapter, there is a mention of what is called *suhafy*, which indicates a person who heavily depended on books in his education. *Suhafy* is a word to negatively describe his education. Saad Al-Sowayan mentions that from the first generation to later generations, the

---

\(^8\) The majority of Muslims believe that the Qur’an is the word of Allah and is not a creature.
poetical narration was oral (72). In fact, the oral preference of education was not special in the Arabic transitional phase, but also it happened in other cultures. Marshall McLuhan states that, in the Middle Ages, reading meant reading loudly (Gutenberg 82). “Readers continued to read aloud after the beginning of word separation in the later Middle Ages, and even after the coming of print in the Renaissance” (85). In fact, McLuhan’s description of education in the Middle Ages is applicable to the education in Al-Jahiz’s age. In the traditional Arabic culture, scholars did not admit one’s knowledge unless he gains the knowledge orally (Al-Asad 180). Even though books were used in the educational process, they were used orally. For instance, Al-Asma’ay (740-828) read collections of Ignorant poets loudly in front of his scholars (Al-Soyoty 1:160). However, after learning the essential knowledge in the kuttab, students who wanted to have more knowledge in a certain field could join what were called "knowledgeable rings" in mosques and private schools (Al-Sandobi 26). "Knowledgeable rings" is an Arabic expression that describes what is similar to the classroom today. It is called "knowledgeable rings" because a scholar sits, and his pupils sit next to him in a circle way. They make a circle shape in a mosque or a school similar to the shape of the ring. However, education was available for both males and females. Moreover, teachers went to prisons to teach prisoners (Al-Sandobi 27). Education in this manner was supported by caliphs. They guaranteed high wages for both teachers and students (Falsafat Al-Akhlâq 44). This interest in education resulted in a revolution in knowledge and made the intellectual movement active.

The freedom of thought and the support of education promoted the intellectual movement. In Al-Mamon’s time, the intellectual movement was reinforced in several ways. As mentioned above, Al-Mamon protected the freedom of expression and thought except what was mentioned about the createdness of the Qur’an. However, according to Jabri, he established Bayt
Al-Hikmah (the House of Wisdom) in Baghdad⁹. Bayt Al-Hikmah was similar to a university. Al-Mamon made it a library and equipped it for astronomical observation. Also, he created a department for translating books to the Arabic language (105). In addition to this library and its efforts for supporting the spread of knowledge, authorship, Muslims, at that time, translated philosophical, mathematical, medical books to the Arabic language. In fact, they did not only translate the books but also composed in these new fields of knowledge. For example, in Al-Mamon's time, there was Al-Khawarzmi (780-850), known in the West as Algorithmi, who introduced Hindu-Arabic numerals and algebra to European mathematicians (106). To have an accurate translation, some scholars traveled and lived in Roman cities to learn the language such as Haneen ibn Ishaq (809-873) who was an Arabic Christian translator, physician, and scientist (105). The translation of philosophy, also, impacted the intellectual movement. Aristotle’s works, for example, had a great impact on Islamic philosophy. However, the intellectual movement was not only impacted by translation but also by Arabic culture. Al-Sandobi mentions that there was a marketplace in Basrah, in Iraq, known as a meeting point of Arabs who lived in the Arabian desert and their language and life was not impacted by the other cultures and languages which means they had the pure Arabic culture and language which needed by the Arabian linguists. Arabian linguists met them in this market to learn from them the pure Arabic language and culture (this idea is mentioned in chapter one) (28). The revolution of knowledge happened with the widespread of writing. Literacy resulted in developing and reinforcing the advancement of knowledge in different fields. philosophers and scholars mentioned in this paragraph were the logical outcomes of the widespread of writing. The revolution of knowledge

---

⁹ For Mahasnah, it was established by Haroon Al-Rasheed (156)
at that age, especially the translation of the philosophical books, impacted the way of understanding and explaining Islam.

In the age of Al-Jahiz, the freedom of expression, thought, and also the translation of philosophical books impacted how Islamic scholars interpreted Islam. The freedom of expression and thought made people, in Abbasid Caliphate, able to adopt foreign philosophies and thoughts and conceptualized their way of belief according to these philosophies. The result of integrating philosophies with Islamic teaching was establishing different and various schools. These two factors resulted in the emergence of different and varied Islamic schools such as the most famous Sunni Islamic schools (Maliki school, Hanafi school, Shafi‘i school, and Hanbali school) and al-mu‘tazilah. Because there are a huge number of Islamic schools, the only focus in this chapter would be on al-mu‘tazilah because it is the school that Al-Jahiz followed.

The Al-Mu‘tazilah School of Islam

Mu‘tazilah is one of the Islamic schools that depended on philosophy to determine its own type of thought. Before explaining this school, it is important to explain the word mu‘tazilah and determine its form to be used in English text to make it easy for English readers. In Arabic, the word "m’tazilah" is the name of the school. The literal meaning of the word can be translated as withdrawing or isolating. Mu‘tazili is to describe a person who follows this school and can be translated as an isolating person or a withdrawer. However, because the school has a strong link to philosophy, the words that would be used in this chapter are mutazilism as the name of the school, mutazilist as the name of a person who follows the school, and mutazilistic as an adjective to describe the ideas of the school.

Mutazilism was established at the beginning of the eighth century. Al-Sandobi states that the founder of mutazilism is Wasil ibn ‘Ata (700-748), an Islamic scholar at the end of the first
century in the Islamic calendar (92-94). *Mutazilism* is an Islamic school and had different and varied sects. It was widely spread in the time of Al-Mamon and became the official Islamic school of the caliphate (Jabr 22). Al-Sandobi mentions that the five fundamentals of *mutazilism* are monotheism (only one God who is Allah), justice (Allah is wise and does not accept corruption or does evil), promise and promised (Allah is true to what he promised, implements his promise, rewards the believers if they, at their death time, are good, and does not forgive people who do sins and do not repent before they die), names and judgments (the perpetrator of the major sins is neither a believer nor an unbeliever, but he is between them, which is depravity or rebellion), and the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice (believers are assigned to protect limits ordained by Allah and implement his jurisprudence) (99-102). Because they depend on philosophy, they only use reason to make the fundamentals of the school. Many of the school’s thoughts are not mentioned in the Qur’an or in hadiths. Jabri states that *mutazilists* are philosophers who study religious issues according to their opinions. For him, they only use their mind to determine their understanding of the Islamic teachings (164) instead of Islamic religious texts. For *mutazilists*, the beautiful and the ugly can be only determined by reason. Human beings are able to create their good and bad deeds. Allah is impeccable. He does not create evil and unfairness because if He creates them He would be unjust. But by creating good deeds, He would be just (167). In addition, they believe that Allah is one, and there is nothing like Him. He is the All-Hearer and the All-Seer. He is not a body, not a ghost, not an image, not a meat, not blood, and not an essence. Also, He does not have a color, taste, smell, height, length, width, direction, left, right, and up and down. And He does not move and does not have time or place (Al-Sandobi 98). Although these are not all the ideas of *mutazilism*, they show how they use their mind to understand Islam. *Mutazilists* and their thought found a place in the time of Al-Jahiz due
to the freedom of thought and expression. In fact, the main supporters of *mutazilism* were caliphs such as Al-Mamon, as mentioned. The majority of followers of *mutazilism* were scholars and philosophers. Because *mutazilism* depends on philosophy, ordinary people do not follow it. Philosophy is a literate field of knowledge. Eric Havelock assures that "philosophy" began with Plato in his Republic. Before Plato’s Republic, philosophy was not very professional (*Preface* 281). However, in Al-Jahiz’s time, oral people, who were ordinary people, could not understand philosophy because it is literate. The relationship between philosophy and *mutazilism* may indicate that *mutazilism* was the product of the literate knowledge. The community of Al-Jahiz’s age consisted of stratus some of them found in *mutazilism* what they looked for, others rejected it, and the rest did not know what *mutazilism* mean.

The community in the Al-Jahiz’s age was varied due to the factors mentioned previously. The variety of the Abbasid community was not only because the community accepted other people from other cultures and religions, but also because the freedoms of thought, of religion, and of expression guaranteed their rights to practice their beliefs and traditions. Jabr mentions that what distinguishes the environment of the society in the Abbasid era was the engagement of peoples with each other and the plurality of cultures and religions (23). The acceptance of others was not only in the social life, but also the caliphate palace provided them the chance to be part of the ruling government. Although the state was an Islamic state, Jabr assures that there were many Christians who had high position jobs in the government in the time of Al-Mamon (21). The engagement between Arabs and others and between Muslims and others is represented in the use of foreign names to name Baghdad streets (Jabri 104). In addition, homosexuality was widespread in the Abbasid caliphate (*Falsafat Al-Akhlaq* 56). The spread of homosexuality, which Islam forbids, indicates the extent to which the Abbasid society accepted different ideas,
regardless of their agreement with Arabic culture and Islamic culture. This mix between the different cultures in the Abbasid community may pose questions about the lifestyle of the community, its education, and its ways of living.

Although the Abbasid community at Al-Jahiz’s age was varied, the variety of the community does not mean that these different cultures lived scattered without an engagement with the other. In fact, when historians describe and analyze the Abbasid community, they divide it depending on the social classes and do not consider culture or religion as factors that impacted their way of dividing. Shawqy Dayf divides the Abbasid community into three classes: high, middle, and low. The high class consisted of caliphs, ministers, army leaders, governors of states, princes, some merchants, and some feudal lords. The middle class points to soldiers, ministries employees, the majority of merchants, and professional craftsmen. The low class was the ordinary people such as farmers, the owners of small crafts, slaves, maids, and Ahl Al-Demmah (non-Muslims who came to the Caliphate for protection) (53). Ahmed makes a similar division. He also divides the community of the Abbasid Caliphate into three classes: high, middle, and low. The high class and the low class are same to the high and low classes of the division of Shawqy Dayf, mentioned above. But in the middle class, Ahmed mentions that it consisted of intellectuals, scholars, clerics, merchants, ministry officials, military men, and skilled craftsmen (Falsafat Al-Akhlaq 50-51). It looks that the division of Ahmed depended on several factors, but what is important for this chapter is its dependence on the intellectual level. For him, the low class’s task was to do the works of the law class such as farming, small crafts, and serving the princes, ministers, and rich men and women (51). The majority of the low class people were illiterate because there is not enough time to learn. One of the low class people is Al-Jahiz. But in the case of Al-Jahiz, he challenged poverty and focused on learning. Al-Jahiz’s choice of
learning means that he chose to be literate instead of oral because, as mentioned above, *Kuttab* was the first step of learning reading and writing.

In short, Al-Jahiz lived from the second half of the eighth century to the middle of the ninth century. The freedom, in this period, was not stable. It depended on caliphs’ beliefs. Al-Mamon’s time is known as the time of freedom. He did not make any restriction on expression and thought except the famous issue, namely “the createdness of the Qur’an.” The freedom of expression and thought resulted in a revolution in knowledge and education. Two of the most effective revolutions are the establishment of libraries and organizing the translation of philosophical and scientific books. In addition to the revolution of knowledge, education was supported by caliphs. But the system of education depended on orality more than literacy (reading). However, freedom in Al-Jahiz’s age led to the emergence of different religions and sects in the Abbasid Caliphate such as *mutazilism*. *Mutazilism* is a *Sunni* Islamic sect that depends on philosophy to interpret the Islamic wholly text (the Qur’an and hadeeths). The community of this time of freedom, the revolution of knowledge, and a variety of religions and sects is divided into three classes: high, middle, and low. The members of the high class and the middle class were educated. But the low class which consisted of farmers and small craftsmen were not educated which means they were oral. However, Al-Jahiz was a child of a low class family. The brief show of Al-Jahiz’s age helps to understand the community that Al-Jahiz was raised in. The community of Al-Jahiz, the low class community, was oral. In addition, the education was oral. Al-Jahiz had to overcome some of the social obstacles to be one of the most important figures in the intellectual community of the old Arabic culture.
Al-Jahiz’s Life

The early life of Al-Jahiz is controversial due to lack of information about his life. But historians agree that his name is ‘Othman ‘Amr Bahr Mahbob Al-Kinani Al-Faqmi (Jabr 7; Jabri 35). “Al-Jahiz” is his nickname. Jahiz means protruding eyes. Al-Jahiz’s eyes were protruding. For this, he was called Al-Jahiz (Jabr 7). Jabri mentions that Al-Jahiz was deformed and ugly (36). This means that Al-Jahiz’s nickname is a description of his ugliness. Did he like the nickname? In fact, he did not like the name, and he encouraged people to call him by his first name ‘Amr (Al-Sandobi 15). But people in his time and after his death call him Al-Jahiz regardless of his objection. However, his tribe is Kinanah which is an Arabic tribe. Kinanah is one of the tribes that Arabic linguists (as explaining in the previous chapter) traveled to it to record the pure Arabic language. Knowing Al-Jahiz’s tribe indicates his strong connection to the oral language because his tribe is known as one of the Arabian Peninsula tribe that has its oral stories, poems, and oratories. Al-Jahiz, who was interested in pure Arabic literature, might gain impact by his tribal oral tradition. For Jabri, Al-Jahiz was mawla in Kinanah (35). Mawla means a slave and a freed slave. But his last name is Al-Kinani which means that he is from Kinanah. In Arabic culture, slaves cannot be named by the tribes that their masters are from. Al-Sandobi mentions that Al-Jahiz is an Arabic person, and his ancestry is one of the most noble ancestries in Arabic culture (14-15). Al-Jahiz’s date of birth is controversial. Jabr states that Al-Jahiz was born around 776 (7). Yaqot Al-Hamawy (1179-1229) mentioned that Al-Jahiz said that I was born in 767 (2101). What is important is that Al-Jahiz was born at the beginning of the Abbasid age. And his city of birth is Basrah. According to this date and city, one can know what kind of education that Al-Jahiz gained.\(^\text{10}\)

\(^{10}\) Marshall McLuhan in his dissertation (*The Classical Trivium: The Place of Thomas Nashe in the Learning of His Time*) sought to explain Thomas Nashe’s thoughts by contextualizing it in terms of the “learning of his time.” In the
Al-Jahiz’s birthplace gave him a chance to learn the pure Arabic language. In the previous chapter, Al-Marbid, a marketplace in Basrah, was the destination of Arabs from the Arabian desert. In this marketplace, Al-Jahiz listened to and learned from the nomadic Arabs the pure Arabic (Jabri 59). In addition, Basrah was the hometown of the great Arabic scholars. Al-Jahiz learned Arabic grammar and literature by listening to them (59). But because Al-Jahiz was born to a low class family and was an orphan, his mother encouraged him to be a businessman. Al-Jahiz refused and spent his time learning. He spent money that his mother gave him for groceries on books. And once he asked his mother for food, she gave him a plate full of books instead of food (Ibn Al-Murtada 38). This shows the passion of Al-Jahiz for reading and being educated by reading. Mardam mentions that Al-Jahiz read every book that he saw. He paid money to the booksellers to let him stay the whole night to the morning in the bookstores to read the books that he could not buy (9). However, he began his education by going to kuttab in Basrah. Then he studies in the "knowledgeable ring" different types of knowledge (Jabr 7-8). At the beginning of his life, his educational focus was on language, literature, religion, and science (Jabri 60). But Al-Jahiz did not see what he wanted in Basrah. And this is what triggered his traveling to Kufa (a city in Iraq). It was an educational trip. Al-Jahiz’s education was not only on the Arabic culture. He focused on Greek philosophy, mathematics, and other fields of knowledge from different cultures. According to Jabri, Al-Jahiz read philosophical and medicine books such as Physiognomy by Polemon (A Greek scholar and politician c. 90 – 144 AD), Masarjawaih’s books (lived in the seventh century), Aristotle’s Organon, Euclid’s works (fl. 300 BC),

11 In fact, Al-Jahiz admired Aristotle’s knowledge, especially in Al-Jahiz’s two greatest books, namely Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen and Al-Hayawan. Al-Jahiz called Aristotle in his book the father of logic. Aristotle is the most philosopher cited in Al-Jahiz’s works. There are similarities between Aristotle’s rhetoric and Al-Jahiz’s rhetoric. Al-Jahiz cites Aristotle in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen several times. But also Al-Jahiz criticized Aristotle’s approach in
Bukhtishu’s books (fl. 850), Hunayn ibn Ishaq’s treaties (809-873), Galen’s works (129-216 AD), etc. (72). The variety of the sources of knowledge of Al-Jahiz enabled him to write about many and different fields of knowledge.

Part of his intellectual life is his way of living. The only occupation that Al-Jahiz worked on, which does not connect to writing, was his job in his early life. According to Jabri, in his early life, Al-Jahiz was seen selling bread and fish in Seyhan (a city in Turkey) (38). This story does not confirm that it was his permanent job. In addition, the rest of the stories about his occupation mention jobs that had a connection to writing. One of his jobs was giving caliphs, princes, and leaders his books as a gift. Usually, caliphs, princes, and leaders paid him as a reward for giving them the gift. For example, Jabr states that Al-Jahiz gave Ibn Abi Dawood (776-854), a judge, his *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* as a gift. Ibn Abi Dawood paid him five thousand dinars and lived in his palace for a while (11). In fact, Al-Jahiz gave every book that he wrote to high-class figures. Al-Hamawy mentions that Al-Jahiz gave his *Al-Hayawan* to Muhammad ibn Abdulmalek Al-Zayyat (789 - 847), a minister. Al-Zayyat paid him five thousand dinars (2117-2118). Also, Al-Jahiz worked with the government, Abbasid Caliphate. Al-Mutawakkil (822-861), the tenth Abbasid caliph, called him to discipline and teach his children. But when he saw his ugly face gave him ten thousand dirhams and fired him (36). Also, Al-Mamon appointed him to be the minister of the Diwan of the letters. But after three days, Al-Jahiz quit (Jabr 9). This news about Al-Jahiz’s way of living points to that Al-Jahiz’s connection to writing was not only a way of learning but also a way of making a living. Al-Jahiz learned by reading, taught by writing, and made a living by writing. However, the strong connection between Al-Jahiz’s life and writing impacts his personality. Al-Jahiz saw himself as a unique

---

his book about animals. Moreover, he describes Aristotle as a rhetorician who did not have the ability to give a good speech (*Al-Bayan* 3:27).
independent person. He quit from the Diwan of the letters although he was the minister of the Diwan. He chose to be independent. And this can be a result of the impact of the writing on his personality.

Al-Jahiz saw himself as a person who does not need to come closer to high-ranking people to be valued. Al-Jahiz sought his personal independence. And this is clear when he refused to be a minister of the Diwan of the Letters. In the oral culture, being a knight or a chief of the tribe is a pride. Also, chiefs and knights are the most important members of the tribe. But, according to Ong, with the invention of writing, the individual is isolated from the community (The Presence 30). The refusal of Al-Jahiz of the ministry indicates his thought about what is pride. For him, people who accompany the sultan (caliphs or governors) wear humiliation; their motto is adulation. And their hearts are worn by horror (Rasael 4:255). In this quotation, Al-Jahiz saw, what was seen in the oral culture as loyalty (the coming closer to the chief), was an affront. Writing “downgraded the network of personal loyalties which oral cultures favor as matrices of communication and as principles of social unity” (The Presence 54). The relationship between Al-Jahiz and caliphs was built on a benefit not only to Al-Jahiz but also to the caliphs. Jabri mentions that if Al-Jahiz went to caliphs and princes, he acted like a teacher. They copied some of his works and own books (48). Writing makes the individual aware of himself and his ability to think without others (The Presence 134). Reading and writing taught Al-Jahiz that a person cannot benefit by setting closer to the high ranking people as much as reading a book. Therefore, he accompanied books instead of people. This strong connection with books made him one of the most knowledgeable people of his time.

Al-Jahiz, who lived at the beginning of the spread of writing in the old Arabic culture, wrote in about every field of his time. Jabri described him as a well-versed person in all fields of
knowledge of his time (43). Mardam mentions that Al-Jahiz summarized the knowledge of his time (77). Muhammad bn Yazdad, a minister in Al-Mamon’s time who died in 230, states that Al-Jahiz was a scholar in every field of knowledge (Al-Hamathani 74). One of the Andalusian scholars states that in front of Adulsian kings, student prides that they met Al-Jahiz (Mardam 9-10). Although Al-Jahiz lived in Basrah and Baghdad, he was known as an intelligent person in Andalus. In Al-Jahiz’s period, if a person, lived in Basrah, wanted to communicate with others in Andalus, he needs months to send a letter. The transferring of Al-Jahiz books from Basrah or Baghdad to Andalus was not an easy process. Andalusians saw in his books what is deserved to endure the hardship of transferring these books. These stories about Al-Jahiz’s knowledge point to the strong connection between Al-Jahiz and writing. This connection at that time, which is part of the shift time from orality to literacy, is shown and explained in the last section of this chapter which is about the awareness of Al-Jahiz of the impact of reading and writing on people’s thoughts. In fact, Al-Jahiz’s intensive use of writing can be seen in his 360 works. This intensive use of writing should have an impact on his way of thinking and expression. A literate man is formed by a deep commitment to writing (Orality 7-8). In the case of Al-Jahiz, writing 360 books and letters is an example of the deep commitment to writing. With the writing of 360 books and letters, Al-Jahiz replaced his mouth with a pen, and instead of explaining his knowledge to a physical audience, his brain imaged the audience. The long experience with writing should result in changing the way of thinking and expressing.

Al-Jahiz’s Works and Philosophy

As mentioned above, Al-Jahiz’s wrote in every field of knowledge at his time. He created his own approach to organize his knowledge and experiments. His approach, explained in this section, made him one of the most distinguished scholars in Arabic culture. In fact, Al-Jahiz
lived in a time that did not have adequate books in every field of knowledge. He relied on his own mind to categorize and transfer knowledge, also to create his method of writing. Before Al-Jahiz, Arabic rhetoric was not regulated and inferred its rules. Al-Jahiz did not only deduce the rules of Arabic rhetoric, especially the oral Arabic rhetoric, but also made it a field of knowledge. Ibn Al-‘Ameed (912-970), a minister in Abbasid Caliphate, stated that Al-Jahiz is the pioneer of Arabic rhetoric and eloquence, and scholars, after Al-Jahiz, rely on his knowledge of rhetoric (Al-Hamawy 2116). But Al-Jahiz was not only a rhetorician. As mentioned, he wrote different fields of knowledge.

The strong connection between Al-Jahiz on one hand and reading and writing on the other hand provided him a chance to have an overview of all fields of knowledge at his age. According to Jabr, Al-Jahiz’s wide knowledge allowed him to write in every field of knowledge. His works are more than 360 books (14). In fact, the number of Al-Jahiz’s books is not specified with certainty because the majority of his books are lost. Chapter eighteen of Al-Sandobi’s *Adab Al-Jahiz [Al-Jahiz’s Literature]* is to count Al-Jahiz’s books. Al-Sandobi shows 159 books; some of them are printed, others are still manuscripts, and the rest are lost. Ahmed states that the number of the edited and printed books of Al-Jahiz is 55 books. Ahmed provides five different opinions about the number of Al-Jahiz’s books. The numbers range from 121 to 176 books (30). However, there are two issues with the number of books. First, because Al-Jahiz, at the early of his life, struggled to make his books widely accepted. He followed a strategy. The strategy is that he attributed his own books to another well-known author. Al-Jahiz states that when he wrote a good book, people did not accept it and read it. Then he wrote a book whose quality is not good as the unaccepted book and attribute the book to one of the well-known authors. People hastened to read and copy the latter (43-44). The sufferance of Al-Jahiz from unacceptance of his society
at the beginning of his life shows the orality of the society. In the oral culture, memory effectively functions with what Ong is called the “‘heavy’ characters, persons whose deeds are monumental, memorable and commonly public” (Orality 69). Al-Jahiz, in his early life, was not a heavy character. But he dealt with unacceptance according to his own personality, which was akin to literacy. He did not follow the way of oral people to be accepted. He wrote books by the name of other famous authors to make people accept his own writing. In an oral Arabic culture, there were narrators, mentioned in the first chapter, who became close to a poet or orator to narrate his poems or poetry. Being a narrator was the first step of gaining credibility and being accepted. In addition, Al-Jahiz’s priority is the quality of his thoughts. What was important for him was to find out whether his thoughts were valued or not. Attributing his thoughts to himself does not matter at the beginning. For this reason, Al-Jahiz wrote the books under others’ names, not his name.

The second issue related to the number of Al-Jahiz’s books is that there are books attributed to Al-Jahiz but were not written by him. Al-Sandobi counts eight books attributed to Al-Jahiz that he did not write (145). The issue could be similar to what happened to Al-Jahiz. Scholars’ works were not accepted, so they attributed their works to Al-Jahiz to be accepted. However, it is important for the chapter to show and explain some of Al-Jahiz’s books to show his way of writing and understand his way of composition. The explanation of the way of writing helps to show the extent of the impact of writing on Al-Jahiz.

This chapter chooses four books and letters of Al-Jahiz to analyze and focus on. The criterion for selecting these books was based on what helps to clarify and determine Al-Jahiz’s writing style and his approach to analyzing scientific and cognitive issues. Although Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen is one of the most important books in the Arabic culture and literature, this
chapter will not focus on it because the book is analyzed in the last two chapters of this project, namely the fifth and the sixth chapters. However, the first book is *Al-Hayawan* [*The Animal*].

The book is located in seven volumes. For Jabri, the book is massive research on animal nature. But, for Jabri, although Al-Jahiz’s main topic is animal nature, he writes about affairs that do not have a relation to the main topic of the book. It is an encyclopedia of knowledge that studies instructions of many religions such as Judaism, Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Islam, and atheism. Also, Al-Jahiz wrote, in *Al-Hayawan*, about his own opinions about life, anecdotes, and jokes (14-15). In the introduction of *Al-Hayawan*, Al-Jahiz explains his approach. He states that *Al-Hayawan* is a book that meets the needs and hopes of nations. Although it is an Arabic Islamic book, it mentions some philosophical thoughts, states both the knowledge of hearing and the knowledge of the experiment, cites the Qur’an and hadeeth, uses emotion and desires. The youth, adults, immoral people, hermits, stupid, and clever will find their needs in the book (1:5). Also, in the third volume, Al-Jahiz writes that if one becomes bored with serious topics, the book has funny stories and weird news to reactivate the mind of the readers (3:3). In sum, although *Al-Hayawan* is about animals, it explains different topics from different fields of knowledge.

The second book is *Al-Bukhala* [*The Misers*].*Al-Bukhala* is a collection of stories of misers. It is an implicit rhetorical project like Aristotle analyzing the thought process of specific types of people like the young and elderly. According to Jabr, in *Al-Bukhala*, Al-Jahiz explains and narrates real stories of misers who lived in his age. For Jabr, the purpose of writing these stories was not only to narrate these stories, but also to clarify how the misers think and their

---

12 The book is translated into English. There are two versions of translation. The title of the first translation version is *The Book of Misers*. This version is translated by R.B. Sejeant and published by Garnet Publishing in 1997. The title of the second translation version is *Avarice and The Avaricious*. This version is translated by Jim Colville and published by Routledge in 1999.
point of argument about miserliness. Al-Jahiz explains their meaning of what is called miserliness by others, why they call generosity profligacy, and altruism ignorance (15-16). In fact, in the introduction of Al-Bukhala, Al-Jahiz states that the book is to entertain the readers, explain the misers’ view of point for several issues. The book clarifies the cause of being a miser (1). The style of the language of the book is sarcastic. Because Al-Jahiz’s Al-Bukhala is stories of the misers, and miser, for him, is not a good manner, Al-Jahiz chose the sarcastic language which corresponds to the topic of the book.

The third book is Al-Tarbee’a wa Al-Tadweer [The Quadrature and the Rotate]. Al-Tarbee’a wa Al-Tadweer is a letter that was written to satirize a person called Ahmed bin Abdulwahhab. Al-Jahiz claims that bin Abdulwahhab read the titles of the books, but he could not understand what the books are about (Al-Tarbee’a 6). Al-Jahiz used sarcastic language. To prove how bin Abdulwahhab is ignorant, he gives him, in Al-Tarbee’a wa Al-Tadweer, one hundred scientific issues and questions related to different fields of knowledge. Instead of providing answers to the questions, Al-Jahiz refers in each question to one of his works. Jabr mentions that Al-Tarbee’a wa Al-Tadweer shows the extent of Al-Jahiz’s knowledge (17). By referring to his works to find the answers to the questions, Al-Jahiz shows indirectly bin Abdulwahhab that Al-Jahiz is the ideal intellectual person. In fact, “orality situates knowledge within a context of struggle. Proverbs and riddles are not used simply to store knowledge but to engage others in verbal and intellectual combat” (Orality 43). Therefore, Al-Jahiz transformed the face-to-face confrontation to the pages of the letter.

The fourth work is Fakhr Al-Sodan ‘Ala Al-Bidan [Pride of Blacks over Whites]. Fakhr Al-Sodan ‘Ala Al-Bidan is a letter. Letter in the old traditional Arabic culture is not a page or two pages. The meaning of letters in the old traditional culture is close to the meaning of a booklet. It
has only one concentrated topic. However, Jabr mentions that the reason for writing this letter is that owners of caravans, in Al-Jahiz’s time, used black slaves to serve them. Their situation aroused the pity of Al-Jahiz which led him to defend them and write about their virtue (66-67). In the letter, Al-Jahiz mentions the names of the noble black people to show that the color of the skin does not that a black person cannot succeed in life, or he is always inferior. For Al-Jahiz black people were not created black by Allah to despise them or to make them inferior (Rasael 1:210). He describes them as the most strong and generous people. In addition, for Al-Jahiz, they are the most skilled people in dancing and drumming. They do not learn these skills and gain them naturally (1:195). Also, Al-Jahiz mentions what is black in the earth such as a kind of wood that is black and the best kind of wood for the fire (1:204). According to Ong, “oral cultures must conceptualize and verbalize all their knowledge with more or less close reference to the human lifeworld” (Orality 42). Al-Jahiz used well-known black people and the best black items in nature to prove that the white color is not the reason for the superiority, but the deeds of a person. However, these four works of Al-Jahiz (Al-Hayawan, Al-Bukhala, Al-Tarbee’a wa Al-Tadweer, and Fakhr Al-Sodan ‘Ala Al-Bidan) show Al-Jahiz’s style of writing books. But this style follows Al-Jahiz’s own approach created by himself. Al-Jahiz’s approach was built according to the characteristics of mutazilism and philosophy.

Al-Jahiz benefited from different fields of knowledge to create his own approach. In his works, Al-Jahiz shows and explained his approach. In the introduction Al-Hayawan, he states that the book depends on philosophy, narration, experiments, Qur’an, hadiths, emotions, desire to analyze the issues in Al-Hayawan (1:5). Al-Jahiz benefited from different fields of knowledge to create his own approach. In his works, Al-Jahiz shows and explained his approach. In the introduction Al-Hayawan, he states that the book depends on philosophy, narration, experiments,
Qur’an, hadiths, emotions, desire to analyze the issues in *Al-Hayawan* (1:5). In fact, his scientific approach depends on doubt, criticism, and experiment and experience. Reason is the main factor used to control and determine the procedure of these three factors (doubt, criticism, and experiment and experience). Obviously, Al-Jahiz’s approach was the result of the impact of some ideas in his time such as mutazilism, which depends on philosophical thoughts and religious texts. In addition, Al-Jahiz might have benefited from the translated books that flourished at his time, as mentioned. Although his style of writing, as shown previously, is akin to orality more than literacy because he wrote for the public who were oral (Al-Jahiz style of writing would be studied in the last chapter of this dissertation), his own approach is close to literacy. Why? And how? Ong mentions that in an oral culture, celebration or play were the way of verbalized learning. But in the literate culture, learning “became “work” as distinct from play, and the pleasure principle be downgraded as a principle of verbalized cultural continuity” (*The Presence* 30). Al-Jahiz might realize that he writes to the public who were illiterate. Reading, in Al-Jahiz time, was aloud. Al-Jahiz targeted different types of the public. For this reason, his writing style was akin to oral style. But, at the same time, his approach, which was created by himself as a literate person, was literate. What leads to this result is two reasons. First, his writing style was oral because reading to learn at his time was loud. Second, Al-Jahiz sought to be close to the public (Al-Sandobi 207) which requires using a style of language that they can understand. Third, Al-Jahiz was aware of the difference and the impact of orality and literacy, as shown later in this chapter. However, the mind, in Al-Jahiz’s thought, is a pillar to distinguish the right approach.

Reason is the standard that Al-Jahiz depended on to reach the truth. According to Jabri, Al-Jahiz added to narration and experiment a third factor which is reasoning. He made reason the
criterion of everything (144). In *Resalat Al-Haneen ela Al-Watan* [The letter of Homesickness], Al-Jahiz mentions that eyes err; and senses lie. The decisive verdict is only for the mind. And the correct understanding can be reached only by reason because it controls the organs and senses (*Rasael* 1:43). In addition, in *Al-Hayawan*, Al-Jahiz advises students to not follow what the eyes see, but what the mind understands. For him, issues can be understood and judged in two different ways: external judgment of the senses, and internal judgment of reason. Reason is reliable (1-97). Ong asserts that literate people are aware of themselves as capable of thinking for themselves “to a degree impossible for relatively overcommunalized tribal man ... With literacy, the individual finds it possible to think through a situation more from within his own mind out of his own personal resources and in terms of an objectively analyzed situation which confronts him” (*The Presence* 134-135). Al-Jahiz, as a literate person, used his mind to create his own way of thinking or his approach. The use of reason led him to make doubt a component of his approach.

Doubt, criticism, and experiment and experience are the components that Al-Jahiz built his approach on. Doubt, for Al-Jahiz, is a way to reach the truth. Eric Alfred Havelock in his *Preface to Plato* states that Plato’s way to truth is to turn away from the panorama of sensual experience. In Plato’s approach, the only possible object of thought is the abstracted object per se. For Havelock, Plato’s approach was not familiar to ordinary Greeks whose state of mind was still that of opinion (254). Al-Jahiz’s approach was not known in his time, also. Based on Havelock’s analysis of Plato’s approach, one of the differences between Al-Jahiz’s and Plato’s approaches is that Al-Jahiz used doubt, criticism, and experiment as ways to reach the truth. But Plato explicitly excluded the experiment. In *Al-Hayawan*, Al-Jahiz states that Al-Jahiz states that one should know the place of doubt (he means when one should doubt) and situations in which
doubt should be used to reach certainty. For him, doubt should be learned (6:335). Doubt, according to Al-Jahiz’s thought should not be used every time. For him, there are situations that doubt can be used for the purpose of reaching certainty. This condition (reaching the truth) of using the doubt as an approach means that when doubt could not help to reveal the truth, it would be wasteful. Like reason, there is a link between doubt and literacy. In *Orality and Literacy*, Ong describes the oral mind as an aggregative and the literate mind as an analytic mind (38). Al-Jahiz’s understanding of doubt is a literate conception in which doubt is used to analyze and study the situation. Reason can determine situations that require doubt. Like doubt, criticism needs reason. Reason is to analyze objects, sayings, and actions then criticize them.

Al-Jahiz’s depending on reason triggered the use of criticism as a component of his approach. Al-Jahiz depending on reason may be the result of his *mutazilism*, as mentioned above. In addition, the freedom of thought that was guaranteed in his time enabled his dependence on reason as a source of knowledge and a way to the truth. Al-Jahiz, in his works, depended on several things to prove his opinion such as others’ sayings. Proving his opinion depending on the others’ experiments and opinions led to criticism. According to Jabri, Al-Jahiz scrutinized others’ opinions (136-137). For example, in *Al-Hayawan*, Al-Jahiz mentions that Aristotle states in his book of *Animal* that there was a castrated bovine that copulated a cow; and the cow became pregnant. Al-Jahiz mentions that because Aristotle did not express what he saw, he could not believe Aristotle’s story or comment on what he wrote (5:502-503). In this story, one can reveal two kinds of approaches, namely experiment and criticism. If the information that Aristotle provided is based on an experiment made by Aristotle, Al-Jahiz would accept it as evidence. Mustafa Nasif suggests that Al-Jahiz tried to not be impacted by the opinions of others (17). Al-Jahiz summarizes the opinions of people. For him, there are two kinds of people. The
first kind of people likes to narrate strange stories. To achieve this purpose, they do not care about the credibility and the authenticity of the stories. The second kind of people does not take a story seriously unless they know it is true (Al-Hayawan 4:178). There is no doubt that Al-Jahiz’s approach to criticism is the result of the literate characteristics of Al-Jahiz. “[T]he alphabet has made abstract analysis possible as never before” (The Presence 34). Criticism is to analyze a text or saying. Criticism, in Al-Jahiz’s approach, overlaps his experimental approach in which Al-Jahiz criticized some kind of information that was not inferred by the experiment. In fact, experiment and experience are two components of Al-Jahiz’s scientific approach.

Al-Jahiz used experimental approaches in two ways. The first way is his own experiment. He made an experiment on various animals and plants to study their behaviors, habits, and even their language. In each experiment, he created a special methodology. In some experiments, Al-Jahiz cut their organs to study them and their way of function (Al-Hayawan 6:16); in others, he feed them poison (5:111); also, Al-Jahiz gathered opposite animals in one place to observe their behavior against each other (5:77); he used chemical substance to know its impact on animals (4:11); etc. In addition to this methodology, Al-Jahiz studied the sound of animals such as their vocal syllables (Jabri 134). However, the second way of the use of the experimental approach is to benefit from others’ experiments. According to Jabri, Al-Jahiz listened to experience and the experiments of perfumers, butchers, sailors, fishermen, doctors, and other people of experience, science, and knowledge (134). The experimental approach results from the impact of literacy. In Orality and Literacy, Ong mentions that the thought of the literate people is characterized by writing. For literate people, thinking is a permanent part of their noetic resources (51). Unlike oral people, knowledge for literate people does not need meter and memorable words to be stored and recalled. It needs paper. In Al-Jahiz’s case, an experiment is a way of reaching the
truth. Paper, not the memory, is the final destination to store the result of the experiment.

Reading what is stored in the paper is much easier than remembering what is stored in the memory. However, Although Al-Jahiz’s approach is literate, his way of writing, as mentioned, is oral. Al-Jahiz did not write for himself but for his community. Al-Jahiz did not separate the individual from the community. Al-Jahiz’s way of dealing between his literacy and the orality of his society could be viewed as a middle ground between orality and literacy in their pure forms, the former collective the latter individualistic.

There are three main words in Al-Jahiz’s theory of community, namely community, individual, and communication. In *Al-Hayawan*, Al-Jahiz takes about the necessity of the community and how it is a need for every human being (1:41-44). Then he devotes a section to explain the importance of communication to build and maintain the community (1:44-46). According to Jabr, like Aristotle, Al-Jahiz thinks that a human being is a political animal. Human beings cannot be separated from their community. Without community, human beings do not have meaning (81). Al-Jahiz’s thought of the community is akin to Thomas Hobbes’ philosophy of man. In the analysis of Hobbes’ philosophy of man and the state of nature, Micheal O’Flynn mentions that, for Hobbes, human happiness is associated with man in a state of nature in which the latter is to inform people of the fate of life in case there is no common power able to overawe selfish and aggressive individuals. For Hobbes, “the behavior of individuals was presumed the result of natural drives. Hobbes assumed that individuals would behave the same in the ‘state of nature’ as they did in the social system with which he was familiar and supported” (22). John Locke agreed with Hobbes’ idea but he re-philosophized Hobbes’ thought from a religious perspective. O’Flynn states that “Locke employed Hobbes’ ‘scientific’ postulates on human nature, but presented them in a manner consistent with the existing religious world-view” (29).
However, when a human being lives in a community, he needs a language to communicate with others. “Needing the social setting to get thinking under way means, in effect, to need sound ... [A] spoken language unites communities as nothing else does” (The Presence 146). Al-Jahiz’s theory of community is akin to orality more than literacy because literacy devotes the isolation of the reader which leads, as Ong assures, to the rise of individualism (54). For Al-Jahiz, the ideal community is the community that targets the common good of the members of the community. It seeks their flourish and respects their freedom, and these goals can be achieved by the comprehensive solidarity between the members of the community, authority, and religion as an ethical system (Al-Hayawan 2:116). In addition, Al-Jahiz connects between the environment, the community, and the animal. For him, the environment impacts not only the behavior and the color of the animal but also the human beings (5: 370). In sum, Al-Jahiz believed that human beings need the community. Communication is essential because language is what connects humans to each other in the community. The members of the community are the pillar to maintain the community. Al-Jahiz’s theory of community does not separate human beings to men and women which means both have the same task to maintain the community. In fact, Al-Jahiz’s view of women is in contrast to the deracinated literate individual of the Western printing press.

Al-Jahiz’s view of women is akin to orality. Al-Jahiz believed the equality between men and women. Al-Jahiz states that there is no one sane man believes that women are better than men, or men are better than women (Rasael 3:151). In fact, for Al-Jahiz, there are cases that show the superiority of women over men. one of the cases that he mentions is that men seek to betroth women and their consent to accept them (3:146). But Al-Jahiz was aware of people who believe that men are better than women. He did not discuss their point of view but questioned the
reason for not giving them their rights. Al-Jahiz states that some people think that men are better than women. This belief does not justify depriving women of their rights (3:157). Al-Jahiz’s admitting of women’s rights and their equality to men has no link to literacy. Leonard Shlain in his *The Alphabet versus the Goddess: The Conflict Between Word and Image* states that “one pernicious effect of literacy has gone largely unnoticed: writing subliminally fosters a patriarchal outlook” (1). Shlain claims that the status of women in the oral culture was much better than her status in the literate culture. In the case of Al-Jahiz, although he, as mentioned, was literate, he saw women as equal to men. Al-Jahiz’s awareness of the impact of writing on people’s thoughts could be the cause of avoiding the impact of the pernicious effect of literacy on Al-Jahiz’s view of women. In this context, Shlain warns of the pernicious effect of literacy (377) which means that literate people can avoid this kind of impact. In addition, the warning of Shlain indicates that man can control his characteristics gained by the medium of communication.

In sum, Al-Jahiz did not focus on a specific field of knowledge. He wrote about every field of knowledge in his time. His works are 360 books and letters. The majority of his works are lost. However, Al-Jahiz created his own approach to study issues that appeared in his time. In fact, his scientific approach depends on doubt, criticism, and experiment and experience. Reason is the main factor used to control and determine the procedure of these three factors (doubt, criticism, and experiment and experience). The approach of Al-Jahiz was literate more than oral, as explained. But his view of community is akin to orality than literate. Al-Jahiz believed that human beings need community. The ideal community, for Al-Jahiz, is the community that guarantees the common good of the members of the community. Women are not only part of the community, but, for Al-Jahiz, they are equal to men. Al-Jahiz’s works and thoughts explained the extent of the impact of orality and literacy in his thoughts. Al-Jahiz lived in a time where the
shift from orality and literacy was still processing. Studying his thoughts and works helps to understand how literate people think and express themselves in the transitional phase. However, Al-Jahiz was literate and had some oral characteristics, as mentioned. These contradictory characteristics of Al-Jahiz indicate at least an implicit the awareness of the impact of writing on the expression and thoughts of human beings.

**Al-Jahiz thought About the Impact of Orality and Literacy on People:**

As mentioned in the introduction and the first section in this chapter, Al-Jahiz lived in a time of transitioning from orality to literacy in the Arabic culture. Al-Jahiz’s education depended on both orality and literacy. These two factors maybe impact the way of Al-Jahiz’s thinking and his awareness of the impact of writing on people’s thoughts. This section focuses on his Al-Jahiz’s consciousness of the effect of writing on the way of thinking and expressing.

Rhetoric, for Al-Jahiz, is an oral literature genre. Al-Jahiz’s objection to making rhetoric literate literature is that as mentioned in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, oratory does not need overthinking to choose words and meaning (*Al-Bayan* 2:9). In addition, Al-Jahiz states that Arab orators in the Ignorant Age were better than the orators of India, Greece, and Persia because Indians, Greeks, and Persians took time to choose the right words and the good meanings. For Al-Jahiz, rhetoric is to interact with the current moment, the environment and the status of the audience in the time of giving a speech, (3:27) which is unknown before an orator gives a speech. Anthony M. Wachs, when he discusses the thoughts of McLuhan about the three arts of the trivium and its relationship to media ecology, states that rhetoric is related to orality. In addition, the function of rhetoric is to change the audience (99). Al-Jahiz has another justification for making rhetoric an oral genre. For him, because the storage of words for writing is paper, there is a need for external memory (paper) to give an oral speech. Al-Jahiz assures that the
paper does not have a strong relation to the oral speech as the memory of the speaker (*Al-Bayan* 3:28). Muhammad Obaid Allah states that what was new in Al-Jahiz’s age is that rhetoric, known as oral, entered the writing space. Orators wrote their speech and then read their speech loudly (56). It is obvious that even they tried to imagine the audience and the environment of the speech when they wrote the speech, the performance of speech would be different than speaking from memory. Performing the speech depending on the memory enables the orator to change the words depending on his and the audience’s psychological status. Al-Jahiz’s objection to using writing for rhetoric does not mean that he did not value writing. In fact, he pointed in several places in his works to the importance of writing and its impacts.

Writing, for Al-Jahiz, is the way to establish civilization, learn, and improve. To show the importance of writing, Al-Jahiz compared writing to speaking. In *Al-Hayawan*, Al-Jahiz states that reading books can guide people more than speaking to them because, in case of speaking to them, they may pretend that they are convinced. Also, speaking to people may lead to intolerance. In addition, people do not like to only listen. They want to participate in the argument which may trigger opposite to the goal of the speaker (1:84). Ong points to this characteristic and calls it “agonistically toned.” For Ong, oral people and their language are agonistic (*Orality* 43). In addition, for education, Al-Jahiz does not only encourage reading. In fact, he believes that the first step to learning is frequent listening, and the second step is reading. But, for Al-Jahiz, reading should be more than listening. In other words, the second step should be more than the first step (*Al-Hayawan* 1:55). Also, Al-Jahiz studied the civilizations and realized that civilization is not oral but literate (1:71). Also, Al-Jahiz directly explained the impact of writing on people’s life and way of thinking. For Al-Jahiz, if one reads a book, he achieves a long time of enjoyment, forms his personality, becomes a good orator and a great
writer, gains a great linguistic style, improves his self-esteem, excites his emotion, and acquires the respect of the public and the friendship of the kings. What one cannot know by listening in a year, a reader can know in a day without fear of negative competition, tiredness of finding a good scholar to listen to, attending to one (scholar) who sees his knowledge as goods to only gain money, learning from an ill-mannered person, and avoiding the learning next to hateful people, comparing oneself to foolish people (1:51). Moreover, writing is the only way to convey knowledge from age to age (Al-Bayan 1:80; Al-Hayawan 1:47-48). The importance of writing for people turns the attention of Al-Jahiz to point to how a writer values his readers.

Al-Jahiz paid some of his attention to the importance of the readers for the writers. Al-Hamawy mentions that Al-Jahiz advised the writer to know their audience before they write to avoid using a low language to write to educated people, and vice versa (2108). Low language means the language used to speak or write to ordinary people. In the oral culture, the speech is audience regardless of their status and positions. But in writing, the first question that Al-Jahiz asked is who are the readers? “There is no collective noun or concept for readers corresponding to ‘audience’” (Orality 74). Although Al-Jahiz differentiates readers from the audience, he unites them into two different groups (educator and noneducator) without differences between the members in each group. In the introduction of his Al-Hayawan, Al-Jahiz states that he writes the book for everyone (1:5). For this purpose, he did not focus only on the animals. The book consists of stories, poets, studying animals, philosophy, etc. Also, Al-Jahiz suggests that writers of books should write their books and imagine the readers as scholars and, at the same time, enemies. By imagining that the writer would master his writing (1:44). This advice points to two aspects: imagining the reader and the quality of the writing. Al-Sandobi describes Al-Jahiz as a person who likes to satisfy and please the public (207). To satisfy the public, Al-Jahiz focuses on
“al-bayan.” Al-bayan is an Arabic word and has different meanings. The meaning that closes to Al-Jahiz’s use is a clarification and also eloquence.

Al-Jahiz used the word “al-bayan” according to the meaning of talking or expressing clearly about yourself, herself, himself, themselves, and even itself. Obaid Allah suggests that al-bayan, for Al-Jahiz, means understanding, explaining, communication, and connection. It is a word for all that reveals the meaning (23). However, al-bayan, for Al-Jahiz, can be achieved by five things: pronunciation, gesture, account by hand, writing, and the situation (Al-Bayan 1:76). According to these five ways, al-bayan is a system of communication and has ways some of them are linguistic, and some of them are not. In addition, the five ways point to the awareness of Al-Jahiz the difference between communicating orally and literally. Mustafa Nasif states that Al-Jahiz introduced writing as a way of al-bayan to show the need of the community for a non-agonistic language (63). In addition, al-bayan of Al-Jahiz is more than just orality and literacy. Abdulhakeem Radi's comment on Al-Jahiz’s five ways of al-bayan is that Al-Jahiz believed that al-bayan is necessary for the continuation of life (68). In Al-Hayawan, Al-Jahiz makes the thinking deeply about the creation of the earth a way of al-bayan (1:42-44) in which human beings, in this case, communicate with God who created these creations. Therefore, Al-Jahiz’s philosophy of al-bayan opens others’ eyes to several mediums of communication, not only orality and literacy. Al-bayan for Al-Jahiz is not only a way of communicating. But a way of communicating what should be understood. When a human being communicates with others, but he could not be understood, his way of communicating cannot be al-bayan because it is lack clarification. To achieve clarification, Al-Jahiz points to the importance of choosing the right words.
The right words are determined depending on the context. In *Al-Hayawan*, Al-Jahiz states that every kind of talking (meant the situation) has its own words. Sarcasm needs satirized language, good poetry requires strong and eloquent words, one cannot use high language to jock, etc. (3:12). In the introduction of his *Al-Bukhala [The Misers]*, Al-Jahiz states that if a reader finds grammatical mistakes, he should know that Al-Jahiz intentionally wrote them in this way because the use of the right grammar may change the purpose of the story (33). Al-Jahiz connected his theory of the right words to writing. In *Rasael Al-Muallmeen [Letters of Teachers]*, Al-Jahiz points to the importance to imagine the meaning before choosing the word. He states that the worst writers are those who choose words before determining the meaning because he likes the sound of the words (*Rasael* 3:40). In sum, the right words, for Al-Jahiz, have a link to the meaning of the words, the purpose of the speech, and the situation. The right words are for both writing and speaking. For only speaking, Al-Jahiz studied the sound and its impact.

Al-Jahiz’s studying of sound indicates his awareness of the difference between orality and literacy. In *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, Al-Jahiz defines the voice as the tool of pronunciation that differentiates words and composes a speech. For Al-Jahiz, the movement of the tongue will not be words and talking without sound. And then he points to the importance of hand and head gestures to provide an eloquence speech (1:79). To show the limitation of using sound, Al-Jahiz compares sound to writing. Al-Jahiz states that our understanding of people’s talking stops when their sounds pause. When speaking is only a sound, there is no understanding. The sound in the latter case would be silent sound. And this situation (silent sound) happens when one cannot understand the speaker. Sound is for the close-talk and immediate need, and writing is for the

---

13 In there are similarity between Steve Whitson and John Poulakos’ aesthetic rhetoric and Al-Jahiz “right choice of speech or speaking.” The task of aesthetic rhetoric, for Whitson and Poulakos, “is to speak words appealing to the bodily senses” (141). Al-Jahiz’s “right choice of speech or speaking” is to satisfy the audience.
important need \textit{(Al-Hayawan 1:47-48)}. Understanding is the main criterion that the speech or even the writing can be described as eloquent or clarified \textit{(al-bayan)}. But as noted, Al-Jahiz's \textit{al-bayan} is not only sound and right words but also gesture.

Pointing to the importance of the gesture in the oral speech or talking indicates the awareness of Al-Jahiz of the oral performance. In \textit{Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabeeen}, Al-Jahiz states that if a speaker does not use his body gesture with his talking, two-thirds of his talking will not be understood \textit{(3:119)}. Also, Al-Jahiz describes the use of an external tool in speech as an extension of the organ that uses the external tool. For example, he mentions that if a speaker uses a stick when he gives a speech, the stick is like an extension of the speaker’s hand \textit{(3:116)}. Al-Jahiz believes that, in some cases, gestures are more eloquent than spoken words and writing, especially with secrets \textit{(1:79)}. Therefore, the gesture is part of clarification \textit{(al-bayan)} which is to speak or write clearly\textsuperscript{14}.

\textbf{Summary}

This chapter focuses on Al-Jahiz’s age, works, thoughts, and his awareness of the difference between orality and literacy. Al-Jahiz’s age was not stable. He lived in the Abbasid Caliphate, the golden age of Arabic and Islamic civilization. During Al-Jahiz’s time, freedom was guaranteed, especially in Al-Mamon’s time. In addition, \textit{Mutazilism}, Al-Jahiz’s sect, was flourished. The community, at that time, was oral more than literate. However, Al-Jahiz benefited from the freedom and the educational and intellectual revolution. He wrote on every field of knowledge in his time. His view of community was more oral than literate. In his theory of community, Al-Jahiz was not impacted by the writing characteristics. He believes that every

\textsuperscript{14} In the discussion of the fifth stage (delivery) of the five canons of rhetoric (invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery) in the Antiquity, Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg mention that delivery is "the system of the nonverbal signs." In ancient Rome, "voice, gestures, and facial expressions materially affect the impact of all that has gone into a speech" (7).
individual needs community and should interact with the community. In addition, he thinks that women are equal to men. But the impact of literacy on Al-Jahiz was apparent in his own approach and also his awareness of the difference between orality and literacy. Al-Jahiz considered rhetoric as an oral literary genre. For him, writing impacted the personality of the writer. Writers tend to revise their writing more than oral people.

The chapter’s focus on Al-Jahiz’s age, works, and thoughts can help the reader to understand the status of Al-Jahiz’s age which can be described as a transitional age, transition from orality to literacy. Al-Jahiz as a literate person, lived in an oral community. Some of his thoughts are oral, and others are literate. The chapter is to give a focus on this phase (transitional phase) to understand two important things: how a literate person lives in an oral community, and how community and culture shift from orality to literacy. Understanding these important points contributes to orality and literacy in which they do not only explain how literate people live in an oral culture but provide examples that can be analyzed and studied to find new explanations and perspectives of how people live in the transitional phase.

The first and second chapters explained the Arabic orality and literacy. What the readers need is to know what orality and literacy are according to the media ecological scholarship. The next chapter (the third chapter) is to give an overview of orality and literacy as studied by scholars in the twentieth century.
Chapter Three: The Impact of Orality and Literacy on the People’s Life

Orality and literacy are orientations the represent how people think and express themselves. In addition, by studying orality and literacy of a certain society, researchers seek to understand these societies and cultures. This chapter focuses on orality and literacy. The chapter focuses, at the beginning, on media ecology as the umbrella of orality and literacy. It briefly explains media ecology. Then the chapter focuses on orality and literacy as explained by scholars and shown in the academic scholarship. The final section in this chapter narrows the focus of the chapter on the transitional phase.

This chapter reveals the link between media ecology, orality and literacy, oral literature\(^ {15} \), and rhetoric. The chapter is an attempt to show Western scholars’ work about orality and literacy and about the transition from orality to literacy phase (such as Ong, McLuhan, Wachs, etc.). According to their works, this chapter defines the features of the transition from orality to literacy based on works of scholars who have written about orality and literacy. The chapter points to areas that are not touched by these works. This chapter explains the main points of the project which reveal the characteristics of the transition from orality to literacy. In other words, the chapter discusses the transitional phase which is the most important topic for this project. It depends on Western scholarship and transition from orality to literacy in Arabic culture. By focusing on the latter, this chapter may add to orality and literacy. By revealing these characteristics, the readers of the project may understand what the Arabic culture contributed to the field of media ecology, in general, and to the theory of orality and literacy.

The majority of works on orality and literacy do not provide a deep focus on the transitional phase from orality and literacy. In addition, the concentration of these works narrows

\(^{15}\) Oral literature indicates oral rhetoric and poetry.
their focus to a culture or two (such as Ong’s work which depends on Western culture). Issues related to oral and literate Arabic culture such as *isnad*, as explained in the first and second chapters, can add to the theory of orality and literacy. But to understand its contribution to the field and the theory, this chapter shows orality and literacy as studied by Western scholars. In addition, the chapter points to some elements that the Arabic culture that can be used as tools or characteristics of orality and literacy. In addition to the contribution of the chapter to orality and literacy, the chapter can be described as a preamble of the next chapter.

**Media Ecology**

Media ecology was established to study the impact of media on the human environment. It analyzes the connection between the human condition and the media. It is obvious that “media ecology” consists of two words: media and ecology. The interest in the impact of the media on human beings, their condition, and their environment began before the emergence of media ecology as a term. For this project, media ecology should be known, and its boundaries should be determined because the theory of orality and literacy is part of media ecology. In addition, orality and literacy are used in several fields such as anthropology. However, the question that should be asked is what is media ecology? The answer to this question means to provide the definition of media ecology.

Although media ecology is a new field of knowledge compared to other fields, it has several definitions. Dennis D. Cali briefly states that the term “media ecology” includes seven conceptualizations: media ecology as a metaphor, media ecology as a theory of group, media ecology as great books series, media ecology as a study of media as environment, media ecology as discipline, media ecology as a metameme, media ecology as perspective (Cali 4). Each of these conceptualizations defines media ecology according to its interest. The important
conceptualization for this project is media ecology as environments. Postman defines media ecology as “the studying media as environments” (161). In fact, this definition is taken from Marshall McLuhan. In “Education in the Electric Age,” McLuhan assures that all media are environments, so they have all the effects that biologists and geographers have linked with environments in the past (27). McLuhan’s definition of media ecology does not only connect media to the environment but also sees media as an inseparable element of the environment. In this context, Cali claims that “human beings stand at the center of a media environment that shapes their consciousness” (6-7). As explained in the next section of this chapter, orality, for example, is not only a medium of communication but a way that forms the thoughts and expressions of oral people according to its characteristics. Cali provides another definition of media ecology. The first definition is that media ecology studies the interrelationship of people, media, culture, consciousness, and changes occurring among them (9). In Cali’s definition, the interrelationship of people, media, culture, consciousness, and changes occurring among them can be expressed in only two words, namely media environments. In fact, defining media ecology as the study of environments poses a question about other fields that media ecology may intersect with. Human environments relate to many fields of knowledge such as anthropology.

Media ecology intersects with several fields of knowledge. According to Wachs, Eric McLuhan and Marshall McLuhan established “the laws of media as a grammatical project. The laws of media investigate the etymology, or linguistic origins, of the meaning of media and technology- that is, words” (Education 11). McLuhan and McLuhan began by using linguistics as the starting point for establishing media ecology. However, Lance Strate devotes an entire chapter explaining the fields of knowledge that intersect with media ecology such as communication, grammar, linguistics, semiotics, aesthetics, general semantics, etc. (Media
Ecology 15-38). But the intersections with other fields of knowledge does not mean that media ecology does not have its own theories, methodology, and branches.

Although media ecology intersects with a great number of other fields of knowledge, media ecology had its own themes used to study its issues. The laws of media established by McLuhan make the first boundaries of media ecology. Wachs summarizes what McLuhan called tetrad in four points:

First, all things created by humans extend a bodily function or sense of perception. Second, as an extension takes place, another sense or bodily function is concomitantly “obsolesced.” Then, the extended sense also retrieves a sense or a function that had been previously obsolesced. Fourth, and finally, when an extension is pushed to its extreme, its characteristics are reversed into something else. The fourfold structure of the tetrad is formed in the pattern of the rhetorical concept of the chiasmus (20-21).

McLuhan’s word “extension” in the first point indicates that he makes the media part of the human being’s body. Becoming part of the body means that any characteristics that the media has should impact the human being’s life which is the meaning of the second point. Moreover, in media ecology, there are seven “primary themes that surface in the media ecology literature” which are consciousness, technology, change, balance, environment, culture, interconnectedness. “What is most be emphasized, however, is that media ecology is concern with the interplay of these factors” (Cali 17). These themes are the themes that the majority of works in media ecology focus on. There is no field of knowledge that focuses on all these themes at the same time. However, although media ecology discusses different topics and issues what matters for this project is its focus on communication and rhetoric.

The connection between media ecology and communication can be seen from the first step that McLuhan took to set the laws of media, as mentioned. Wachs devotes The New Science of Communication: Reconsidering McLuhan’s Message for Our Modern Moment to explain the
three arts of trivium that McLuhan studied and connected between them and communication media. In the context of the connection, Wachs writes that

[t]he tradition of the trivium and the relationship between each of its arts has been intimately connected to the growth of different technologies and communication media. In summary, grammar and rhetoric ruled over dialectic and provided balance within the trivium from the time of the ancient Greeks until the Protestant Reformation (11).

The question is what happened after the Protestant Reformation. From the time of ancient Greek until the Protestant Reformation the mediums of communication were “spoken word” and “writing.” Although writing has its own characteristics which are supposed to impact people’s thoughts and expressions, its product was read aloud which contributed to the slow impact of writing on people’s thoughts and expressions. McLuhan assures that before the fifteenth century, the aloud reading made writing inseparable from what is called today oratory (Gutenberg 94). For Wachs, the emergence of the printing press did not only reinforce the isolation reader but also created a cognitive environment that “favored the abstract study of dialectic” (12). In addition to the connection between rhetoric and media, some media ecologists relate communication to media ecology such as James Carey. In fact, the connection between media and communication is obvious in which media is a kind of communication. Media appears as a medium of communication. James W. Carey mentions that the studying of communication means the examination of “the actual social process wherein significant symbolic forms are created, apprehended, and used” (24). Carey asserts that society can be viewed studied as a form of communication (26). Communication is essential in human beings’ life. Without communication, there is no society and vice versa. The strong connection between communication and society indicates common characteristics between the medium of communication and society. Therefore, works on media ecology cannot ignore “communication” because the relationship between communication and media ecology is an essential relationship.
Some media ecologists focus on the strong relationship between communication and society. One of them is Walter J. Ong who focuses on orality and literacy. Orality and literacy, as shown in the next section, studies both spoken words and oral society in which the latter is impacted by the former. Also, it focuses on literate society and the impact of writing and printing on the thoughts and expression of a certain culture that uses writing as a medium of communication.

In sum, media ecology is the umbrella that orality and literacy belong to. Understanding media ecology as an environment helps to understand the way of using orality and literacy to study society, culture, thought, and expression in which orality and literacy is a method to understand the impact of oral word and writing and later printing on the environment that human beings live in. Although media ecology intersects with other fields of knowledge, it has its own themes and methodology. And communication, for media ecology, is not a mere theme, but essential to media ecology. Media and communication cannot be separated because media indicate the medium of communication. However, this brief explanation of media ecology is an introduction to the theory of orality and literacy which is the way to understand how an oral society shifts from orality to literacy.

Orality and Literacy

Orality and literacy are the studying of the characteristics of the medium of communication and to determine the impact of the medium on people’s life and way of thinking and expressing. Based on communication media, Ong divides cultures into oral or oral-aural, script, and electronic (Orality 17). According to this division, the word “orality” indicates the oral or oral-aural phase. And “literacy” points to both script. And both orality and literacy may indicate electronic. Although, in the Oxford dictionary, literacy means the ability to read and
write (OED.com), it denotes electronic as well. In fact, electronic can be both oral and literate which requires both orality and literacy. However, what matters for this chapter is orality (spoken words) and writing.

Logically, orality existed before the invention of writing. “Human society first formed itself with the aid of oral speech, becoming literate very late in its history, and at first only in certain groups” (Orality 2). This means that cultures and stories were formed for a long time depending on the oral characteristics. Changing the characteristics of these cultures to literate characteristics is not an easy task. It is not an immediate transformation and is not a conscious process. What makes the shift from orality to literacy hard and difficult is not only the need for learning writing but also the need for changing the way of thinking, expressing, living. These changes require collective work and effort done by all members of the community because the change from orality to literacy changes not only the individual but also the society and the culture. A literate person in an oral society may struggle to live in this kind of society because he should change his comfortable way of thinking. This struggle indicates that we would have some difficulty studying the characteristics of the oral society, culture, and individual because we are considered literate individuals who live in a literate society.

The difficulty of transferring the society and the culture from orality to literacy is not only a shift from a certain medium of communication to another but a transition of the entire characteristics of the culture and society from the characteristics of the first medium of communication to the new medium. In fact, writing and printing do not eliminate the spoken way of communication. Writing comes beside sound to be a new communication channel. The change that writing does is not only on the way of communicating but also on the way of living and thinking. If a human being is literate, he cannot completely understand the way of thinking in the
oral culture. “We – readers of books such as this – are so literate that it is very difficult for us to conceive of an oral universe of communication or thought except as a variant of a literate universe” (Orality 2). This section is to answer why a literate person cannot understand the oral world. What happened when writing entered the world of human beings is that the words had two ways of existing: orally and visually (writing and printing). These two forms of existence brought a huge change in human history. It was one of the greatest turning points in the human way of living. It is the rule of sound and sight. The former relates to orality and the latter is for literacy.

**Sound vs Sight**

Sound is the main tool of spoken words. To understand the impact of writing on people’s minds and life, one should know the characteristics of both sound and sight. To distinguish sound from sight, Ong writes that:

Sight isolates, sound incorporates. Whereas sight situates the observer outside what he views, at a distance, sound pours into the hearer. Vision dissects ... Vision comes to a human being from one direction at a time: to look at a room or a landscape, I must move my eyes around from one part to another. When I hear, however, I gather sound simultaneously from every direction at once: I am at the center of my auditory world, which envelopes me, establishing me at a kind of core of sensation and existence. This centering effect of sound is what high-fidelity sound reproduction exploits with intense sophistication. You can immerse yourself in hearing, in sound. There is no way to immerse yourself similarly in sight. By contrast with vision, the dissecting sense, sound is thus a unifying sense. A typical visual ideal is clarity and distinctness, a taking apart (Orality 72).

What is heard cannot be touched and seen. And one cannot control the time of what cannot be touched and seen. “There is no way to stop sound and have sound” (32) although this concept is changed with the new technology in which one can replay a film clip, for example, to hear what was said. But sound without technological interference has a unique relationship to time as time and sound run in a parallel line. Time and sound are not perceptible. Also, they cannot go back
and remain stationary. Sound and time have a starting and ending moment. Not being perceptible makes reversing the sound and time. According to Ong, sound cannot be reversed because of the way in which ... it rides in time. Time is entirely irreversible (The Presence 43). With the invention of writing, the language had a huge development. The words exist and never change. Sight became more reliable than sound.

Sight is one of the main tools of literacy. The relationship between sight and time is different than the relationship between sound and time. Sight and time are not parallel as sound and time. What is written exists after the act of writing. “[W]ords fly away, what is written stays put” (The Presence 42). The weak link between sight and time enables sight to act against what is sight. For Ong, one can read the word “over” from left to right, “revo.” For him, sound does not have an equivalent character for this reverse (42). In addition, sight is an analyzing tool. When one sees an object, he sees part of the object. The back of the object cannot be seen unless he turns the object back to see what is in the back. “There is no way to view all that is visible around me at once” (129). To have a complete visual view of a cell phone, for example, one should see its six sides. But to receive a cell phone orally, one can hear only “a cell phone.” This characteristic of sound, as Ong states, situates an individual in the midst of a world (129). Therefore, the invention of the phonetic alphabet did not only provide a new way of communication, but the change of the senses used for communication triggered a change in the way of thinking and expressing which led to change in the characteristics of the society and the culture.

The strong link between orality and sound characterizes the world of orality according to the characteristics of the sound. A sentence exists through sound and disappears with the vanish of the sound. It is pronounced and heard as one piece. For this characteristic, sound is described
as a uniting tool. Ong states that the characteristics of oral thought and expression relate to “the unifying, centralizing, interiorizing economy of sound as perceived by human beings.” For Ong, the oral people tend to the aggregative tendencies, conservative holism, situational thinking, etc. (Orality 73-74). By analyzing these qualities, one finds a strong link between them and the characteristics of sound. These characteristics would be explained later in this chapter.

Moreover, if an oral individual and a literate individual viewed the same image, their interpretation of the same image is different. Wachs suggests that, for the oral individual, what is in the image is received at once (75). They do not pay attention to the details of the image. The oral individual uses sound to communicate. Based on the characteristics of sound (receiving the spoken message at once with no adequate time to analyze what is heard), the oral person perceives the image as he heard a speech. In fact, the oral person does not only use his ears to receive the spoken words. He used his eyes. But sight in his situation is guided by sound because sight, for oral people, is not the main part of the spoken word. Oral communication required sound as the most essential way to speak. Sight is to help listeners to understand the spoken word. Without sight, oral communication can happen, but with no sound, the spoken word cannot exist. One can listen to one talking behind him and understands what he is saying. Ong suggests that words and action in oral culture are inseparable (112-113). Gesture is a vital part of speech. There is no speech without gesture (Shlain 41). The gesture’s function is to facilitate and clarify the spoken words to the listeners. In sum, sound does not only convey the message to the receiver but goes further than that. It characterizes the way of giving the message, the way of forming the message, and the culture’s and individuals’ minds and life by its characteristics. Writing came with the aid of sight to change the style of conveying the message and the life and culture of people.
The emergence of literacy and its connection to sight greatly affected not only the message, but also the sender, his way of thinking and expressing, and the way of delivering the message. In fact, its impact magnified to include society and culture. The link between writing and sight turns many of the intangible meanings to be tangible. For example, in an oral culture, time is time. It is unseen and untouchable. With the invention of the clock, the meaning of time changed. The movement of the hands of the clock represents the movement of time. One can see the movement of time. Ong justifies the altering of the time to be tangible. For him, time is tamed because literate people treat time spatially (*Orality* 76). With the emergence of writing, written words and spoken words links in which the former depend on the latter. In other words, words are written depending on their pronunciation. The written words can be read loudly. But what is brought by writing is the ability to analyze the words. “To ferret out the meaning of alphabetic writing, the brain relies ... on sequence, analysis, and abstraction” (Shlain 5). The sequence, analysis, and abstraction happen when the sight is used to communicate. Before the entering of sight into the sphere of communication, sound formed what is called orality which characterizes the oral society and individual. By studying the psychodynamic of orality, one can understand the impact of the orality on society, culture, and people.

To understand the impact of orality on people’s way of thinking and expression and the culture, one should study the psychodynamics of orality. By studying the psychodynamics of orality, the impact of writing on people, culture, and society are shown because, for the readers of this project as literate people, the characteristics and the impact of writing should exist to understand the orality and its impact. However, Ong devotes an entire chapter in his *Orality and Literacy* to study some psychodynamics of orality. He mentions nine characteristics of the thought and expression of the primary oral culture: additive rather than subordinative,
aggregative rather than analytic, redundant or ‘copious,’ conservative or traditionalist, close to the human lifeworld, agonistically toned, empathetic and participatory rather than objectively distanced, homeostatic, and situational rather than abstract (37-57). These characteristics are not only the characteristics of the expression of the style of talking and speech of oral people but also the characteristics of the oral culture and society. Ong focuses on the psychological aspects when he studies orality and literacy. However, before studying the oral and literate society and culture, there is an important issue that can be posed, away from Ong’s approach, in the following question: how does the brain function based on the medium of communication? The answer to this question is that the brain hemispheres control communication and its medium. In other words, a certain communication medium uses one of the brain hemispheres to function. It is a turn from Ong’s psychological approach to a scientific approach.

Studying the relationship between the medium of communication and the brain hemispheres leads to understanding the impact of a certain medium of communication on the thought and expression of the people who use the medium to communicate. Shlain and Wachs assert that oral culture is influenced by the right hemisphere whereas the literate culture is affected by the left hemisphere of the brain (Shlain 40; Wachs 65-66). The focus turns to the right brain culture which helps to understand the impact of orality on people’s thought and expression. Wachs states that the culture of the right brain perceives the world “as having a special connection to nature, a connection that left brain cultures do not understand” (66). The emergence of writing led people to think by their left hemisphere which, as Shlain suggests, triggered the role of the right brain (40). Both Shlain and Wachs mention that the culture of the right brain cannot understand the culture of the left brain (Shlain 40; Wachs 65-66) and vice
versa. Shlain summarizes the impact of the left hemisphere on the life of Renaissance people. He wrote that:

The Renaissance popes acted against the backdrop of a world being transformed by the printing press. I propose that the sudden inundation of society by alphabet letters caused a dramatic increase in left-brain hunter-killer values throughout Europe, and a diminution of the right-brain values of love, kindness, equality, respect for nature, nurturing small children, protecting the meek and weak, and common sense. These trends became exaggerated in the wealthiest, all male, most literate segment of society—the papacy. In the Renaissance Vatican, gold, gain, pride, prizes, hubris, contests, and vainglory were held in the highest regard. The occasional papal mistress present during this period was not enough to counterbalance the extreme masculine ethos of the papal court. The absence of woman wisdom was an important factor contributing to its resultant decline (322).

According to the previous quotation, the right hemisphere is the source of the feeling of human beings. But the left hemisphere “controls the vital act of willing” (21) which means it is more logical and rational than the right hemisphere. After the entering of writing, using the left hemisphere, to the world of communication, the community and the culture changed as well as the thought and the expression of people.

The unity characteristic of the orality makes the oral culture and the society a collective culture and society. Obviously, the members of the oral culture and society are oral. This characteristic of oral people leads to the characteristics of the society that they live in. It is the impact of the sound that leads to the unity of the people in groups. Ong emphasizes the relationship between sound and the socialization of life (The Presence 122). However, “In an oral culture, restriction of words to sound determines not only modes of expression but also thought processes” (Orality 33). When all members of a certain society and culture think according to the restriction of the words, this culture and society would be characterized by the thought of the members. Orality reinforces the commonality (a feeling of group solidarity) and internalization of the personality of its members. According to Ong, “oral communication unites
people in groups. Writing and reading are solitary activities that throw the psyche back on itself” (69). Unlike oral people, literate people do not relate strongly to each other. The emergence of writing and later printing triggered the rise of individualism (The Presence 45) because a reader needs isolation to read, but a speaker needs others to listen to his ideas and thoughts. In addition, the oral mind, as mentioned, is not analytic but collective. The collective mind of the oral people cannot support them to create an organized and civilized system of ruling. For example, as Shlain notices, Arabs in pre-Islamic time lived according to the instruction and customs of tribes without central government (278). To have a well-organized system of the ruling means having an analytic mind because building this kind of system means there is a mind that analyzes the needs of the society or the state to an economic system, social system, war system, etc. And this analytic mind is a literate mind, as mentioned, not an oral mind. Moreover, the agonistic language that the oral people use influences their culture. For Ong, in the oral culture, the overt personal hostilities are exhibited and flaunted (The Presence 195). In the Ignorant Age, Arab tribes celebrate when one of their members becomes a poet because he can defend their tribe. Poetry is spreadable faster than rhetoric due to its metric style (Ibn Rasheeg 1:49). Also, the oral mind connects between the human life-world and its values and knowledge. Ong suggests that the oral-aural mind mingles the true lore about things with the lore about human beings to make it accommodating to the human life-world (233). The reason for this mingling may have a link to the economic memory which connects things in groups in the memory to facilitate memorizing and recalling.

*Oral Memory*

Writing, in the literate culture, takes many of the burdens of oral memory. In the literate culture, even a person needs to memorize a text, writing exists as a great helper. In the oral
culture, as Ong mentions, there are no records but a memory (The Presence 23). Is human memory verbatim? Ong poses a similar question. His answer is that short expressions can be. We have, however, seemingly no clear-cut instances of absolutely verbatim memory for any lengthy passages in completely illiterate cultures. In fact, there are lengthy passages. One of them is what is mentioned by Muhammad Diab Al-Atleedy (c. 1689) in his E’alam Al-Nas Bema Waq’a Ll-Baramikah m’a Bani Al-‘Abbas [Telling People What happened to Barmakids at the Time of Sons of Al-Abbas]. He states that Al-Mansur (714-775), the second Abbasid caliph, can memorize what he heard from the first time, without repetition. Al-Mansur had a male slave who can memorize what he heard when it is repeated the second time. And Al-Mansur also had a female slave who was able to memorize what she is repeated for the third time. Al-Mansur used his strong memory and his slaves' memory against poets who came to him to praise him for money. He told them that if your poem is authentic and not created before for praising others, I would reward you gold as much as the wight of the material that you wrote the poem on. When a poet finishes the poem, Al-Mansur says that I know the poem, it was created by another poem. Al-Mansur sings the poem to prove his claim. During this time, Al-Mansur asks his male and female slaves to hide in a place where they could hear the poet and Al-Mansur. Then Al-Masur calls the male slave, who heard the poem two times, and says that it is not only me, but also my slave knows the poem. The male slave sings the poem for the third time. Also, Al-Mansur calls the female slave to repeat the poem for the fourth time (118-120). The story ends with a poet who realized what happened and created a poem that its words are hard to be memorized and recalled. However, this story is one of many stories about people who had verbatim memory. But according to most works in the Academic scholarship in orality and literacy, oral people do not have a verbatim memory. Based on oral records, Ong concludes that these songs were not sung
the same way twice (Orality 59-60). But Eric Havelock states that the rhythmic word organized cunningly in verbal and metrical patterns was the only way to guarantee the preservation and fixity of transmission (42). In fact, the question about the verbatim memory of the oral people is not the right question. As mentioned before, it is not an easy task for literate people to understand the oral mind and its way of thinking and expressing. The concept of memorization and recall may differ from the memorization and recall of literate people. Literate people asked about verbatim memory because the writing provides this feature. They ask about the advantages that they have. The right question is about the way of memorization of oral people.

Oral people use various techniques to raise the efficiency of memory. Some of their ways are formulaic language, heavy characters, and the order of events. Formulaic language unites words in groups. Formulaic language uses a metric style to facilitate memorization and recall. Also, Ong mentions that music is used to constrain a verbatim oral narrative (Orality 63). To sing an epic, the singer depends heavily on the prefabricated metrical units (The Presence 24) which act like the music in which they are performed in equal phonetic passages. These equal phonetic passages are heard similar to the sound of music. It is easy for the oral memory to memorize these passages because they have meter. Havelock assures the role of poetry and the metric words in preserving poems and epics. For him, the rhythmic word is the way to have an unchangeable poem (42). The loss of a word in a certain passage ruins the musical tone of the passage.

In an oral culture, heavy characters are used to foster the efficiency of memory. Ong points the heavy character as the heroic tradition of the oral culture. He links between the heroic tradition and the agonistic lifestyle of the oral culture. Ong states that “[o]ral memory works effectively with ‘heavy’ characters, persons whose deeds are monumental, memorable and
commonly public.” The reason for creating the heavy character, for Ong, is “to organize experience in some sort of permanently memorable form” (Orality 23). As mentioned above, oral language is agonistic. It is obvious that the heavy characters, which should be brave, generous, knight, etc., are agonistic as well. The memory of oral people makes a connection between their life-world and language. The memory of oral people can efficiently memorize what oral people experience. It is an associated work of memory, language, and life-world.

The third technique to improve the oral people’s efficiency of memory is the order of events. The order of events means focusing on the events of the story more than the words of the story. Oral knowledge is stories. Stories can be easily memorized than mere information. Stories are easy to memorize and remembered not only because it consists of events but also linked to the life-world of oral people. Ong suggests that, in the oral culture, “knowledge cannot be managed in elaborate, more or less scientifically abstract categories.” Oral people need stories that hold knowledge. What amazed Ong is the ability of oral people the conservation of incident and narrative structure (Orality 140-141). The efficiency of memory of oral people may not mean verbatim memory, but a memory that is able to remember the detailed events of stories. Verbatim memory is the concern of the literate people because they have the equipment that helps them to remember every letter of stories, oratory, poem, etc. Stories consist of events that can be memorized. The component of poems that helps oral people to memorize is the meter of the poems.

To sum up, in the oral culture, oral people depend on their memory as a way to memorize their knowledge (poetry, rhetoric, proverbs, etc.). The quality of memorizing is not what oral people look for. For some researchers, verbatim memory does not exist in the oral culture. But other researchers assure that the rhythmic word is the only way to the preservation and fixity of
transmission. In addition, to manage and organize the memory, ‘heavier figure’ is created or a well-known person or character. Oral people attribute much of their knowledge, stories, poems, rhetoric to the heavy figure to improve the efficiency of the memory and facilitate the remembering process. Therefore, the way of memorization and remembering in the oral culture controls the way of speaking. The language of poetry depends heavily on meter to ease the process of memorization and remembering. Giving a rhetorical speech means following certain ways and rules. Although rhetorical language does not depend on the metric style of language, it is considered a pillar in the oral culture. The importance of rhetoric in both oral and literate culture is shown and revealed by the focus of researchers on orality and literacy.

**Rhetoric**

Rhetoric relates to both orality and literacy. But in orality, rhetoric plays a more important role in people’s lives than in literacy for two reasons. First, the life of oral people is around rhetoric. According to Ong, business consists fundamentally of rhetoric. Buying things in these cultures is a rhetorical act in which it depends on “a series of verbal (and somatic) maneuvers, a polite duel, a contest of wits, an operation in oral agonistic” (*Orality* 68). Second, rhetoric began for the public. For Ong, the Greek word “rhetor” means a public speaker (109). However, with the emergence of writing, rhetoric does not lose its position with orality. When Wachs explains the importance of the three arts of the trivium (rhetoric, grammar, and dialectic) to McLuhan’s theory of media ecology, he states that these three forms of arts relate to three types of logos: rhetoric to the spoken word, grammar to the written word, and dialectic to the inner word (28). After the spread of writing, after the Christian era (from the fourth century to the sixth century), rhetoricians were interested in spoken words. But Grammarians focused on writing (*The Presence* 78). In the oral culture, rhetoric was a genre without any other detail. But
with the invention of writing, grammar emerged as a new way that contributed to developing rhetoric in which it created literate rules to manage rhetoric and its performance. According to what was mentioned above, talent, intuition, human memory, promptitude are required in oral rhetoric because rhetoric is a public speech. Public speech means that rhetor depend on his own memory and vocabulary to give a speech. Memory is not only the place of past events and words in the mind, but an organizer of one’s behavior (explained in the next chapter) which is needed in the public speech to connect between words, voice, gestures, etc. However, writing widens the boundaries of giving a speech to the outside human body. The literate rhetoric depends on grammar, a written discipline, to give a speech. Voice and gestures vanished. Paper and pen took their place in the speech process. These changes in the literate rhetoric reinforced the dependence of literate rhetor on external factors and tools. The entering of writing the world of rhetoric may pose a question, not about the changes that writing made to the rhetoric but the writing as a medium of communication as a system of communication. The question relates to the relationship between spoken language and writing. In fact, it is a controversial issue.

The relationship between the system of writing and the spoken word is a controversial issue. Is writing a supplement to the spoken word? In fact, the answer to this question requires explaining the thoughts of scholars. The scholars had two different and contradictory opinions. The first opinion answered the previous question as yes. For Ferdinand de Saussure, writing is a supplement to the spoken word (23-24). Writing is the visual form of spoken words. In addition to the opinion of Saussure, Ong views writing as a secondary modeling system (Orality 75) which means that the authentic modeling system is the spoken word. Ong mentions Aristotle’s ideas about writing. For Aristotle, human knowledge exists only in the enunciation (Ramus 107-108) which means that what is written is a coded symbol of what is said. Ong uses the system of
Semitic languages as an example that could prove that writing is a supplement to the spoken word. Ong writes that:

Hebrew and other Semitic languages, such as Arabic, do not to this day have letters for vowels. A Hebrew newspaper or book still today prints only consonants (and so-called semi-vowels [j] and [w], which are in effect the consonantal forms of [i] and [u]): if we were to follow Hebrew usage in English we would write and print ‘cnsnts’ for ‘consonants’. The letter aleph, adapted by the ancient Greeks to indicate the vowel alpha, which became our roman ‘a’, is not a vowel but a consonant in Hebrew and other Semitic alphabets, representing a glottal stop (the sound between the two vowel sounds in the English ‘huh-uh’, meaning ‘no’). Late in the history of the Hebrew alphabet, vowel ‘points’, little dots and dashes below or above the letters to indicate the proper vowel, were added to many texts, often for the benefit of those who did not know the language very well, and today in Israel these ‘points’ are added to words for very young children learning to read – up to the third grade or so. Languages are organized in many different ways, and the Semitic languages are so constituted that they are easy to read when words are written only with consonants (Orality 89).

Adding points to words is to help readers to pronounce words in the right way. The first chapter of this project explains the movement system of the Arabic writing system which is similar to the points in the Hebrew alphabet.

The second opinion asserts that writing is not a supplement to the spoken word, but a unique and different system of communication. In Of Grammatology, Jacques Derrida asserts that writing is not a supplement to the spoken word (164). Also, in the same book, Derrida suggests that “there is no linguistic sign before writing” (14). But Ong asserts that there is no linguistic sign after writing either. Ong insists that “[t]hought is nested in speech, not in texts, all of which have their meanings through reference of the visible symbol to the world of sound. What the reader is seeing on this page are not real words but coded symbols ...” (Orality 75).

However, by understanding that writing is a supplement to the spoken word, one can realize why writing did not make an immediate impact on people’s thoughts and expressions. In other words, why there is a long transitional phase (transition from orality to literacy) which is the issue of the final section of this chapter. The transition from orality to literacy is the transition from the oral
mind to the literate mind. Each mind has its own characteristics which form not only the culture but also the members of the culture and even the type of knowledge that those members seek to obtain.

Orality and writing are not only media of communication. In fact, they come to impact not only society but also people’s thoughts and expression. Any medium of communication “has an important influence on the dissemination of knowledge over space and overtime and it becomes necessary to study its characteristics in order to appraise its influence in its cultural setting” (Innis 33). Spoken word and writing form thought and the way of thinking depending on the characteristics of each medium. To understand the impact of orality on people’s thoughts and expressions, one should understand the features of sound, explained above. In the oral culture, Ong describes the thought of the culture as unit. For him, oral individuals cannot separate themselves from the tribal thought (The Presence 231-232). The unity of the thought of the oral people is formed by the feature of unity of sound. In addition, the thought of the oral culture is limited by the capacity of the orality or the sound. Depending only on the human’s memory to maintain the knowledge reduces the opportunity of cognitive diversity. In The Presence of the Word, Ong states that, in the oral culture, “knowledge cannot be stored in abstract, categorized forms.” For Ong, storing knowledge in abstract and categorized form requires elaborating and dispassionating “causal analyses and sharp abstract categorization depends absolutely on writing” (203). In addition, the members of the oral society think within the boundaries of the thought of their society and culture. This limitation of thought makes knowledge, in the oral culture, “a tribal possession, not a matter of individual speculation” (204). However, writing made a revolution on the thought. Ong mentions that people who have interiorized writing speak according to literate characteristics. For Ong, they organize their thought and expression (Orality
Writing provides the human mind the ability to analyze knowledge. With writing, the text is steady and unchangeable which enables the mind to read it several times and analyze it. In addition, writing, which creates an isolated reader, makes people aware of themselves as human beings who are able to think by themselves (The Presence 134-135). A human being needs others’ thoughts to think. In the oral culture, thinking is a social activity in which one depends on the thought of others. In writing, the need of others is still needed with writing. But writing gives another way of thinking with others. Others, with writing, exist in the paper. Readers can agree or disagree with the ideas that they read without fear of any confrontation. Practicing thinking alone makes literate people aware of their ability to think without external help.

This section provides a brief explanation and an overview of orality and literacy. It explains the characteristics of both sound and sight and their impact on people’s minds (thought, expression, and memory), society, and rhetoric. To understand the shift from orality to literacy (the narrow focus of this project), there is a need for this brief show of orality and literacy in which it can help readers of the project to understand the features of each of them and understand how the shift occurs.

Depending on the above explanation of orality and literacy, the impact of spoken word, before the emergence of writing, on people and culture is different than the impact of writing on them. In the oral culture, there was a speaker, who cannot be called a speaker without an audience, talking to an existed audience. The main tools are the mouth, ears, and sound. With the writing, the writer does not need an existed audience. He needs readers who he could not guarantee their existence. He does not need the sound, but a hand and eyes. In the former, the words could be touched or analyzed. But in the latter, the words occupy a physical space. The change in the environment of communication results in several changes in human life. It results
in a literate person, society, and culture. But the question is who can be described as an oral person and a literate person. The answer could not be merely that who cannot write is an oral person and who can write is a literate person because the impact of writing is an impact that includes mental and psychological processes. These effects can only occur after a complete mental and psychological comprehension of writing. “Oral formulaic thought and expression ride deep in consciousness and the unconscious, and they do not vanish as soon as one used to them takes pen in hand” (Orality 26). Describing the oral formulaic thought and expression as deep in consciousness and the unconscious indicates a need for conscious and unconscious efforts to implement the changes that writing can make. It, also, points to a need for a long time to implement these changes. The shift from orality to literacy is not an immediate and easy process.

**Transition from Orality to Literacy**

Orality existed a long time before the invention of writing. Human beings during this long period built their cultures, myths, stories, etc. according to oral characteristics. The shift from the deep impact of orality to literacy was not easy because, as Ong describes, oral thought and expression were deep in consciousness and unconsciousness. For Ong, the impact of orality on the thought and expression does not “vanish as soon as one used to them takes pen in hand.” Ong cites Opland’s observation that when Xhosa poets learned writing, the style of their written poems had the same characteristics as their spoken poems (Orality 26). In addition to Ong’s example, after the widespread of writing in the oral traditional Arabic culture, Arabic authors frequently used their names followed by the verb “says,” such as Al-Asma’ai says ... (Al-Asma’ai 17) and Ibn Al-Muqafa says ... (Ibn Al-Muqafa 21). At the beginning of the invention of writing, thought and expression were not impacted immediately by the characteristics of writing.
With the beginning of the emergence of writing, there was what this project calls “oral writing” which means to write according to the characteristics of orality. In Arabic culture, the Alphabet existed before the widespread of writing. But whose developed the writing system were linguists who saw the need for writing. They were oral, as mentioned earlier, and began to develop the Arabic writing system. Their oral characteristics impacted their way of developing the writing system. Arabic writing system depends on the spoken words to develop the writing system. Ong, in the *Orality and Literacy*, writes that:

Hebrew and other Semitic languages, such as Arabic, do not to this day have letters for vowels. A Hebrew newspaper or book still today prints only consonants (and so-called semi-vowels [j] and [w], which are in effect the consonantal forms of [i] and [u]): if we were to follow Hebrew usage in English we would write and print ‘csnnts’ for ‘consonants’. The letter aleph, adapted by the ancient Greeks to indicate the vowel alpha, which became our roman ‘a’, is not a vowel but a consonant in Hebrew and other Semitic alphabets, representing a glottal stop (the sound between the two vowel sounds in the English ‘huh-uh’, meaning ‘no’). Late in the history of the Hebrew alphabet, vowel ‘points’, little dots and dashes below or above the letters to indicate the proper vowel, were added to many texts, often for the benefit of those who did not know the language very well, and today in Israel these ‘points’ are added to words for very young children learning to read – up to the third grade or so. Languages are organized in many different ways, and the Semitic languages are so constituted that they are easy to read when words are written only with consonants (89).

What is applied to Hebrew in this quotation is applicable to the Arabic language. Ong describes the manuscript culture as an oral culture (119). The insistence of orality during the writing time can be justified in several points. The first point, mentioned above, is that the oral people developed the writing system. Obviously, the new system would be the visual image of the oral spoken words because the conception of communication, of the developers, was still an oral conception represented in the spoken words. Writing, as Ong states, arose because of the need for record keeping attendant on urbanization (*The Presence* 53). Literacy took its place in people’s way of thinking and expressing after the invention of printing. The invention of printing was by literate people who saw the need for a system that was not impacted by the system of the
oral spoken word (explained later in this section). In this context, in the twentieth century, the
innovation of new media began by supporting the oral and printing system. But with the change
that these new media did to the people’s way of thinking and expressing, new media took its
place as a new system that does not fully depend only on literacy and orality. For example, the
emoji becomes part of the daily conversation of people. Second, making writing a mere visual
image of the oral spoken word helps orality to continue its impact for several years. Third,
writing equipment was not available for everybody at all times. “A complete system of writing
becomes the possession of a special class and tends to support aristocracies” (Innis 4). Finally,
books were read loudly which means that there was a reader but many listeners. Listening was
not separated from reading. Therefore, writing did not help to completely form the thought and
expression of people.

Oral people treated reading the way they treated writing. Reading, at the beginning of the
spread of writing, was aloud. It can be described as an oral reading which means to read a text as
to listen to an oral speech. Oral people, at the beginning of the spread of writing, preferred oral
narration over reading. In the Middle Ages of Europe, reading meant reading aloud (The
Gutenberg 82). In fact, freeing a community from the characteristics of the orality at the
beginning of the literate age is not an easy process. For McLuhan, “Readers continued to read
aloud after the beginning of word separation in the later Middle Ages, and even after the coming
of print in the Renaissance” (85). Ong also assumes the loud reading in the Middle Ages (The
Presence 58). Middle Ages came after the widespread of writing during the Antiquity. The
Middle Ages is almost ten centuries. It is ten centuries that writing did not fully impact society
and the individual. This long time of little impact of writing on people’s thought and expression
confirms the four points mentioned above about the reasons for the lack of the impact of the
writing. The impact of literacy widely existed with the invention of print. “Well after printing was developed, auditory processing continued for some time to dominate the visible, printed text, though it was eventually eroded away by print” (Orality 120). The spread of printing was greater than the spread of writing because printing a book is way easier and faster than rewriting a book.

The invention of printing resolved the problem of the lack of equipment for writing and the difficulty of rewriting text. Rewriting is difficult because it required a long time of effort. But “print replaced the lingering hearing-dominance in the world of thought and expression with the sight-dominance which had its beginnings with writing but could not flourish with the support of writing alone” (Orality 121). The change that printing brought was not only speed and widespread of books and newspapers but also foster the impact of literacy on people. Writing, at the beginning of its invention, was linked to the spoken word. Its equipment was naturally available, the ink (used for painting, the pen from trees, etc.). But printing, on the other hand, is the result of literate thought. It needs knowledge that was not available at the oral time. Rewriting a book is completely a human being’s effort. But printing the same book is a mechanical effort although the existence of human beings is needed. In period of writing, “the book was a scribal product, which means that the distribution of this technology and the process of change was slow and not on a massive scale” (Wachs 60). It is a matter of “time” that played an important role in reinforcing the impact of literacy. But knowledge had the biggest share of the impact of writing in which we can see the development in some fields of knowledge such as philosophy, rhetoric, etc.

The intellectual movement was one of the most impacted elements impacted by writing. In the first chapter, the first written books were to record the oral traditional stories, poems, and oratories besides the Islamic texts. The writing of the oral traditions indicates the reason for
developing the writing system in the Arabic culture which is to maintain the spoken word. For this reason, Arabic writing was the visual image of the sound of the spoken word. However, in the Western culture, knowledge was inseparable from enunciation. Ong mentions that, for Aristotle, “[h]uman knowledge for Aristotle exists in the full sense only in the enunciation ...” (Ramus 107). Moreover, Greek philosophers did not treat their knowledge as the product of writing. In The Presence of The Word, Ong mentions that Greeks and Romans did not understand what is writing. Their way of composing was not as today. Aristotle’s books were collected after his death. And Cicero traveled to Greece to listen to Greek philosophies (55-56). Cicero could read Greek philosophers’ books instead of going through the trouble of traveling. “Socrates dismissed writing, identifying it as a mere mechanism to remind him who knows [about] the things that have been written” (Shlain 153). The connection between written books and reading aloud may be the cause of a lack of confidence in writing as a source and conveyor of knowledge. During the Middle Ages, in the Middle East and the West, rhetoric was an oral literary genre. With the invention of print, the interest in writing reduced. “The fact that dialectic and rhetoric ... dominated the intellectual and academic world from classical antiquity with gradual diminution through the Enlightenment has long been known” (The Presence 219). The reduction of interest in rhetoric as an oral genre coincided with the beginning of the wide impact of literacy.

In sum, transition from orality to literacy was not an easy process. It took time and effort. Writing, at the beginning of its spread, had a strong link to spoken words because the developers of the writing system were oral people. The impact of writing was not huge for several reasons. Writing is created as a visual image of the spoken word. In addition, the equipment for writing was not always available. Also, reading was a social activity. It was aloud. These four reasons
were obstacles to the full impact of writing on people’s thoughts and expressions. Because writing was the visual image of the spoken word, writing as an activity was implemented according to the spoken word. Reading, also, was treated as writing. What was written was loudly read. Printing came to overcome the dominance of orality. The slowness characteristic of writing was replaced by the speediness of printing which foster the full impact of literacy on people’s way of thinking and expressing. However, the most thing that changed by writing was the intellectual movement. Before the invention of print, people knew several fields of knowledge such as mathematics, medicine, history, etc. Oral people and literate people live in the transitional phase according to both the characteristics of the sound and sight. Chapter four focuses deeply on the transitional mind. Chapter four is to answer questions such as how a literate person lives in an oral culture. Who could become a literate person and who could not be a literate person? and more.

Summary

This chapter focuses on three topics which are media ecology, orality and literacy, and transition from orality to literacy. The chapter is to clarify one important point which is the Western media ecologists’ opinions and works about the transition from orality to literacy. To achieve this purpose, the chapter explains the orality and literacy which requires an introduction to media ecology to determine the boundaries of the field. Media ecology is the study of the implication of media on communication, the human condition, and environments. However, media ecology intersects with other fields of knowledge such as communication, anthropology, linguistics, etc. To clarify media ecology as a unique field, the chapter points to the main themes that media ecology focused on. In addition, drawing upon works on media ecology, the chapter suggests that media ecology views media as environments (a definition that can summarize the
path of media ecology). However, the chapter also discusses academic works on orality and literacy. Orality and literacy are a theory or a method to study the society, thoughts, and expressions of oral and literate cultures. What helps to study the oral and literate cultures is the analysis of sound, the main tool of spoken words, and sight, the main tool of writing. One of the main features of sound is uniting. But sight is analytic. However, by studying the tools of both orality and literacy, the chapter determines the changes that writing made to society, thoughts, and expression. Analyzing orality and literacy was a way to narrow the focus of the chapter to the transition from orality to literacy. Transition from orality to literacy is not an easy and immediate process. It took time to make this shift. In fact, the transition from orality to literacy did not happen at the time of the spread of writing, but after the invention of writing.

This chapter is to explain one of the main themes of the project which is transition from orality to literacy. The chapter discussed orality and literacy and the transition from orality to literacy according to the Western scholarship although the cultural focus of the project is the Arabic culture. In fact, the chapter is an overview of works on orality and literacy and the shift from orality to literacy. Chapters one and two focus on the first main two themes of the projects which are the old oral and literate traditional Arabic culture. This chapter comes to clarify points and to indicate reasons that led to the transformation from orality to literacy.

This chapter’s purpose is an introduction to the next chapter. It focuses on the main points that Western works discuss transition from orality to literacy. The next chapter is to show how the focus on the old traditional Arabic culture can add to the theory of orality and literacy, especially the transformation from orality to literacy. Chapter four depends on the first two chapters of this project to discuss issues related to orality and literacy and the shift from orality to literacy. To avoid the overlapping between this chapter and the next chapter, chapter four
studies only issues that are not mentioned in the third chapter which obviously are not mentioned in the Western works.
Chapter Four: Thought, Knowledge, and the Medium of Communication

Chapter three explains orality and literacy and the shift from the former to the latter depending on works focused on the Western oral and literate cultures. This chapter focuses on issues related to the shift from orality to literacy such as literate knowledge and oral knowledge, isnad, and literate people in the oral culture. The difference between chapter three and this chapter is that this chapter does not only explain the transitional phase depending on the Western works (e.g. Orality and Literacy, The Presence of the Word, The Alphabet versus the Goddess, The Bias of Communication, etc.), but it, also, discusses other issues that are not mentioned in the previous chapter and in the Western works on orality and literacy such as knowledge and forming human mind, isnad, and how literate people and oral people live together in the transitional phase. These issues are the focus of this chapter. However, this chapter discusses the role of the medium of communication used to convey knowledge in forming the human being’s thoughts and expressions. The main themes for this chapter are thought and language, consciousness and unconsciousness, brain and language, and memory. The issue of the role of knowledge relates to the shift from orality to literacy which could explain how a human being gains the characteristics of oral medium of communication or writing as a medium of communication, as explained later in this chapter. Moreover, this chapter focuses on the isnad, an Arabic oral issue explained in the first chapter, as a required process to maintain knowledge in the Arabic transitional phase (the transition from orality to literacy).

The project concentrates on the transformation from orality to literacy and issues related to this transformation, the issues mentioned above. This chapter is a further explanation of the transition from orality to literacy. The chapter is to analyze and study the transitional phase between the oral traditional and literate Arabic cultures. Although there are works that focus on
some oral and literate aspects of the Arabic culture, as explained in the introduction of this project, the concentricity of these works does not focus on the Arabic unique elements that can be used to enrich our understanding of the transition from orality to literacy. *Isnad* is one of the issues related to the Arabic culture. Therefore, this chapter studies three points related to the main goals of the project, namely *isnad*, transition from orality to literacy, and knowledge, as one of the main factors of transition from orality to literacy.

Works on orality and literacy discuss the transformation from orality to literacy as a section, even less than a section. This narrow focus on issues related to the transitional phase comes in the context of discussing orality and literacy as an oral culture and literate culture, not as a transitional phase that has its own characteristics. However, the goal of this chapter, as well as the goal of the project, is to focus on the transformation from orality to literacy. Therefore, the significance of the chapter to the theory of orality and literacy can be explained in two points. First, the chapter does not only discuss the transition from orality to literacy but, as mentioned above, points to some issues that have the main role in the transitional phase such as the role of knowledge to reinforce the impact of the medium of communication on people’s thoughts and expressions. Second, the chapter opens the academic research to the unique elements in the Arabic culture that can be studied not only for the transition from orality to literacy but also for orality and literacy, in general, such as *isnad* and the status of the language in the Arabic Islamic mind as a sacred language, as explained in the first chapter. The importance of the concentration of this chapter on isnad can be viewed not only through the isnad as a unique issue related to orality and literacy, but also as an issue that opens our eyes to a new way of communicating literate knowledge\(^\text{16}\) in the oral age. Therefore, isnad does not only relate to media ecology but

---

\(^{16}\) Describing *isnad* as a way to convey literate knowledge is discussed in the section of *isnad* in this chapter.
also to communication in which isnad depended completely on communication to convey knowledge.

Knowledge, the Medium of Communication, and the Characteristics of the Human Beings’

Thoughts and Expressions

“Knowledge” is one of the main words in this chapter. In fact, the entire chapter is built around knowledge and its role to form the human mind according to the characteristics of the medium of communication. The important question that this section should answer is what is knowledge? This chapter uses John Locke’s understanding of knowledge as the starting point to determine the concept of knowledge that this chapter means.

Locke connects knowledge and idea. He states that “[o]ur knowledge is conversant about our ideas only” (433). Locke’s connection between knowledge and ideas results from his thought about the ideas of the human mind as the only immediate object of the mind. Locke defines knowledge as “nothing but the perception of the connexion of and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas” (433). In this sense, human culture determines the type of knowledge. Locke writes that “to understand a little more distinctly wherein this agreement or disagreement consists, I think we may reduce it all to these four sorts: I. Identity, or diversity. II. Relation. III. Co-existence, or necessary connexion. IV. Real existence” (433-434). The first sort points to the human identity which is formed by his own culture. The connection between knowledge and culture can be viewed in term of media ecology in which what is called knowledge in the oral culture is different than the knowledge of literate culture.

In this chapter, there are two types of knowledge17, oral and literate. Oral knowledge is poems, stories, proverbs, oral rhetoric, and wisdom. Oral knowledge is a summary of the human

---

17 Information and knowledge are different. Luciano Floridi in the introduction of his *Information: A Very Short Introduction* views information as made of data (xxx). It is raw data without external impact. But there are many
experience spoken or narrated in a poem, oratory, or a story. “In an oral culture, knowledge, once acquired, had to be constantly repeated or it would be lost: fixed, formulaic thought patterns were essential for wisdom and effective administration” (Orality 24). Ong describes the process of education in the oral culture as an apprenticeship processed “by listening, by repeating what they hear, by mastering proverbs and ways of combining and recombining them, by assimilating other formulary materials, by participation in a kind of corporate retrospection” (8). However, literate knowledge is the knowledge that comes as a result of the impact of writing and, later, printing such as mathematics, geometry, philosophy, linguistics, grammar, etc. Ong styles “the orality of a culture totally untouched by any knowledge of writing or print, ‘primary orality’” (10). For Ong, writing provides human beings with the advantage of the ability to “elaborate and dispassionate causal analyses and sharp abstract categorization” (The Presence 203). According to Ong, the feature of elaborating causal analyses and sharp abstract categorization leads to the emergence of astronomy, mathematics, physics, grammar, logic, metaphysics, and all other abstract knowledges (203). Therefore, this chapter uses the word “knowledge” to indicate two types of knowledge which are oral knowledge and literate knowledge. The link between knowledge, orality, and literacy implies the impact of knowledge on human mind.

The human being’s mind is formed by knowledge. For Plato, considered a transitional person, knowledge is the true belief. It could be justified (Plato 69). Al-Jahiz did not define knowledge. But he divides knowledge into origins and branches. Al-Jahiz asserts that one cannot learn the branches before he masters the origins (Al-Bursan 29). Al-Jahiz links knowledge or gaining knowledge with the medium of communication. For him, the first step to knowledge is silence, then listening, followed by memorization, thereafter, applying the learned knowledge,

external cultural factors, as explained, impact the concept of knowledge. However, “information” in this chapter is akin to literacy more than orality in which literate knowledge is abstract and has raw data.
and finally teaching and disseminating the knowledge (Al-Bayan 2:339). However, knowledge and the medium of communication are inseparable in which human beings use the latter to convey the former. Human beings’ memory is to store knowledge. But is knowledge the only thing that a human being stores in his memory? And is knowledge stored only in the memory? The answer to both questions is no. But the importance of knowledge to the human mind, as explained later, is its role in forming the human mind according to the characteristics of the medium of communication. According to what is mentioned, there is a connection between knowledge, the medium of communication, the human brain, and memory. In this section, a literate person means to gain literate knowledge through reading or listening. Knowledge is what builds the human mind and is responsible for thinking. If one builds his knowledge by oral knowledge, he cannot be literate even though he can read and write. This section is to discuss this hypothesis through five themes, namely consciousness and unconsciuosness, brain and knowledge, knowledge thought and language, thought and language, and memory.

Consciousness and Unconsciousness

As mentioned in chapter three, there are conscious and unconscious impacts of the medium of communication on people’s thoughts and expressions. In Orality and Literacy, Walter J. Ong states that oral thoughts and expression “ride deep in consciousness and the unconscious, and they do not vanish as soon as one used to them takes pen in hand” (26). Chapter three of this project explained the concept of “oral writing” and “oral reading.” According to these concepts, oral people write and read according to the characteristics of the orality which means that writing’s impact on their thoughts and expression was not aware due to its unconscious impact. Although they can read and write, they do not absorb writing. In other words, the characteristics of literacy do not alter their way of thinking and expressing. Al-Jahiz,
as shown earlier, was aware of some of the impact of writing due to his analytic brain that he
gained by writing. “Early written poetry ... is at first necessarily a mimicking in script of oral
performance. The mind has initially no properly chirographic resources. You scratch out on a
surface words you imagine yourself saying aloud in some realizable oral setting” (Orality 26).
But the question is how does this conscious and unconscious process of the impact of the
medium of communication support the hypothesis of the project? The answer to this question is
that knowledge, as the leader of the change, is an unconscious way of the impact of the medium
of communication. The way that oral and literate people receive and process knowledge is
unconscious. Ong, in his analysis of Milman Parry’s doctoral dissertation, describes the
expression and thought of the human mind as a process (21). And, as explained later in this
chapter, thought and knowledge are inseparable. In addition, Ong states that Plato had
reservations about writing as a mechanical, inhuman way of processing knowledge (25).
Knowledge is not a process, according to Ong, but processed by writing. Therefore, it is helpful
to explain the conscious and unconscious processes of the impacts of the medium of
communication on people’s thoughts and expressions.

The impact of the medium of communication on people’s thoughts and expression is a
complicated process. This complicated process makes some of the impacts of the medium of
communication unconscious in which human beings cannot realize the impact of the medium of
communication on themselves. Leonard Shlain describes the process of reading. For him, the
eyes of the readers scan distinctive individual letters arranged in a certain linear sequence. The
result of scanning these letters is a meaningful word. Scanning words ends in having a complete
sentence. Understanding depends on the sentence’s syntax, “the particular horizontal sequence in
which its grammatical elements appear.” Shlain calls this process reductionism. “This process
occurs at a speed so rapid that it is below awareness” (4-5). The process of reading is to read letters that do not have meaning by themselves. But when letters are gathered in a group, they make a word that has a meaning. But the word needs other words to provide a sentence that points to a more accurate and specific meaning than the only word. This process is unconscious. For oral people, the previous chapter explains, the sound and how the brain deals with the knowledge that the sound carries. In the oral situation, the process of receiving knowledge must be unconscious due to the inability of the oral mind to analyze because it is not an analytic brain and the unconscious process of the heard knowledge on the human brain. As mentioned earlier, sound cannot be stopped. Sound carries the spoken word which consists of knowledge. When the sound disappears, knowledge, also, vanishes. Knowledge should be transmitted into the human mind. The human mind does not have enough time to think about knowledge conveyed by sound due to the limited existence of sound. The relationship between sound and time lead to making the receiving knowledge in the oral culture an unconscious process. In both orality and literacy, the conscious and unconscious process of receiving knowledge gives the medium of communication the advantage of determining the character of the knowledge being communicated. Also, it determines the character of knowledge.

Harold A. Innis asserts the use of a certain medium of communication for a long period of time will “determine the character of knowledge to be communicated.” For Innis, the widespread impact of the medium of communication would result in a new form of civilization (34). For example, with the invention of social media and new technologies in the modern age, the culture of society takes a new form. The cultures of youth become similar. McLuhan describes our present culture as a global village (The Presence 88). One can infer two important things from Innis’s idea. First, the use of the medium over a long period indicates the
unconscious process of the impact of the medium of communication in which the medium was created for the conscious need. For example, writing is used to maintain text, poetry, rhetoric, etc. But the unconscious process, as explained earlier is not realized. The unconscious impact of writing needs time to take place in the human brain. Second, every medium of communication opens new fields of knowledge. With writing, there are mathematics, philosophy, science, etc. Innis links these new fields of knowledge not only to the new media of communication but also to the new forms of civilization. For example, in ancient Egypt, pyramids were structured after they invented mathematics. Pyramids are the landmark of the ancient Egyptian civilization. By connecting the two points inferred from Innis’ idea, it is obvious that the unconscious impact of a certain medium of communication manifests in new fields of knowledge. In other words, knowledge is the way to assure the full impact of a medium of communication. With the writing, realizing the impact of the unconscious process of writing is difficult because the writing was not widely spread as orality and later printing.

Unlike printing, writing takes time to influence culture. But the question, which is posed in chapter three, why did the writing take a long time to impact people’s oral life and culture? According to Ong, writing was invented at the service of orality (Orality 121). In addition, writing equipment was not available for everyone. Rewriting a book takes time to have only one copy to be read only by one person at a time. The lack of writing equipment, as a cause of the delayed impact of writing on cultures, triggered the continuity of the oral knowledge and way of receiving knowledge. Books, in the transitional phase, were written to be read aloud. McLuhan mentions that, in the educational system of the Middle Ages, books were read aloud (Gutenberg 82). In addition to reading aloud, McLuhan finds in one of Istuan Hajnal’s works a strong connection between orality and writing. McLuhan mentions that, for Medieval students, writing
was not “only profoundly oral but inseparable from what is now called oratory and what was then called *pronuntiatio*, which was and remained the fifth major division of standard rhetorical study.” McLuhan concludes that writing was greatly valued in the Middle Ages because Medieval teachers and students found in writing the proof of solid oral training (94). In many cases, written knowledge was not only read aloud but also oral knowledge. The limited spread of writing can be viewed by studying the writing society and culture.

What contributes to the lateness of the unconscious impact of writing on people’s thoughts and expression is that writing, at the beginning of its invention, was elitist. Al-Jahiz, as mentioned, was poor. His mother encouraged him to find a job instead of educating himself. Al-Jahiz’s story of his early life indicates that education, which began with learning writing and reading, was for the elites. The equipment for writing was not available to every member of society. Lance Strate mentions that many of the impacts of writing “did not fully take hold until the printing revolution in early modern Europe.” For Strate, memorization continued to be vital in writing culture due to the lack of writing equipment (24). The continuity of memorization means that knowledge was treated by the brain as oral knowledge. In fact, Strate asserts that “a certain amount of multiformity persisted in chirographic cultures, as scribes usually had the freedom to alter the documents that they were copying in a number of ways, while “scribal corruption” was difficult to avoid” (24). Neil Postman, in his discussion of epistemology and its link to media, connects epistemology to the truth. Then he concludes that “the weight assigned to any form of truth-telling is a function of the influence of media of communication” (24). One of the cases that Postman provides is the speech of Socrates in the courtroom. For Postman, what led to accusing Socrates of guilty by the jurors is his way of speaking. Socrates’ “manner was not consistent with truthful matter, as [jurors] understood the connection” (22). The printing
revolution enabled ordinary people to have books, newspapers, etc. James W. Carey states that “[t]he instruments of communication were expensive and distant and, for most people, uninteresting and irrelevant” (1). The result of the elitism of writing is that writing was not widely used for personal communication as oral language. This limited use of writing contributes to the reduction of the impact of writing on the culture and people’s thoughts and expressions. The impact of writing happens in the brain which is the holder and processor of knowledge. Studying the human mind and how it functions and treats heard and read knowledge helps to understand how knowledge can be the main factor in shaping people's thoughts and expressions according to the medium of communication that conveys it.

**Brain and Language**

The human brain is one of the places where knowledge is processed and stored. In the Transitional phase (transition from orality to writing), there are two ways of gaining knowledge; namely listening and reading. As will be shown, the human brain does not treat heard knowledge and read knowledge in the same way. Therefore, it is important to focus on the brain and knowledge.

Focusing on the brain hemispheres contributes to making a connection between knowledge and the unconscious processing of the impact of the medium of communication on people’s thoughts and expressions. In the transitional phase, oral people and literate people are not aware of the complicated process of the function of the brain hemispheres for speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Shlain mentions that orality depends on the right hemisphere. But
with the invention of writing, the left brain’s hemisphere takes the place of the right hemisphere\textsuperscript{18}. Shlain writes that:

To speak, we need the cooperation of both hemispheres of the brain, and we use both areas of the retina and we employ both hands. Although speech is generated primarily from the dominant left brain, articulation requires the activation of muscles controlled equally by both hemispheres. Retinal cones and rods both engage when we speak and listen; in many instances, the listener’s eye gathers more about the meaning of the speaker’s message than does his ear. Gesture is also a bicameral activity with both hands participating. Their role varies, depending on the emotional content of the conversation and the ethnic background of the speakers, but gestures are always present.

When written words began to supersede spoken words, the left brain’s dominance markedly increased. To write and read, an individual uses primarily the left hemisphere, only the hunting cones and only the killing hand. With the strokes of a thousand chisels, styli, brushes, and pens, literacy diminished the right brain’s complementary role in creating and deciphering language, dismissing with it the importance of both the rods of the retina and the left hand (40).

The human brain’s hemispheres physically involve the process of speaking and writing. This involvement indicates the direct impact of the medium of communication (spoken word and writing) on the human brain. McLuhan differentiates between visual space and acoustic space. For him, visual space has a linear sequential direction, but the acoustic space is not linear. Each of these spaces has its characteristics. The characteristics of the visual space are abstract deductive, fragmented, causal, objective, and rational. But the acoustic space is subjective, simultaneous, intuitive, all-embracing, concrete, inductive, mystical, and experiential. McLuhan assures that the visual space characteristics are the characteristics of the left hemisphere of the brain, whereas the characteristics of the right hemisphere of the brain are the characteristics of the acoustic space (\textit{Understanding} 38). The characteristics of the right brain and orality are identical. The oral society is collective. Collective characteristics cannot be the characteristics of the visual space. It is akin to the acoustic space. Wachs describes the right hemisphere as holistic.

\textsuperscript{18} There are numerous authors and theorists who deal with brain hemispheres such as Marshall McLuhan, Leonard Shlain, Anthony Wachs, Julian Jaynes, Roger Sperry, JB. Hellige, V. S. Ramachandran, Tim Crow, John Cutting, etc.
and orienting our perspective in acoustic space. And the left hemisphere “orients us within visual space” (64). The dependence on the left hemisphere creates an analytic way of thinking in which it depends on abstract, deductive, fragmented, causal, objective, and rational. These characteristics of the left brain do not depend on others to deal with the knowledge. Even the writer of a book does not exist at the time of receiving (reading) the knowledge from his book. The dependence on the left brain results in the isolated reader which triggers what is called individualism. However, the complicated process of the function and the role of the brain’s hemispheres cannot be realized at the time of the transition from orality to literacy because knowledge is received and processed as oral knowledge. Even transitional literate people cannot understand the function of the brain’s hemispheres.

Although Al-Jahiz, as mentioned in the second chapter, was aware of the impact of writing, the process of the impact was not known, especially the explaining of the function of the brains’ hemispheres because it needs an anatomical studying of the human brain which could not happen in the transition stage (from orality to literacy) due to the lack of the equipment. Al-Jahiz realized the conscious impact of the writing which can be realized by observation but could not notice the unconscious impact of the writing such as the function of both brain’s hemispheres. Shlain asserts that when learning to spell happens in the early phase of human life, “people are unaware of the changes in perception it causes. Once a person learns an alphabet, alphabet mental processes will influence their every assumption and decision for the rest of their lives” (429). The impact of the alphabet could not happen with only reading. The lack of writing equipment limits the use of writing for specific purposes. It was not used as much as spoken words. The experience of literacy cannot happen without the existence of its both pillars (writing and reading). Blanka Frydrychova Klimova states that writing helps writers to discover “things
for themselves about the language and about themselves too, thus promoting personal” (9).

Writing is the way of literally expressing oneself. The lack of writing cannot be compensated by only reading. Reading is to receive, and writing is to send. It is obvious that both (writing and reading) have different processes. In writing, writing should imagine his target audience. He produces knowledge. But in reading, the reader focuses only on the written words and uses his brain to analyze and categorize the knowledge. In fact, one needs both writing and reading to have a complete experience of literacy.

Unlike the spoken word, reading and writing need to be learned at the age that the human being is aware of the role of language and the need for writing. Writing as a new medium of communication “will play a role in determining which neuronal pathways of the child’s developing brain will be reinforced” (Shlain 3). In schools, and, at the beginning of the spread of writing, children do not learn only writing, but science and literature which means that writing is linked to knowledge. Before writing, knowledge is gained by listening to stories, wisdom, poetry, and rhetoric. As mentioned, knowledge organizes and builds the function of the brain (Kesteren & Meeter 2). By considering knowledge as the builder of human beings’ brain and the studying of the brain’s hemisphere mentioned above, one may result in that knowledge, at least, one of the main factors that form people’s thoughts and expression according to the medium used to convey the knowledge. And, as mentioned, part of the changes that every medium of communication brings with its innovation is its own sort of knowledge. Fields of knowledge brought by writing contribute with the aid of thought to the change of thoughts as well. Knowledge and thought share the human brain which means the change that knowledge does impacts the thought as well. Knowledge and thought are inseparable.
Knowledge, Thought, and Language

Knowledge and thought need each other. Knowledge needs thought to develop, and vice versa. In fact, the impact of a new medium of communication needs the knowledge to show the impact of the medium. Poetry, rhetoric, and wisdom appear as the result of the impact of the spoken word. With the emergence of writing, there are different fields of science. Moreover, with writing, oral knowledge developed. The *Rhetoric and the Poetics of Aristotle* divides rhetoric into parts to improve the performance of rhetoric. Also, in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, as would be shown later, builds the rules of the Arabic rhetoric. Innis states that the “impact of science on cultural development has been evident in its contribution to technology advance, notably in communication and in the dissemination of knowledge” (192). For Innis, this impact of knowledge exemplifies in the types of knowledge disseminated. Innis concludes that “science lives its own life not only in the mechanism which is provided to distribute knowledge but also in the sort of knowledge which will be distributed” (192). According to Innis’ thought, knowledge requires a new medium of communication that is capable to absorb its detail and sets up its boundaries. The invention of writing was a result of the need as the proverb says necessity is the mother of invention.

Although knowledge may be developed by a new medium of communication, in the transitional phase, the previous dominant medium of communication impacts the way of receiving and processing that knowledge which may limit the potential of the development of the field of knowledge\(^\text{19}\). In the Greek transitional phase, “reading of historical works in public became a prevalent convention.” At the Greek transitional phase, Polybius (200-118 BC), in his

\(^{19}\) McLuhan in his *The Gutenberg Galaxy* mentions that “written materials are strongly urged into the oral pattern of proverb and aphorism and exemplum or instance, by the oral form of discourse.” For him, with the invention of printing, the feeling of authority was confused due to “the intermingling of the old oral and the new visual organization of knowledge” (104).
Historiae “uses the verb “hear”, *akouein*, in the context of reading historical texts: their reading by readers is *anagnōsis*, but the readers also “listen” (*άκοντος*ιν) and are “listeners” (*άκοντες*) (Zelnick-Abramovitz 179). The adoption of the oral characteristics to store and express the written knowledge should have an impact on both the knowledge and the brain of the listeners. Rachel Zelnick-Abramovitz assures that although the elites, in the Hellenistic and Roman eras, were literate, one component of their culture was oral (183). The change in the people’s thoughts and expressions, came later, might be the result of not only the invention of writing, because it was already invented, but of the widespread writing knowledge. For example, with the innovation of printing, literate knowledge was widely spread which resulted in a literate society after a long time of oral society in the Middle Ages. Zelnick-Abramovitz focuses on the Greek transition from orality to literacy. In the conclusion, Zelnick-Abramovitz writes that:

To sum up, the mobility of culture in the Hellenistic period, manifested in the oral presentations, is a complex phenomenon: on the one hand, performers relied on written texts but transmitted them orally; on the other hand, the commemoration of such oral presentations was often epigraphic (193).

In fact, this conclusion is not special for Hellenistic period. As shown in the first and second chapters of this project, books were read aloud. And the beginning of the spread of writing linguistics Arabic scholars traveled to the Arabian Peninsula desert to write oral poetry and rhetoric. Marshall McLuhan mentions that Cicero insisted that “wisdom is eloquence because only by eloquence can knowledge be applied to the minds and hearts of men” (24). According to Cicero’s opinion, both wisdom and rhetoric are the knowledge of the oral culture. Cicero lived in a transitional phase which means that he was in the phase that considered rhetoric an oral tradition. This oral knowledge builds the oral brain which stores its knowledge based on categories. These categories (the function of memory is explained later in this section) depend on concepts and words. “And for Cicero ... the technique of application depends upon the Roman
brick procedure of uniform repeatability and homogeneous segments of knowledge” (24). At the
time of Cicero, writing was known and used for several purposes. But the way of treating
knowledge was still akin to treating oral knowledge than writing knowledge.

Depending on what has been explained above, thought is formed by knowledge, and the
type of knowledge depends on the type of the medium of communication. For example, one of
the characteristics of writing is analysis. Writing knowledge (mathematics, philosophy,
geometry, etc.) was created with the help of the analytic characteristics of writing. Human
beings’ thoughts cannot be analytic without writing knowledge. In other words, although writing
is analytic, it cannot characterize human thought as analytic thought without writing knowledge.
In _Orality and Literacy_, Ong states that literate people do not only write literately but speak
literately as well. For Ong, literate people “organize, to varying degrees, even their oral
expression in thought patterns and verbal patterns that they would not know of unless they could
write” (56-57). The expression relates to the thought as thought has a strong connection to
knowledge. Speaking literately means that their language is analytic. The analytic language is the
product of analytic thought. The question that may emerge is about the status of literate
knowledge in the transitional phase. What is mentioned above is that the literate knowledge in
the transitional phase was processed as oral knowledge.

Literate knowledge in the transitional phase is produced for oral persons. Oral people
listen to memorize. For them, there is no time to analyze what is heard. On the other hand,
literate people read to understand. The spatial stability of the text provides literate people with
the analysis of the sentence into words, which in turn contributes to the analysis of the “read
knowledge,” literate knowledge. When literate people live in an oral society, they produce
literate knowledge but treat it as oral knowledge. Ong provides stories about literate Greeks and
Romans who treated their literate knowledge as oral knowledge. Aristotle’s works were collected after his death. And Cicero traveled to Greece to listen Greek to and learn Greek philosophy although they wrote their philosophy (The Presence 55-56). In Arabic culture, the majority of scholars traveled to gain their knowledge despite the dissemination of public libraries. The matter is not their way of treating literate knowledge, but how they produce the literate knowledge. It is the unconscious impact of writing which functions through knowledge. Literate people are not aware of the impact of writing on their way of thinking and expressing. Traveling to gain knowledge is a characteristic of orality. Literacy is to read books written and brought from away. “Context for the spoken word is furnished ready-made. In written performance the writer must establish both meaning and context” (116). In the transitional phase, the situation is complex because the meaning and context should be easy to be understood by the oral people. Ong in his Orality and Literacy and, also, in his The Presence of the Word explicitly analyzes the characteristics of the oral and literate culture. Although Ong points to knowledge in the transitional phase, his analysis of the knowledge of the transitional phase depends on the characteristics of orality and literacy. What this project claims is that the transitional phase is a phase distinguished from orality and literacy despite its need for some terms of conceptions of orality and literacy. In several places of this chapter and, also, chapter three, knowledge and scholars, in the transitional phase, were in a middle place between orality and literacy. Scholars thought literately. But they wrote their literate knowledge orally. Al-Jahiz, in Al-Hayawan, studied animals and their behaviors. This type of study is literate. It is literate knowledge. But when he wrote the literate knowledge, he used the oral style of language.

Abu Tammam (803-845) is a well-known Arabic poet. He can be described as a literate person. When one asked him why do not you say what can be understood? His answer was why
do not you understand what is said? (Al-Soli 72). It is obvious that Abu Tammam used his literate linguistics style to convey his literate knowledge. But the result was that the public did not understand him. Abu Tammam lived in the time that authors wrote to an oral people. Both, Abu Tammam and the authors of his time, were literate and thought literately. But the difference between them was that Abu Tammam thought and expressed literately while the authors thought literately and spoke orally. Ong states that “[t]hought is nested in speech” (The Presence 138). And, again, thought and knowledge are inseparable. The spoken word and writing show thought in two different ways. In fact, the difference is not only in the way of expressing the thought but also in the way of thinking. Ong asserts that literate people do not write but also speak literately (Orality 56-57). In fact, Ong’s idea is about literate people in a literate culture (after the transitional phase). After the transitional phase, most literate culture does not what orality means. The members of literate culture do not experience oral thinking because they were raised in a literate culture. But the situation is different in the transitional phase. In the transitional phase, orality is the base. literate people grow as oral people and become literate later. At best, literate people grow as literate but in an oral culture. In both cases, literate people, in the transitional phase, experience directly or indirectly oral thinking and expressing. This feature of growing in an oral culture gives them an opportunity to understand oral thinking and the ability to think, express, and write orally as what happened with Al-Jahiz who was raised orally, mentioned in chapter two, and became literate later. In addition, this feature gives them an advantage of understanding both cultures and thinking patterns (oral and literate). Also, knowledge is not only processed differently depending on the type of knowledge brought by the medium of communication but also is stored differently. The role of human memory shows the link between knowledge and the change of people's thoughts and expressions depending on the characteristics
of the medium of communication used to convey the knowledge. The next subsection is to discuss this role of memory.

**Memory**

The human memory is one of the most important components of human communication. Without human memory, the communication process cannot occur. Jonathan K. Foster emphasizes the importance of memory in the communication process. For him, every action those human beings take depends on human memory. People cannot “speak, read, identify objects, navigate [their] way around [their] environment, or maintain personal relationships without their memory” (17). Memory is the storage of vocabulary, the language. Nicholas Carr mentions that the dependence of people, today, on the new technologies instead of their own memory in navigating their surroundings makes them suffering from “both anatomical and functional changes in the hippocampus and other brain areas involved in spatial modeling and memory” (20). Knowledge is transmitted from human memory to external memory. In this case, the human mind does not only completely use human memory to recall information, but the main source becomes the external memory (maps). If the memory is damaged, the language would not exist which results in the inability to communicate. Ong states that human beings know what they can recall (*Orality* 33) which means that they are existing through their memory. According to this chapter, they are their oral or literate knowledge. But how does studying human memory contribute to the discussion of the transitional phase? And what is the role of memory to prove that knowledge is responsible for making the impact of a certain medium of communication on human beings’ way of thinking and expressing? The answer to these two questions is the purpose of this subsection. To answer these questions, the section begins by proving the existence of oral memory and literate memory.
In media ecology, especially the theory of orality and literacy, oral people’s technique to memorize knowledge is different from the technique of literate people. The difference in the way of memorization determines not only the way of recalling the knowledge but also the type of knowledge. In *The Presence of The Word*, Ong describes the oral way of memorization and the literate way of memorization. For Ong, the knowledge, in the oral culture, cannot be stored in abstract, categorized forms. With writing, the large accumulation of exact knowledge makes elaborating and dispassionating causal analyses and sharp abstract categorization possible. For Ong, literate knowledge (astronomy, mathematics, physics, grammar, logic, metaphysics, and all other abstract knowledges) is a mere potential of the human mind until some use can be made of the script. But without script, knowledge is stored in terms of events. These events are maintained in the men’s minds by being clustered into the stories told about a relatively small number of heroic figures. Ong suggests that economy of storage specifies what sort of knowledge is stored (203). This chapter calls these two approaches of memorization ‘oral memory’ and ‘literate memory.’ The reason for calling them oral memory and literate memory is linked to the rest of the subsection in which it depends on the scientific approach to studying human memory. This scientific approach does not mention oral memory and literate memory. But this section needs to keep its thought about orality and literacy within the boundaries of media ecology. However, one of the important differences between oral memory and literate memory is that, unlike oral memory, literate memory extends itself to an external source. Strate states that, at the beginning of the invention of writing, writing was merely a way to develop memory (by creating an external memory) which enable human beings to have verbatim memorization (24). The economic memory of oral people leads to what Ong calls the “heavy figure” (*Orality* 69) to attribute the actions of others to a character to ease the memorization
because the oral memory does not have the ability to memorize every detail. The task of both types of memories (oral memory and writing or literate external memory) is to memorize the knowledge. In fact, oral memory and literate memory are to memorize knowledge and other important things, but the concentration on knowledge indicates its important role to form and build the memory and its function according to the characteristics of the medium of communication. Media ecology focused on the ways of memorization. But neuroscience focuses on the scientific approach to explain the way of building human memory, which may be helpful to improve the understanding of media ecology of the function of memory based on the way of memorization.

To study memory and the role of knowledge in building human memory, neuroscience’s studying of memory provides a scientific view that can help media ecologists to see the impact of communication media on people’s thoughts and expressions. Also, the scientific study of memory can also help to explain the main role of knowledge to change the thoughts and expressions of people according to the characteristics of the medium of communication. In neuroscience, the effective memory system should be able to “(1) encode (i.e., take in or acquire) information, (2) store or retain that information faithfully and, in the case of long-term memory, over a significant period of time, and (3) retrieve or access that stored information” (Foster 33). In the case of oral culture, to have an effective oral memory, the memory of oral people receives the heard information. But to store the information in the long-term memory, the oral memory must transform the information into memorable knowledge exemplified in the heavy character, formulaic template (metric poetry), etc. These two steps facilitate the third step (the recall process). To focus scientifically on knowledge as the main factor that builds human memory, the
chapter focuses deeply on the first two steps. In the first step, one can understand the insistence of the orality to remain at the beginning of literacy, especially in the writing phase.

As stated, orality does not vanish easily in the writing phase. Oral thought and expression are dominant not only in the transitional phase but also in the whole writing phase. In the case of individuals, there is a problem which is that an oral person knows how to read and write but remains oral. The question is that why does the oral person who can write and read think and express orally? The answer may be that past experience and past knowledge is the reason. Memory, which is the place of storing knowledge, is formed by oral knowledge. And “[m]emory is evident to the degree that an event influences later behaviour” (Forster 29). If the memory is accustomed to storing knowledge in an oral way (explained by Ong above), the upcoming knowledge will be treated orally although it is read, especially if it is read aloud and/or communally. In fact, “what we are able to retrieve depends largely on the context in which the information was encoded or classified in the first place, and to what extent this matches the retrieval context” (Foster 57). In oral memory, the knowledge or information is obviously encoded according to the way of memorizing the oral knowledge. In addition, the analytic knowledge may not attract the oral people to memorize them. When an oral person listens to raw literate knowledge, ignoring this knowledge is the result. Foster calls this ignoring status “poor attention” (34).

Al-Jahiz was aware of the problem ignoring literate knowledge because he, as mentioned, wrote for an oral society. Al-Jahiz states that the books of lore and mathematics should not write only to pure reason such as writing the difficult meanings, absolute truth which tires people’s minds and requires great efforts (Rasael 3:153). In addition, in the introduction of Al-Hayawan, Al-Jahiz mentions that although the book concentrates on animals and philosophy, it provides
stories, jocks, and poetry to make the book ideal for youth, the elderly, worshippers, and lecher (1:5). Al-Jahiz wanted his books to be read. Although he is literate, and his knowledge is literate, Al-Jahiz advises others to adopt his style of writing which is to mix the literate knowledge with the oral knowledge. Forster explains the process of storing memories in the brain. He writes that:

Deep within our brains, memories are sorted (or consolidated) in a part of the brain called the hippocampus, which acts as the ‘printing press’ for new memories. Important memories are ‘printed’ by the hippocampus, and then filed away (as ‘books’) indefinitely in the cerebral cortex. The cortex is the outer layer of the brain, where a vine-like thicket of billions of nerve cells reverberates via electrical and chemical impulses to retain information (74).

This complicated process of storing memories cannot be changed merely when one reads and writes. It needs what changes the way of the functioning. When a person becomes older, it is difficult to change what was built in years from one form to another.

In the writing phase, as noticed, there are two concepts, namely oral writing and oral reading. These two concepts show the insistence of orality and its types of thoughts and expressions. The question about the reason for the insistence of the orality in the writing phase can be scientifically answered with the help of neuroscience. In neuroscience, there are types of human memory. The important types of memory to solve the problem of the insistence of orality are short-term memory, long-term memory, and implicit memory. Foster assures that:

Short-term memory seems to remain quite well preserved in older individuals, although tasks with more of a working memory element are often adversely affected by aging... So where more cognitive work is involved (as distinct from more passive short-term storage) then deficits can be apparent (92).

The human mind cannot be easily changed from the habituated way of thinking and expressing to a new way. The decline in the function of the long-term memory with the new cognitive works

---

Oral writing means to use the oral style of speaking in writing, and oral reading indicates not only reading aloud but reading as listening to a speech. In fact, these terms cannot be separated. In addition, these terms existed only in the transitional phase. In the transitional phase, writers use the oral style of speaking to write their works. These works are read aloud.
indicates that the long-term memory habituates a certain way of gaining and processing knowledge, and that makes the transformation to another way is kind of impossible, for adults, because it is a complicated process. However, implicit memory which describes as a memory without awareness, “seems to decline little with age” (93). This decline relates to the processing of the way of storing knowledge in the memory. “There is also evidence that age-related loss of memory capacity may be linked to a reduction in cognitive processing speed as we get older” (94). Therefore, the relationship between knowledge, age, and memory shows the importance of knowledge to form the memory of human beings in which, with age, human memory does not process knowledge as it is (as oral or literate) but as what the memory habituated. And this decline of memory with age interprets the insistence of orality in the writing phase in which adult oral people treat literate knowledge as oral knowledge. Oral memory and literate memory, in orality and literacy, may be understood through the two parts of working memory: the phonological loop and the visuo-spatial sketchpad.

Orality and literacy relate to the medium of communication and are part of the interest of media ecology. The studying of memory, in orality and literacy, is a philosophical study although there are some works that scientifically focus on memory such as The Alphabet versus the Goddess: The Conflict Between Word and Image by Leonard Shlain. In fact, Shlain combines the scientific approach and the philosophical approach. However, part of the interest of neuroscience is the studying of human memory. Neuroscience explains scientifically the function of human memory. In neuroscience, there are types of memory such as what is explained above, short-term memory, long-term memory, and implicit memory. In addition to these types of human memory, there is the working memory. This type of memory consists of three components. The influential working memory model is a central executive that has two so-called
‘slave’ systems (the phonological loop and the visuo-spatial sketchpad). The functional roles of these three components are:

i) the central executive controls attention and coordinates the slave systems, ii) the phonological loop contains a phonological store and an articulatory control process and is responsible for inner speech, iii) the visuo-spatial sketchpad is responsible for setting up and manipulating mental images, and iv) the episodic buffer (not shown) integrates and manipulates material in working memory (Foster 40).

The working memory functions differently between sound (oral tool) and sight (literate tool).

“Book readers have a lot of activity in regions associated with language, memory, and visual processing, but they don’t display much activity in the prefrontal regions associated with decision making and problem solving” (Carr 44). Foster mentions that research proves that the phonological loop plays an important role in language development. “Its existence is supported by experiments showing that performance on memory span tasks typically depends substantially on the use of an articulatory code” (Foster 40-41). Carr suggests that the flowing of knowledge into the working memory is called “cognitive load.” But when the load exceeds the human mind’s ability to store and process knowledge, the human mind cannot maintain knowledge in the long term memory. Human beings’ ability to learn suffers, and humans’ understanding remains shallow (Carr 45). To understand the relationship between knowledge and the two components of the working memory, there is a need to focus on the relationship between reading and memory which explains not only the function of human memory with reading but also the role of knowledge in forming human memory.

Chapter three of this dissertation shows how human beings read words and the role of sight in changing human beings’ brains from orality to literacy. Before the invention of writing, human beings had lived for a long time. The majority of human beings’ life, before writing, was oral. Richard F. Thompson and Stephen A. Madigan state that the human beings’ brain
developed to its fully modern form over 100,000 years ago. And the invention of writing was about 10,000 years ago (212). The oral language was invented 50,000 to 150,000 years ago (Perreault & Mathew 5). That means that the majority of human beings’ life is oral life. In addition, before writing, neuroscientists states that no changes in brain structure or organization have occurred for a very long time (Thompson & Madigan 212). The point is that not only media ecologists but also neuroscientists affirm that writing changes the structure or organization of the brain regardless of their different approaches to explaining the change. Carr asserts that “[r]eading and writing require schooling and practice, the deliberate shaping of the brain” (Carr 20). But the question is that what is the relationship between knowledge and changes that it can make to the human brain and memory? Neuroscientists answer this question.

As mentioned above several times, knowledge builds the human brain and memory. Strate suggests that the sharing of knowledge multiplies the presence of human memory and enhances its preservation (20). The studying of neuroscience the brain by anatomy clarifies the link between knowledge and function of the brain. In fact, neuroscience uses functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and positron emission tomography (PET) to study parts of the human brain and memory (Foster 80). neuroscience explains how the human brain and memory benefits from knowledge. Thompson and Madigan write that:

Every person has perhaps billions of bytes of information stored in long-term memory. This “memory store” is the vast store of information you possess as a result of learning and are not aware of unless you call it up ... without memory there can be no mind (1). The word “learning” indicates knowledge which is the way of forming the human brain. Based on the analysis of neuroscientists stated above and the studying of media ecologists about oral knowledge and literate knowledge, if a person builds his brain by oral knowledge, he is described as an oral person even though he can read and write. Foster states that human memory
is developed by increasing semantic knowledge. For him, “there is evidence that increasing semantic knowledge enhances the way in which information in permanent memory can be accessed” (88). Semantic knowledge is “the general knowledge and features that make up concepts that people have acquired and abstracted.” The concept of semantic knowledge is connected to words (Stephen & Wright 670). However, knowledge is not only the main tool of forming the human brain but also the responsible for behaving and thinking, as stated in the introduction of this subsection.

To sum up, the section discusses the hypothesis of the project which is that knowledge is the main factor to change the characteristics of the human brain according to the characteristics of the medium that is used to convey the knowledge. The discussion of the hypothesis is through several themes which are consciousness and unconsciousness, brain and knowledge, knowledge thought and language, thought and language, and memory and leads to several results. First, knowledge is what forms the human brain. Second, the process of building the brain by knowledge is an unconscious process due to its complexity. Third, the spoken word uses the right human brain hemisphere, and writing uses the left human brain hemisphere. Each hemisphere is responsible for a group of characteristics that impact people's way of thinking and expressing. Fourth, knowledge forms thought in which thought is produced depending on the kind of knowledge that the human brain stores (oral knowledge and literate knowledge). Fifth, in the transitional phase, literate people produce literate knowledge and treat it publicly as oral knowledge. Sixth, memory, brain, and knowledge depend on each other. Memory and the brain are developed by knowledge which means that oral knowledge is responsible for forming the oral brain, and literate knowledge is what forms the literate brain. To sum up the results within the boundaries of media ecology, the characteristics of each medium of communication allow
people who use the medium of communication to have certain types of knowledge which their characteristics of the medium of the communication (e. g., the analytic characteristic of writing allowed literate people to develop mathematics, philosophy, etc.). For people, to have a brain characterized by the characteristics of the medium of communication, they should study and understand the knowledge brought by the medium of communication. This studying and understanding of the new types of knowledge mean letting the new knowledge form the brain according to characteristics of the medium of communication, and avoiding receiving and thinking of the new knowledge according to the brain built by types of knowledge of another medium of communication. However, isnad is an Arabic unique knowledge because it is a literate knowledge that emerged in the oral phase. Depending on the previous discussion of orality and literacy in chapters three and this chapter, it is logical to have oral knowledge in the literate phase. But how an oral human brain builds literate knowledge before the dissemination of writing.

**Isnad: Literate Knowledge in the oral Phase**

In the Arabic traditional culture, there are isnad and narration. Both associate with narrating the oral spoken words (poetry, rhetoric, hadeeth, etc.), but the difference between them is large. Other oral cultures experienced narration. But isnad is a unique component of the Arabic traditional culture. As described before, isnad is literate knowledge. Before discussing the emergence of literate knowledge in the oral culture, it is important to point to the reason for describing isnad literate knowledge. Innis assures that, at the beginning of Islam, the only written spoken word is *Qur’an*. Hadeeth was oral and narrated orally. Hadeeth “gained the force of law and the authority of inspiration and became a system of law and religion. Writing slowly

---

21 Chapter one explains isnad in which it is the unique component of the old traditional Arabic culture. Also, it shows the difference between narration and isnad.
extended its influence to the Hadith.” Innis attributes the late recognition of writing to “the cost and effort of writing down a large volume like the Koran” (119-120). In fact, chapter one proves that writing hadeeth was banned by prophet Muhammad because he was afraid of overlapping between the Qur’an and hadeeth. In other words, prophet Muhammad did not want people to think hadeeth is part of the Qur’an. However, Islamic texts (the Qur’an and hadeeth) brought what can be described as literate knowledge such as the law (known as Sharia). Shlain states that the dominant role in any society acquiring an alphabet is played by the law. For Shlain, “non-alphabetic societies rely more on custom and taboo” (149). The Islamic law was thought by prophet Muhammad in a way that was not experienced in the Ignorant Age. Al-Raf’ay mentions that Islam replaced the custom and tradition with Islamic law. Prophet Muhammad’s companions went to prophet Muhammad to study Islamic law. In the Arabic old culture, he was the first known teacher (245-246). Because prophet Muhammad banned writing of his sayings and actions, his companions and the oral people who followed them before the widespread of the writing depends on narration to maintain the knowledge. Narration could not be the solution because of many problems such as forgetting, distortion, lying. Muslims developed narration to solve these problems. They divided hadeeth into mutawatir, ‘Ahad, al-musnad, mursal, etc (these terms are explained in the first chapter) (Al-Soyoty 1:113; Al-Raf’ay 282-283). Also, depending on the strongness of isnad, Muslims divided hadeeth to correct, good, and weak (Mahasnah 79). With isnad, there are three literate issues. First, isnad is to divide the hadeeth into categories. Second, to know the correctness of hadeeth, oral Muslims focused on the authenticity of each narrator of a hadeeth. They studied their personality and their personal history. Third, prophet Muhammad’s sayings are knowledge that explains Islamic law. Ong states that the oral mind is not analytic and could not be due to “the unifying, centralizing, interiorizing economy of sound.”
But the literate mind is analytic (Orality 73-74). That means that the three issues do not relate to oral knowledge because they are analytic. With widespread of writing, studying isnad contributed to the emergence of several field of knowledge such as the knowledge of men, the knowledge of string.

Describing the isnad as literate knowledge that emerged in the oral phase clarifies the ambiguity of the issue. The ambiguity of the issue points to the logical point which is the impossibility of the oral mind to produce literate knowledge. In fact, the situation of creating literate knowledge in the oral time has a strong link to Islamic traditional thought. At the time of the prophet Muhammad, Muslims were oral. But, at the same time, the sacredness of the prophet Muhammad’s sayings, according to their belief, led them to think of ways to maintain the knowledge. Their oral mind did not think of writing although it existed in their neighbor civilizations (Rome and Persia). But they think of narration that was known and experienced at their time. Then their oral mind guided them to combine narration (an oral way of transmitting poetry, knowledge, etc.) with another oral component, “heavy figure.” The transformation of isnad from oral knowledge to literate knowledge happened with their modifying of the heavy figure. The heavy figure was converted to heavy figures, looking for certitude. McLuhan mentions that “written philosophy ... make[s] “certitude” the primary object of knowledge” (McLuhan 156). Although McLuhan determines philosophy as a field, looking for certitude cannot emerge in the primary oral culture. In the oral primary culture, myths were widespread and largely accepted. Myths are beyond certitude. McLuhan does not only mention philosophy that looks for certitude, but written philosophy. Although isnad is not philosophy, it shares with philosophy the looking for certitude.
In sum, *isnad* is a literate knowledge that emerged only in the oral phase and the transitional phase. The opposite issue to *isnad* is the literate person who lives in an oral culture. In fact, in the transitional phase, the existence of literate people in the oral culture is common because writing is considered a new medium of communication and does not gain the trust of people. In addition, writing equipment was not available as much as we see the abundance of pens and papers today.

A Literate Person in an Oral Culture

In the first section of this chapter, a literate person in an oral culture is described as communicating his literate knowledge orally. The first section described his writing as oral writing because it is written for oral people. In other words, the writing, in the transitional time, is written to be heard. In chapters one and two, traveling in the transitional phase was a way to gain knowledge and spread the knowledge although books existed. In Greece, Ong mentions that, instead of reading Greek philosophical books, Cicero traveled to Greece to hear the Greek philosophy (The Presence 55-56). Traveling to gain or spread knowledge indicates the literate people’s lack of trust in the role of literacy. Zelnick-Abramovitz attributes the traveling of literate people or historians as he calls them to “their wish to attain fame in the quickest way possible.” In his analysis of Lucian of Samosata’s works, Zelnick-Abramovitz states that “Lucian himself admits to having the same motive ... He explains that he went to the festival because he wished to become known to all Macedonians and exhibit (deixai) his work to as many as he could” (178). In addition to the desire to be known, literate people are part of the community (the oral community). They might think orally when they deal with a social matter. Knowledge in the oral culture is a social activity. “Proverbs and riddles are not used simply to store knowledge but to engage others in verbal and intellectual combat” (*Orality* 43). In the transitional phase,
knowledge may be a social activity as in the oral culture. In the analysis of *Birds*, *Knights*, and *Frogs* of Aristophanes (446-386 BC), a Greek playwright, Carl A. Anderson and Keith T. Dix writes that:

In *Birds* ... every instance of literacy is exposed as fraudulent or bothersome. In *Knights*, we see the poet drawing on literacy to characterize various speakers as self-serving manipulators. In *Frogs*, the poet weighs the claims of the oral and literate modes. Each has its place, and there is no doubt of popular distrust of those who claim the ability to read longer texts, but the literate mode seems to assure the survival of the poet’s works (85).

The three different views about writing in the three works of Aristophanes may indicate the impact of the public on the thought of the writer. Al-Jahiz praises spoken words in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, As mentioned, but, in *Al-Hayawan*, values writing.

In short, literate people in the oral culture do not conflict with the dominant culture. Regardless of their awareness of the difference between orality and literacy, when they write, they choose words used in the spoken word to foster the acceptance of their works. For example, Mnesiptolemus of Cyme in his *Historiae* used the words “hear” several times. Zelnick-Abramovitz mentions that the use of the verb “hear” in *Historiae* implies the public reading of the book (183). The writer in the transitional phase may imagine not only an audience, and an oral audience.

**Summary**

This chapter focuses only on the transitional phase. It studies three issues, namely the hypothesis of the project, *isnad*, and literate person in an oral culture. The hypothesis of the project is that each medium of communication has its own unique characteristics and forms the thoughts and expressions of cultures according to its characteristics. But the characteristics of the medium form the thoughts and expression of people and culture with the help of knowledge. The characteristics of each medium of communication help people to create new types of knowledge.
When a person deeply studies and understands the new types of knowledge brought by the medium of communication, the thoughts and expressions of the person are formed according to the characteristics of the medium of communication. This hypothesis is discussed through five themes: consciousness and unconsciousness, brain and knowledge, knowledge thought and language, thought and language, and memory. The second topic of this chapter was isnad.

Although isnad is studied in the first chapter of the project, this chapter focuses on two issues related to isnad and literate knowledge. First, the section of isnad focused on the reason for describing isnad as literate knowledge. Second, isnad is unique because it is literate knowledge produced by the oral mind. The reason for the emergence of literate knowledge in the oral culture is the desire of oral people to maintain the authenticity of their knowledge. The last section of the chapter is how a literate person lives in an oral culture. The section concludes that although the literate person produces literate knowledge, he conveys the literate knowledge orally. In addition, in the transitional phase, literate people use the oral style of gaining and teaching knowledge. They travel although they can read what they traveled for.

By focusing on issues related to the transitional phase, this chapter expands the discussion of one of the most important topics of the project which is the transformation from orality to literacy. The focus of the chapter on knowledge as the main factor of forming people’s minds, thoughts, and expression according to the medium of communication, isnad, and the status of literate people in an oral culture opens a new window for the study of media ecology, especially orality and literacy. In addition, the chapter focuses on two issues related to the main topics of the project which are transformation from orality to literacy and isnad (an old Arabic cultural component). The chapter contributes to media ecology in which it enlarges the deep focus on the Western culture to include the unique characteristics of the oral, transitional, and
writing phase of the old traditional Arabic culture. In addition, isnad can be viewed as a way of using oral communication. In addition, the chapter assures communication is not merely to connect people and cultures but also to develop their life, knowledge, and culture.

Previous chapters and this chapter explain both the old traditional Arabic oral and literate cultures and the transitional phase. They study the transitional phase in two different ways: showing the Arabic transitional phase and the academic research about the transitional phase. Although the first two chapters focus closely on the Arabic transitional phase, the next two chapters are to analyze a work written in the transitional phase. The work is *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* of Al-Jahiz. Al-Jahiz is a literate person who lived in an oral culture and write his *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* to be read aloud. The next chapter (the fifth chapter) focuses on issues related to orality and literacy in Al-Jahiz's theory of rhetoric.
Chapter Five: Art of Orality and the Art of Literacy: Rhetoric and Eloquence.

Chapters five and six analyze *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* which is a book written in the transitional phase by Al-Jahiz. This chapter focuses on Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric that is elucidated in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. This chapter does not only explain the theory of rhetoric, but also shows the implications of orality and literacy in the theory. To study the implications of orality and literacy in Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric, this chapter begins with a general introduction to the theory and its way of explanation in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. Then the chapter studies the theory depending on topics related to orality and literacy. In addition to the introduction to the theory of rhetoric of Al-Jahiz, the chapter focuses on clarification and its importance which consists of several themes, namely silence, flaws of speech, significations and meanings, sound, and accordance. The final section in this chapter is orality and literacy in Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric. Although the themes of the second section of this chapter discuss oral and literate issues in Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric, the final section is to widen the focus on the oral rhetoric and literate rhetoric in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. Studying the differentiation between oral rhetoric and written rhetoric leads to understanding literate rhetoricians’ way of thinking in the transitional phase because they deal with a literary genre that is known and used as oral, not written or literate. Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is an example of rhetoric in the transitional phase.

Studying Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric explained in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* reveals the Al-Jahiz’s manner of thinking and expressing. Al-Jahiz is a literate person who lived in an oral culture, as mentioned. The question that this section answers is how does a literate person live in an oral culture? In addition, this chapter contributes to the goal of the project in which it focuses
on two main aspects of the project, namely focusing on the transitional phase and studying *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* of Al-Jahiz.

The project helps to discover new issues related to orality and literacy from Arabic culture. Although Arabic culture was mentioned in some of media ecologists’ works\(^\text{22}\), the focus of these works is limited on some issues corresponding to issues of orality and literacy in the Western culture such as the role of singing in the oral time and how the community of the oral Arabic culture thought. But this work may discuss issues that are not mentioned in these works of Western scholarship. In fact, the difference of the theory of Arabic rhetoric of Al-Jahiz from the oral Western theory of rhetoric may lead to emerging unique issues related to orality and literacy, especially the transitional phase.

**General Introduction to Al-Jahiz’s Theory of Rhetoric in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen**

Al-Jahiz titled the book *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. There are two words (*Al-Bayan* and *Al-Tabyeen*) and conjunction (*wa*). Both “Al-Bayan” and “Al-Tabyeen” can be translated to several words in English such as eloquence, clarification, declaration. No doubt, Al-Jahiz brought these two similar meaning words to indicate two different meanings. But the problem that confronts this section is the specific and accurate meaning of words related to rhetoric. Although this section translates the name of the book as *The Clarification and the Eloquence*, there are some issues related to this translation. But determining the specific meaning of the title is revealed later in this chapter, especially in the discussion of the concept of “good clarification.” However, it is necessary to translate the title of the book at the beginning of analyzing Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric because his theory of rhetoric is based on two words, namely clarification and

\(^\text{22}\) Especially works in orality and literacy such as *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* of Walter J. Ong and *The Alphabet versus the Goddess: The Conflict between Word and Image* of Leonard Shlain.
eloquence. Obviously, the translation of the conjunction (*wa*) is “and.” Therefore, Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric is part of *Al-Bayan* (clarification) and also part of *Al-Tabyeen* (eloquence.)

*Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* consists of four volumes. In these four volumes, Al-Jahiz discusses various and different issues related to language and rhetoric. The common theme between these issues is clarification. For literate people of today, the structure of the book cannot be understood. The editor of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, Abdulsalam Haroon, states ten themes that the book discusses and mentions which are clarification and eloquence, eloquent rules, middle opinion, rhetoric, poetry, assonance, examples of advice and letters, examples of worshippers and storytellers and their stories, mentioning of sayings of foolish and wacky and their unique witticisms, and examples of chosen eloquent sayings. Because the structure of the book is confusing (the issue of the confusing structure of the book is one of the main themes of the next chapter), different scholars and rhetoricians explain the main theme differently.

Ahmed Meliani divides *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* into two main parts. The first part is a part of talking or speech. This part consists of chapters related to the tongue and what is connected to the tongue such as the letter exits, flaws of speech, the difference in performance, mistakes, and fluency. The second part of the chapter is concerned with eloquence. Part of eloquence explains clarification, eloquence, and rhetoric and its lore and conditions. If one reads the reviews of Haroon and Meliani of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, one may think that they describe two different books. The theory of rhetoric was not written in a linear-logical structure. One needs to read every single sentence to find out the theory of rhetoric. It is a hard task.

---

23 The editor of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, Abdulsalam Haroon, divides the book into four volumes. But Al-Jahiz divided his book into three volumes. The majority of the fourth volume of the editor is the index.

24 “Letter exits” is an Arabic discipline studying the scientific explanation of ways to announce Arabic words. Scholars of this discipline mention that all Arabic alphabet is pronounced from five exits: nose, lips, tongue, throat, and jaw (Sowaid 1).
The hardest task of rhetoricians is to discover the structure of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. The result of studying and understanding the structure of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* may lead to improving the readers’ understanding of Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric. Abo Hilal Al-Askari (920-1005) mentions that *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* consists of great oratories and names of rhetoricians and orators. But determining the boundaries of rhetoric, eloquence, the divisions of clarifications are scattered in the entire book. They were hidden between examples and cannot be discovered without an accurate and a long contemplated studying of the book (5-6). The different ways of describing *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, mentioned above, indicate the style of oral language and thought that Al-Jahiz used in his *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. “We – readers of books such as this – are so literate that it is very difficult for us to conceive of an oral universe of communication or thought except as a variant of a literate universe” (*Orality* 2). According to Ong’s idea, Haroon, Al-Askari, and Meliani are “so literate” which makes it very difficult for them to understand the structure of the book. But, at the beginning of this section, the way of thought and expression of Al-Jahiz in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* cannot be determined before deeply studying the theory of his rhetoric explained in the book. Al-Jahiz’s manner of thought in his rhetorical theory was the result of studying rhetoric from several aspects. In his rhetorical theory, Al-Jahiz did not only depend on Arabic rhetoric but also benefited from the rhetoric of other cultures such as Greek rhetoric.

Al-Jahiz’s interest in rhetoric was not limited to Arabic rhetoric. In fact, he studied rhetoric from different cultures. Al-Jahiz’s citations of Greek and Persian rhetoricians, for example, in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* prove the impact of foreign rhetoricians on his theory of rhetoric. Huda Gaza and her colleagues state that summaries of Aristotle’s rhetoric were written
by Al-Kindi (801-873) the first of the Islamic philosophers, and Ibn Fehreez. Both Al-Kindi and Ibn Fehreez were contemporaries of Al-Jahiz. In several of his works, Al-Jahiz cites Al-Kindi and Ibn Fehreez, which means that he read their works including their summaries of Aristotle’s theory of rhetoric. Al-Jahiz, in _Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen_, mentions that Aristotle knew the divisions of speech, meanings, and features (_Al-Bayan_ 3:28). Al-Jahiz’s interest in rhetoric is part of his doctrine (mutazilism). Rhetoric, as Haroon assures, is a pillar of mutazilistic preaching (10). His theory of rhetoric was built on clarification and eloquence, as mentioned, which was needed to impact the mutazilistic preaching.

**Clarification and its Importance**

Clarification (al-bayan) is the main word in _Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen_. He uses this word as the base of all types of speaking and writing. Al-Jahiz defines clarification as “a noun to describe everything that takes out the mask off of the meaning and uncovers the veil from the conscience to make the listener knows the truth.” For Al-Jahiz, clarification is whatever tool that reveals the meaning. The matter and the end for both the speaker and the listener is understanding and comprehension. Whatever is used to reach understanding and comprehension is clarification (1:76). Al-Jahiz's definition of clarification depends on three pillars, namely speaker, listener, and the truth. These three pillars are similar to Aristotle's components of persuasion (logos, pathos, and ethos) in which logos concerns the truth said by the speaker; pathos relates to the listener and his emotional relationship to the speech; and ethos is about the characteristics of the speaker. although Al-Jahiz's clarification and Aristotle's types of appeals were expressed differently, they have one goal which is conveying the truth that leads to

---

25 He is known as Ibn Fehreez or Ibn Behreez. There is no information about his life and his works. The only known work for him is his book about logic. Unfortunately, the book is in the Persian language and there is no Arabic or English version.
persuasion. Muhammad Obaid Allah’s comment on Al-Jahiz’s definition of Al-Bayan is that clarification, for Al-Jahiz, is an essential concept and consists of the meaning of comprehension, understanding, communication, and connection. It is the great name of everything that reveals the meaning (23). In fact, there are two points in Al-Jahiz’s definition of clarification. First, the definition does not determine a specific language, medium of communication, or channel as a way of clarification. This undetermined way of clarification implies that clarification could be happened by human beings or by other creatures. For example, the sun reveals the meaning of “midday.” Second, at the end of the definition, Al-Jahiz mentions the main issue of clarification for both “speaker” and “listener.” The second point leads Fawzy Al-Saeyd Abd Rabboh to assure that Al-Jahiz’s understanding of clarification as the signification of a word to its meaning (123).

Abd Rabboh links clarification to language. In fact, the issue of Al-Jahiz’s clarification relates to the meaning of language. Al-Jahiz states that people narrow their understanding of the meaning of speaking and the meaning of language (1:145). In addition, Al-Jahiz provides mimickers as a term that describes people who mimic the sound of different creatures. When a person mimics an animal, he tries to clarify a certain meaning. Ronald C. Arnett and Annette M. Holba explains Aristotle’s mimesis as “a form of imitation that does not seek to duplicate the “real.” Mimesis reveals a truth not present in real reality alone” (88). Al-Jahiz provides a story of a person who stood at an entrance of a city and brayed imitating the sound of a donkey. Every donkey in the city brayed back to him (1:69-70). Al-Jahiz called this a clarification in which braying revealed a meaning. If the person did not bray but spoke a human language, the donkeys would not bray back to him which means they understood that this type of sound is for them although a human being cannot determine the meaning of the sound. This story is an example of the meaning of Al-
Jahiz’s concept of clarification which implies that Al-Jahiz’s clarification is more than a human language.

Al-Jahiz’s definition of clarification has an oral aspect and a literate aspect. The oral aspect of the definition is the last part of the definition. In the last part of the definition of clarification, Al-Jahiz mentions “speaker” and “listener,” which may imply that a human being should be part of the clarification process. Al-Jahiz, who lived in an oral society, might want to clarify the meaning of clarification by pointing to the “speaker” and the “listener” as an implicit example. In addition, at the beginning of the definition, after mentioning that clarification is everything that reveals a meaning, Al-Jahiz states that revealing the meaning makes the listener know the truth. According to what appeared as a contradiction in the definition, Al-Jahiz makes human beings a part of the clarification as a sender or a receiver. Every creature has the ability to have the feature of clarification. But to have this clarification, human beings should be part of the process of clarification. The reason for mentioning “listener” without mentioning “writer” and “reader” is that Al-Jahiz wrote his book to be read aloud. Marshall McLuhan and Walter J. Ong assure that written texts, at the beginning of writing, were written to be read loudly (Orality 26; Gutenberg 82, 85). The reason for reading aloud is that “[t]he mind has initially no properly chirographic resources” (Orality 26). The literate aspect in Al-Jahiz’s definition of clarification exemplifies in the analytic thought of clarification. Al-Jahiz’s analysis of clarification cannot be the product of oral thought because he studies clarification as a term that becomes a base of every language. In addition, Al-Jahiz does not use clarification according to its “literal meaning” which is (in Arabic dictionary) to clearly show something. In this context, Ong, in his

26 The potential contradiction in the definition appears when he states that clarification is everything that reveals a meaning. This does not specifically determine human beings’ language as part of the clarification. But at the end of the definition, Al-Jahiz explicitly points to the human beings as part of the clarification. In addition to that, Al-Jahiz mentions stories of different creatures that able to clarify.
explanation of the responsibility of the alphabet for many illusions and delusions deriving from associations of meaning with a visual field, mentions that the term ‘literal meaning” indicates that meaning is trim and easily manageable (The Presence 46). In sum, Al-Jahiz’s concept of clarification is the result of a literate way of thinking. Al-Jahiz tries to ease the concept for his oral reader by applying the term according to their daily experience (speaking and listening).

But, according to Al-Jahiz’s clarification, is silence considered clarification? In fact, Al-Jahiz mentions silence in several places in his Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen. In some places, he considered silence a contradiction to clarification, and, in other places, he views silence as eloquent.

Silence

Al-Jahiz devotes an entire chapter to silence in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen. This focus on silence indicates the importance of silence in Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric. But how does silence become part of rhetoric? Al-Jahiz views silence from three different perspectives. He praises silence, dispraises silence, and makes silence a way to praise clarification. At the beginning of the chapter on silence, Al-Jahiz provides stories and proverbs to praise silence. For example, one of the proverbs is that “if speaking were silver, silence would be gold” (1:194). This proverb prefers silence over speaking. Another different example is that a person came to Prophet Muhammad and said, “you are our master, the best person, and the most generous.” Prophet Muhammad said “O people, speak your own words, and do not let the devil provokes you. I am nothing but a slave of Allah and His messenger” (1:194-195). Although this story or hadeeth does not directly mention silence, it implies that silence is better than speaking falsely and exaggerating. Al-Jahiz states that Ignorant Arabs commanded people to make sure what they say is true, and warned them of false speaking, wrong opinion, and gone opinion. A gone opinion ignores the right opinion because it is said or heard after the saying of the second opinion
A gone opinion is an opinion that is said. It is called “gone opinion” because the speaker cannot return the sound used to express the opinion back after saying the opinion. Silence provides time to see the different opinions before saying one’s own opinion. In the old Arabic culture, especially in the oral Arabic culture, it is shame to change your position (opinion). Al-Jahiz’s idea implies that when one agrees or says his opinion, he cannot announce that his opinion is wrong even though he, later, knows that his opinion is wrong. But the question is that why cannot people retract their opinion? The characteristics of sound may result in the inability to retract opinion. “There is no way to stop sound and have sound ... If I stop the movement of sound, I have nothing – only silence, no sound at all” (Orality 32). Said opinion, in the oral culture, cannot be reviewed because the sound used to say the opinion cannot be stopped. In an oral culture, communication is a social activity. One cannot communicate outside his society. He needs others. Retracting opinions may place the speaker in an awkward situation. “Since pure interiors (persons) do communicate with one another so largely by voice, the silencing of words portends in some way withdrawal into oneself. Such withdrawal need not be antisocial ...” (The Presence 126). Even silence, in the oral culture, is a social aspect. In the oral culture, “the silencing of words” indicates defeatism that the oral person does not want to have as a characteristic. However, for Al-Jahiz, silence is not always good. In fact, he encourages people to speak more than being silent. Speaking is the way to existence. Al-Jahiz believes that, as explained later, the advantages of speaking are more than the advantages of silence.

Al-Jahiz shows silence as the opposite of a clarification. Al-Jahiz states that after he provides examples, proverbs, poems, hadeeths, that praise silence, he turns his attention to talented people in rhetoric and advises talented people to not stop speaking and giving speeches. Al-Jahiz opens talented people’s eyes to the obstacles that they may face. For him, their ability to
give a speech is not static. In some time, they may find themselves speaking fluently, but, other times, they may find it hard to give a speech. Also, for him, silence leads to weakening the talent of giving a speech. In addition, Al-Jahiz was aware of the psychological impact of others’ frustrating opinions. For this reason, he advises talented people to ignore their opinion (Al-Bayan 1:200). In another place of Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen, Al-Jahiz emphasizes his idea of the impact of silence on the talent of rhetoric. For him, if a person stops giving speeches, his rhetorical thought will die, his motivation will vanish, and his linguistic taste would be ruined. Tongue, for Al-Jahiz, needs practice. In the case of being silent for a long time, the tongue would lose its flexibility which means that the right pronunciation of words would be impacted (1:272). Al-Jahiz views speaking as a social activity. He states that the benefit of silence does not exceed the brain of the silent person. But the benefit of speech is shared with others (listeners). Narrators do not narrate the silence but the spoken word. In addition, Allah sent his messengers and prophets to guide people verbally (1:272). Moreover, he links speaking to knowledge. For him, an Arabic person creates proverbs. People use these proverbs because of their great benefits to memory. Stories and proverbs are the carriers of knowledge. Al-Jahiz equalizes between a person who knows the truth and chooses to be silent (does not express the truth) and the one who speaks falsely. Although there are situations that silence is better than speaking, they are rare compared to situations that speaking is better than silence (1:271). In fact, viewing proverbs and stories as the carriers of knowledge is an oral culture characteristic. Ong suggests that oral culture people highly value “those wise old men and women who specialize in conserving it, who know and can tell the stories of the days of old” (Orality 40-41). In the case of silence, there is no knowledge. Therefore, Al-Jahiz praises and dispraises silence. In both cases, Al-Jahiz prefers speaking over silence.
But to solve the problematic contradiction view of silence in Al-Jahiz’s *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, there is a need to read his view in terms of media ecology or, to be specific, orality and literacy. Ong writes that:

Man is rooted in “speaking silence.” All this is true, and in a certain sense commonplace, but it is noteworthy that when we thus think of silence as communicating, we are likely to think of it as a kind of speech rather than as a kind of touch or taste or smell or vision “speaking silence,” we say. The reason is plain: silence itself is conceived of by reference to sound; it is sound’s polar opposite. Thus even when we conceive of communication as a transaction more fundamental than speech, we still conceive of it with reference to the world of sound where speech has its being, and thus attest in a reverse way to the paramountcy of sound and the oral-aural world in communication (*The Presence* 2-3).

Silence is part of the communication process in both Ong’s ideas and Al-Jahiz’s “good silence.” Al-Jahiz praised silence that leads to improving the way of speaking and expressing one’s thoughts. Al-Jahiz thinks that silence could be as a way to the good communicating. “Good silence” can be determined with reference to the world of sound. “Good silence” can be noticed in the speech of a man. In the case of dispraising the silence, Al-Jahiz does not see a benefit in silence because it is not part of the communication process. The first case (praising silence) does not happen frequently because verbally communicating is necessary for human beings. Therefore, the majority of being silent in various situations is a kind of flaw in Al-Jahiz’s theory. But, also, the disadvantages of silence can be equal to what Al-Jahiz called “flaws of speaking.” In fact, the latter could be worse than the first.

*Flaws of Speech*

Al-Jahiz spends a large part of his *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* on flaws of speech. The flaws of speech are scattered in the book. They are used as an opposite way to clarify the “good clarification” (good clarification is a term in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* and means that a speech without mistakes). In other words, what is not considered a flaw is clarification. However, Abdulhakeem Radi divides the topics of flaws of speech in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* into 1.
lisping (a congenital flaw), 2. flaws due to aging, and 3. special phonemic qualities resulting from the influence of languages other than Arabic (108). In fact, lisping is one type of congenital flaw, so it is more accurate to make the first division “congenital flaws.” In addition, one of the most important flaws that Al-Jahiz studied in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen are flaws resulting from psychological effects such as aleyy and alhasr (problems related to both silence and speaking).

Aleyy and alhasr are two words that indicate a problem in communication. In the Arabic dictionary, aleyy is to describe any kind of saying that could not be understood due to a problem resulting from the inability of speaking or speaking clearly. In addition, aleyy means ignorance. Also, it is the opposite of al-bayan (clarification) (Ibn Manzor 15:112). Alhasr is similar to aleyy. Ibn Manzor mentions that alhasr is a kind of aleyy. It is the inability to speak. The origin meaning of alhasr is “ban” (4:193-5). Both aleyy and alhasr are flaws of speech in Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric. The difference between aleyy and alhasr, on one hand, and silence, on the other hand, is that the latter is a description of one’s choice to not speak although he has the ability to speak. But aleyy and alhasr are to describe one’s inability to speak due to problems in the pronunciation. Al-Jahiz begins his Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen with aleyy and alhasr. Although the book is about clarification and eloquence, Al-Jahiz focuses, at a great part of the beginning of Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen, on the flaws of speech such as aleyy, alhasr, and lisping.

The first paragraph of the first volume of Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen is unexpected. Al-Jahiz begins by seeking refuge with Allah from aleyy and alhasr (Al-Bayan 1:3). Then he provides poems and stories about people who seeking refuge from aleyy and alhasr. Al-Jahiz provides these poems and stories to prove that he is not the only person who should ask Allah for His help to stay away from aleyy and alhasr. Also, Al-Jahiz connects between aleyy and brain disability (1:5). Moreover, Al-Jahiz makes speaking fluently and eloquently to the guest part of
honoring him (1:10) which means that a person who has *aley* and *alhasr* cannot be generous. Ong pictures people's life in the primary oral culture as a rhetorical life. For him, “even business is not business: it is fundamentally rhetoric.” To buy or sell an item in the marketplace in the oral culture, the process “is a series of verbal (and somatic) maneuvers, a polite duel, a contest of wits, an operation in oral agonistic” (*Orality* 68). The commonality between Al-Jahiz’s rhetoric and Ong’s picturing of the rhetorical life of the oral people is that they use rhetoric in their daily life. It is an infinite process. Therefore, an oral person should train himself to be an orator or, at least, to avoid flaws of speech such as lisping. Al-Jahiz’s focus on lisping was more than his concentration on *aley* and *alhasr*. In fact, he details lisping and studies it from different perspectives.

Al-Jahiz’s discussing and studying lisping reveals his literate way of thinking. He analyzes lisping and divides them into types depending on the cause of lisping. For example, the tenth Arabic letter is *râ* (র). Al-Jahiz states that people who have lisping in the letter *râ* pronounce the letter differently. Some of them replace *râ* with *qain* (غ), the nineteenth letter in the Arabic alphabet, others pronounce it as *thal* (ذ), the ninth letter, and some of them enunciate letter *râ* as *yâ* (ي). Although all these ways of lisping are flaws, replacing *râ* with *qain* is the best (*Al-Bayan* 1:15). It is obvious Al-Jahiz used his own approach, mentioned in chapter two, to analyze the types of lisping. However, Al-Jahiz believes that people who have lisping could give an eloquent speech when they avoid words that have a letter that they cannot pronounce correctly. He provides Wasel ibn Atta (700-748), the founder of *mutazilism*, as an example. Ibn Atta had lisping. He could not pronounce *râ*. What contributed to and made the situation more complicated was that he was a leader of *mutazilism*. Ibn Atta had to give speeches and engage in public arguments. What he did was that he avoided words that *râ* letter is part of its construction
(1:14). In fact, ibn Atta’s lisping was not only in one letter, but there are five letters that he could not pronounce. When Al-Jahiz mentions the five letters, he states that the fifth lisping could not be written but only heard (1:36). Ibn Atta is a heavier character. “Oral memory works effectively with ‘heavy’ characters, persons whose deeds are monumental, memorable and commonly public” (Orality 69). Although Al-Jahiz provides a literate thought (analytic thought,) he uses Ibn Atta as a heavy character. Al-Jahiz, in his discussion of lisping, thinks literately and writes orally. However, lisping is a congenital flaw, it was impossible to treat this kind of flaw, at that time. As mentioned, the only way to overcome this flaw, Al-Jahiz suggests avoiding using words has letters that could not be correctly pronounced. Also, there are types of congenital flaws that could not be treated such as bodily flaws that impact the performance of speech.

What proves Al-Jahiz’s literate thinking is his studying of the relationship between the body of human beings and giving a speech because this relationship needs an analytic mind, as explained later, which is a literate characteristic. Al-Jahiz focuses on human organs used in giving a speech. Al-Jahiz mentions that Zaid ibn Jundub27, known as Umayyad orator, would be the best Arabic orator if his teeth were equal and his upper lip was not cleft (55). Al-Jahiz does not only analyze his speeches but also what led to a reduction in the quality of his speech. However, if the majority of the congenital flaws could not be treated, in Al-Jahiz’s time, there are flaws that can be treated such as grammatical mistakes.

Al-Jahiz views grammatical mistakes as flaws of speech. But, for him, Al-Jahiz divides the flaw of the grammatical mistakes into degrees. The worst grammatical mistake is the mistake made by people who originated from a tribe located in the Arabian Peninsula (Al-Bayan 1:146) because they were raised in a society that speaks the pure Arabic language. The second level are

---

27 His date of birth and of death is unknown. In addition, although he is known as an orator, his speeches were not written.
the mistakes made by knowledgeable people (1:146). Although some of the knowledgeable people were not raised in the Arabian Peninsula tribes, they learned Arabic grammar. Then Al-Jahiz states that grammatical mistakes made by beautiful young girls are acceptable in some cases for some people (1:146). Al-Jahiz makes the grammatical mistakes of the beautiful young girls acceptable because people, at his time, considered the grammatical mistakes of a girl a way that increases her attractiveness. Al-Jahiz's idea about grammatical mistakes is closer to literacy more than orality due to two reasons. First, grammar existed with the help of writing. Before writing, Arabs, or oral cultures in general, did not know what linguistic grammar means. McLuhan, as cited by Wachs, mentions that grammar “is related to the written word” (99). Second, Al-Jahiz implies that grammar and speech are disciplines of knowledge in which people can learn them. However, a grammatical mistake is a flaw that happens in the way of organizing and pronouncing the language. It is a deviation from the pure Arabic language. In the old oral Arabic culture grammatical mistake never happened. Grammatical mistakes began, as mentioned in the first chapter, when non-Arabs engaged in the Arabic culture and speak the Arabic Language. But there are flaws that do not happen in words of a speech but in the performance and the way of structuring the speech and the organizing of the speech such as repetition and redundancy.

Al-Jahiz does not completely reject or accept repetition and redundancy. Abd Rabboh summarizes Al-Jahiz’s opinion of redundancy. For him, Al-Jahiz views redundancy as a flaw and as an advantage. Redundancy becomes a flaw if it is used to repeat the words with no purpose. And redundancy is an advantage when it comes to achieving a purpose (215-218). In fact, Abd Rabboh’s summary is a general conclusion. Al-Jahiz states that there is no standard for repetition. The good repetition and bad repetition are determined by the situation.
mains the acceptance or refusal of the audience (*Al-Bayan* 1:105). Also, he mentions that the interaction of the listeners has a limit. When a speech overcomes this limit, the speech becomes redundant (1:99). Obviously, Al-Jahiz’s view of redundancy relates only to the oral speech because the writer could not know the opinion of his audience. In the oral discourse, redundancy, “repetition of the just-said, keeps both speaker and hearer surely on the track” (*Orality* 39). In fact, *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, as will be explained in chapter six, was built on redundancy.

When Al-Jahiz discusses an issue, he provides numerous examples to prove only a point. But Al-Jahiz’s rejection of redundancy relates to the psychological reason, the extent of the audience’s acceptance. In fact, Al-Jahiz’s interest in the psychology of the audience is the factor that impacts his theory of rhetoric. In addition to repetition, Al-Jahiz advises speakers to avoid over-revised speech because the audience does not accept this kind of speeches.

In the speech, Al-Jahiz encourages improvisation. But improvisation is built on talent. Al-Jahiz’s idea of improvisation is not to give a speech preparation. Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* implies that preparation is not only to prepare for a certain speech but to learn how to give a speech anytime and anywhere. For Al-Jahiz, over-revising leads to a flaw of speech. He attributes over-revising to writing orators (literate orators) (*Al-Bayan* 2:8).

For him, the strange meanings, wrong word choice, and bad performance are the result of over-revising. The majority of over-revising was done by non-Arabs, civilized people, and orators whose job is writing (*Al-Bayan* 2:9). Muhammad Obaid Allah's comment on Al-Jahiz’s idea of over-revising is that what was new in Al-Jahiz’s age was that rhetoric became close to occupation. For Obaid Allah, orators made and revised their rhetoric before they give a speech. They took rhetoric out of the oral world to the written world. Then it was performed orally (56). However, the question is does Al-Jahiz limit rhetoric to oral nomadic Arabs? The answer is no.
In fact, Al-Jahiz’s idea of over-revising is in his context of performing Arabic rhetoric, not Greek rhetoric or Persian rhetoric. When Al-Jahiz speaks of rhetoric, in general, without focusing on a certain culture, his idea of revising changes. Al-Jahiz states that there is no better rhetoric than the rhetoric of writers because they look for the right words. Written oratories are from four nations; the Arabic nation, the Persian nation, the Indian nation, and the Greek nation (Al-Bayan 1:137). Therefore, Al-Jahiz sought to keep rhetoric oral although he praised the work of writing orators. “[O]rators ... favor properly oral techniques in their own oratorical medium” (The Presence 26). For Al-Jahiz, Arabic orators should depend on their instinct. He refuses anything that may impact the oral Arabic rhetoric. In addition to writing, bilingualism, according to Al-Jahiz, impacts oral rhetoric. He states that if one speaks two languages, each language reduces the quality of the other language (Al-Bayan 1:368). Al-Jahiz provides stories of orators who learned another language, and their quality of speech was reduced.

To sum up, Al-Jahiz, in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen, states flaws of speech that contribute to the bad oratory. Aleyy and alhasr are flaws related to the way of pronouncing words. A person who has aleyy and alhasr could not give an understandable speech. In addition, lisping is considered by Al-Jahiz a flaw of speech. Although a person who has lisping can give an understandable speech, his speech is not described as clarified due to lisping. Also, congenital flaws in the human organs that are used in speech can reduce the quality of speech. Grammatical mistakes, for Al-Jahiz, are one of the most factors that take the speech from the boundaries of rhetoric and eloquence. However, although Al-Jahiz considers repetition and redundancy flaws of speech, situations of repetition should be considered to judge repetition as a flaw or advantage. Al-Jahiz sought to keep the Arabic rhetoric oral. To do so, he rejects the over-revising of a speech. For him, over-revising takes the speech out of its place, which is orality. Therefore,
Al-Jahiz’s flaw of speech relates to words and the way of pronouncing them. Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric goes beyond words to signification and meaning and their importance in the production of an eloquent speech. Although Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric focuses on the oral Arabic rhetoric, it can contribute to the field of rhetoric in which it compares the oral Arabic rhetoric, as mentioned, to other rhetoric of other cultures such as Greek and Persian. Al-Jahiz saw in oral Arabic rhetoric an optimal model of rhetoric.

Significations and Meanings

Al-Jahiz differentiates between significations and meanings. He does not link them only to spoken and written language, but all that gives meaning. He suggests that all types of significations that reveal meanings, verbal and non-verbal, exemplifies by five things: pronunciation, gesture, counting, writing, and nusbah. every signification has its own characteristics that distinguish it from the rest. Significations reveal the meanings and their interpretation, types, amount, generality, specialty, degree, and quality (Al-Bayan 1:76). According to Al-Jahiz’s divisions of types of significations, the difference between signification and meaning is that signification is the channel used to show the meaning. Obaid Allah states that ways of clarification (al-bayan), for Al-Jahiz, differ and vary depending on the medium of communication (23). Media of communication, for Al-Jahiz, are not only the spoken and written, but all that signifies a meaning is a medium of communication. In other words, “signification” is the synonym of the “medium of communication.” However, Al-Jahiz believes that these five significations are critical for human beings’ life. In fact, for him, if there is no pronunciation, a system of writing, and ignoring counting, the graces would be corrupted, humans would lose all advantages, and all systems that human beings use in their life (Al-Bayan 1:80). Harold Innis mentions that the importance of the medium of communication is embodied in its main role of
dissemination of knowledge. The strong connection between the medium of communication and knowledge is the motivation for media ecologists to study the characteristics of each medium of communication (33). However, one of the important points in Al-Jahiz’s types of significations is that clarification is not limited to spoken and written word but also gesture, counting, and nusbah. They are considered, by Al-Jahiz, as clarification.

Al-Jahiz pays great attention to the first type of signification, pronunciation. Pronunciation, in Al-Jahiz’s Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen, indicates two meanings: the sound and the spoken words. He considers pronunciation the best way to express oneself. For Al-Jahiz, meanings are hiding in the heart of people and in their minds. The disappearance of meanings in people’s hearts and minds makes them akin to the meaning nonentity or nil. One cannot know what is in the heart and the mind of his friend. But what resurrects these nihilistic meanings is expressing oneself. Pronunciation is the way to understand, revealing the meaning of people, and the path to thinking. it brings the absent to existence and turns what is far to be close (Al-Bayan 1:75). Obviously, Al-Jahiz’s idea of pronunciation is social. it implies that pronunciation is to express one’s experience and feeling, not knowledge and information. Al-Jahiz’s idea of pronunciation is akin to the primitive societies’ belief about the role of words. “Primitive societies believe words help the universe come into being” (Wachs 75). However, Al-Jahiz differentiates between meanings and words. He mentions that meanings are everywhere. they do not have boundaries. But words are limited (Al-Bayan 1:76). Although the amount of both meanings and words is large, Al-Jahiz connects between the beauty of words and meanings. Abd Rabboh mentions that literature, for Al-Jahiz, could not be eloquent with only beautiful words. If a literary person’s work has beautiful words and bad meaning, his poem or rhetoric will not be considered as beautiful (195). Al-Jahiz states that a speech does not deserve to be described as
eloquent unless it has both beautiful meanings and words. The listeners of the beautiful speech enjoy both the meaning and style of the language of the speech (*Al-Bayan* 1-115). In the context of the relationship between meanings and words, Al-Jahiz focuses on the words and meaning in terms of the number of words used to express a meaning. Al-Jahiz mentions that a few words may be used to express various and different meanings. But few words for various meanings may be the result of two situations. The first situation is an orator intentionally creates a brief speech (pithiness). In this case, the speech is eloquent. The second situation is the result of inability and the lack of beautiful meanings and words that one knows (27). The brevity or pithiness of speech is required in the oral culture. Ong states that the nature of the memory leads to preferring short and brief speeches (*Orality* 140-141). Therefore, Al-Jahiz’s pronunciation is to match the words the meanings that they express.

Pronunciation is the only type of signification that Al-Jahiz discusses in detail. The other types of significations (gesture, counting, writing, and *nusbah*) are discussed briefly in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. However, Obaid Allah states that Al-Jahiz’s view of body movements and gestures during speeches proves his awareness of the eloquence of oral performance and its need for body movements (48). Al-Jahiz compares gestures to sound. For him, gestures are better than sound in one case which gestures can send a message beyond the distance that sound can reach (*Al-Bayan* 1:79). Ong states that “human communication began with gesture and proceeded from there to sound (voice)” (*The Presence* 148). Also, Al-Jahiz views pronunciation as inseparable from gestures. He states that gestures and pronunciation are partners. Gestures help and interpret pronunciation. In some cases, gestures replace pronunciation but cannot replace writing. For Al-Jahiz, there are known ways to perform gestures. each gesture has its own significance. Gesture helps to understand the deep private meanings (*Al-Bayan* 1:78). Leonard Shlain assures that in
some cases, “gesture is the more expressive mode” (41). Al-Jahiz views gesture, in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, as one of the main parts of the communication process. It helps people to deepen their understanding of others.

In Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric, the third, fourth, fifth types of significations are counting, writing, and *nusbah*. For counting, Al-Jahiz states that counting is a clarification because it clarifies many things in people’s life such as the days of years, centuries, day and night, ages, etc. (*Al-Bayan* 1:80). To clear the connection between counting and clarification, Al-Jahiz mentions that grammarians analyzed the Arabic language to a noun, verb, prepositions, etc. And, also, mathematicians created signs to indicate significations (1:140). Ong attributes the cause of the emergence of counting to writing, in the strict sense of the word (*Orality* 83-84). But writing, in Ong’s idea of the cause of the emergence of writing, does not mean writing as a system of communication that led to literacy. Ong’s writing that led to the creation of counting is the use of “a notched stick, rows of pebbles, other tallying devices such as the quipu of the Incas (a stick with suspended cords onto which other cords were tied), the ‘winter count’ calendars of the Native American Plains Indians, and so on” (83-84) as devices that help oral society to create counting. However, the last type of signification that Al-Jahiz suggests is what he calls *nusbah*. Al-Jahiz defines *nusbah* as the situation that signifies a meaning (*Al-Bayan* 1:76). What makes *nusbah* unique and different than the other type of significations is that it is not created by human beings. Al-Jahiz explains *nusbah* as the situation that enunciates without a word and gesticulates without a human body. Sky, earth, every silent and spoken item, etc. The signification of an inanimate object is similar to the signification of talking animals. The silent object can clarify significantly. For example, the sky and earth tell people about the existence of a creator, who is
Allah (1:91). In sum, both counting and *nusbah* are types of significations and, according to Al-Jahiz’s philosophy, ways to clarify.

Briefly, Al-Jahiz makes connection between signification and meaning. He divides significations into five types which are pronunciation, gesture, counting, writing, and *nusbah*. In Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric, signification is the synonym of “medium of communication.” Pronunciation, for Al-Jahiz, is the sound and the spoken words. Gestures are not only the movements of a human body during a speech but also the movements of objects used during a speech is considered a gesture such as a stick. Counting is also a type of signification and is considered by Al-Jahiz as a way to clarify. The final type of signification is *nusbah*. *Nusbah* is a situation that can clarify meaning without talking or pointing such as sky, earth, wind. However, the link between Al-Jahiz’s types of significations and literacy is strong. First, the way of analyzing and classifying signification is literate because it needs an analytic mind. As shown, Al-Jahiz analyzes sound, words, gestures, writing, and situations of speaking. The oral mind cannot analyze the communication process in Al-Jahiz’s way because it is a complicated analysis that the oral mind, which depends only on sound, cannot deal with this type of analysis. Second, Al-Jahiz considers counting, gestures, writing, and *nusbah* media of communication because human being can make communicate with others by using only them (counting, gestures, writing, and *nusbah*), without the help of sound and words (*Al-Bayan* 1:77-78). “Oral cultures know few statistics or facts divorced from human or quasi-human activity” (*Orality* 42). Al-Jahiz’s view of counting and *nusbah* as types of significations goes beyond the oral mind. But also, this issue could be viewed as close to the oral mind. Ong mentions that everything in the oral culture is fundamentally rhetorical, even business (68). Ong’s idea about the role of rhetoric in the oral time explains why Al-Jahiz links everything to rhetoric in his types of significations.
But by going back to the previous chapter the problem of contradiction in this idea may be resolved. Al-Jahiz thinks literally and writes his thought orally (according to the oral style of expressing). The first point above explains the link between literacy and Al-Jahiz’s types of significations. But his idea of pronunciation, counting, and *nusbah* is close to orality more than literacy in which Al-Jahiz explains everything in human life as part of rhetoric. However, what promotes the idea of literal thinking and oral writing is his analysis of sound. Al-Jahiz’s understanding of sound is the optimal way to produce rhetoric.

*Sound*

Al-Jahiz discusses sound from different aspects. He begins with connecting sound to pronunciation. For him, sound is the device of pronunciation and composing speeches. The movements of the tongue cannot produce pronunciation, talking (metric and prose) without sound. Letters cannot make a sentence without the help of sound. Good hand and head gestures contribute to the product clarification. The perfect clarification (good speech) is made by a tongue (*Al-Bayan* 1:79). Al-Jahiz ideas of the need of pronunciation to the sound is akin to the elocutionist movement in the Western rhetoric in the Modernity. The elocution movement assures that writing cannot indicate pronunciation; “one cannot learn pronunciation through reading” (Bizzell and Herzberg 803). Both Al-Jahiz and the elocutionists viewed sound as the very basic factor that help to have right pronunciation. Al-Jahiz’s discussion of sound assures the connection between rhetoric and orality. He views sound as the ruler and controller of the communication process. Without sound, there is no communication process. Writing is excluded. Gestures come in Al-Jahiz’s thoughts as an external helper to produce the perfection of clarification or speech. Shlain confirms the impossibility of making a conversation without gestures (41). Unlike Shlain, according to Al-Jahiz’s discussion of sound, giving a speech
without gesture is possible but cannot produce the perfect speech. However, Al-Jahiz widens his discussion of sound enters to include the style of oral speech. He devoted two chapters to assonance. Abd Raboh concludes that the deep focus on assonance in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* indicates Al-Jahiz’s interest in sound and its impact on listeners (251). Al-Jahiz states that assonance is not only for the existed audience but for the absent listeners, uncreated audience. The human brain can memorize a rhymed speech. And human minds stay awake with rhymed speeches. It is not easy to forget it (*Al-Bayan* 1:287). Al-Jahiz connects memory, sound, and the style of speech. Ong, in *Orality and Literacy*, suggests that, in an oral primary culture, to solve the problem of memorizing a speech, orators use “heavily rhythmic language, balanced patterns and assonances” (33-34). In Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric, the orator should understand the importance of sound and its impact to provide a perfect speech. The intensive focus on sound in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* points to Al-Jahiz’s understanding of rhetoric as an oral literary genre. Also, Al-Jahiz emphasizes the role of orators and provides them advice to help them improve their speech and its performance.

*Orator*

Orators, in Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric, have the most important role in delivering a speech. To be an orator, natural talent is required. Al-Jahiz states that a person may have a natural talent in mathematics, trade, or singing but not in rhetoric (*Al-Bayan* 1:207-208). But talent, for Al-Jahiz, is not enough to produce speech. Orators must reinforce their talent with requirements. These requirements are scattered in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. They are confidence (1:134), eloquence, quietness, great word choice, ability to know the psychology of the audience, avoiding over-revising or a speech (1:92-93), citing poetry and Islamic religious texts (1:118), a loud voice (1:120-121), holding a stick (3:90), wearing a turban (3:92). Speaking of orators, Al-
Jahiz does not mention anything related to writers. Some of these characteristics that orators should have been mentioned by Western scholars’ works about orality and literacy. For example, in the context of citing poetry in rhetoric, Ong writes that, in the oral culture, “encyclopedism had had to be a matter of poetry, combined with the other great oral-aural speech form, oratory, which in turn was largely poetic, as poetry was largely oratorical” (Orality 35). Also, Ong points to the role of the audience in changing the way of performing the speech (59-60). Moreover, Al-Jahiz’s focus on oratory shows the strong link between Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric and orality. Many of the characteristics of orator and oratory could not be applied to writing because they require a physical existence and the use of human organs. Al-Jahiz, also, points to the importance of agonistic language and the way that orator can follow to use the agonistic language properly.

There is ambiguity in Al-Jahiz’s view of agonistic language28 in speech. Al-Jahiz states that oral people praised powerful speech because it gives one advantage over his opponent (Al-Bayan 1:176). But also, he states that over-revising, redundancy, exaggeration are flaws of speech because they lead to hateful speech and obscenity (1:191). It seems that Al-Jahiz shows agonistic language from two different perspectives (supporting perspective and rejecting perspective). In fact, there is no clear view of his opinion of the agonistic language. In some cases, he advises orators to ignore agnostic language. He suggests that the goal of orators should be to avoid hostile language. Al-Jahiz encourages orators to use peaceful speech to avoid Satan’s temptation (1:255). Satan’s temptation is the hostile language. But Mustafa Nasif concludes that Al-Jahiz indirectly clarifies that the most use of clarification is to face the enemy (21). In fact, Al-Jahiz supports the two perspectives: with and against the agonistic language. Supporting the use of agonistic language in speech is an oral characteristic. Ong deduces that the nature of the

---

28 In Orality and Literacy, Ong uses “agonistic language” to explain the aggressive use of the language in the primary oral cultures. Ong states that fighting by words “is not a real fight but an art form” (43-44).
oral language leads to the frequent use of the agonistic language (*Orality* 43). However, Al-Jahiz provides ways to avoid or gain what can improve the speech. Agonistic language, eloquent, peaceful speech, etc. can be gained by practice. In fact, practice and training are the way to produce what he calls the perfect speech.

Al-Jahiz makes rhetoric a branch of knowledge. He emphasizes the practice rhetoric. For him, there are five steps to gaining knowledge. The first step is silence, the second step is listening, memorization is the third step, then applying what is learned is the fourth step, and the final step is the dissemination of the knowledge (*Al-Bayan* 2:339). But what is the relationship between knowledge and practicing rhetoric? The answer is that the steps of gaining knowledge are mentioned in the context of practicing. In addition, Al-Jahiz views rhetoric as a branch of knowledge. Al-Jahiz’s rhetoric is oral which means that rhetoric is an oral way to convey the oral knowledge. He connects between clarification and medicine (4:40). Clarification, for Al-Jahiz, is oral, and medicine is a written knowledge. Al-Jahiz makes both clarification and medicine branches of knowledge and compare them to each other. And Rabboh suggests that Al-Jahiz’s connection between clarification and medicine means that clarification has rules and laws as medicine (143). Describing rhetoric as a branch of knowledge poses a question about the contradiction between his idea of rhetoric as a talent and, at the same time, as knowledge. Any branch of knowledge can be learned by any person who is interested in it. In fact, Al-Jahiz believes that any branch of knowledge requires talent (1:207-208). However, Al-Jahiz draws an analogy between rhetoric and the bird body. For him, the head of rhetoric is human nature (talent), its backbone is training, and the narration is its wings (1:44). In fact, the idea of training has a connection to memory. Al-Jahiz mentions narration as the wings of rhetoric. Wings are to fly. Talent alone (the head) is not enough to fly. In addition, narration, as mentioned in the first
chapter, is oral knowledge. For this, training is to strengthen the recall from memory. “The oral tradition emphasized memory and training” (Innis 9). As mentioned in the introduction to Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric, the majority of the four volumes of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyen* are stories, speeches, poetry. These cited types of spoken words are examples and are brought for training purposes. Al-Jahiz declares the goal of these examples several times. For example, after providing a speech of an eloquent person, he states that this speech is an honorable and beneficial speech, so orators should memorize its wording and ponder its meaning (1:86). To be a good eloquent orator, one needs to listen to the speech of pure Arabs, scholars, and eloquent people to improve the talent (1:145). Listening to these people is not the final step before producing a speech. But also, Al-Jahiz points to the importance of asking them to listen to the speech of the practicing person. In sum, training is not only to practice rhetoric but a system of learning that consists of listening, memorizing, asking for external help, and then practicing. Al-Jahiz was eager to help orators to have the ability to produce a good speech before they face the audience. Gaining the attention of the audience is the critical factor to judge the quality of the speech. Caring for the difference and diversity of the audience made Al-Jahiz focus on what he called accordance which is to give the right speech to the right audience.

**Accordance**

Al-Jahiz’s accordance is a term that describes the relationship between speech and its environment. The environment of the speech means the audience and their psychological status, the place or stage of the speech, and the topic of the speech. Al-Jahiz directs orators to consider the situations of the audience. The appropriate style of language of a speech is determined by the status and type of the audience. Al-Jahiz states that when one listens to a speech of pure Arabs and wants to narrate the speech, he should use the same pure Arabic language. Also, if one
listens to an anecdote of ordinary people that has grammatical mistakes, it is not eloquent, he should not change the style of the language of the anecdote because changing the style of the language may lead to changing what makes the anecdote unique. Changing the style of the language of the anecdote destroys the enjoyment of the anecdote (Al-Bayan 145-146). In this indirect quotation of Al-Jahiz, Al-Jahiz encourages orators and narrators to literally memorize the heard speeches. In addition, he connects speeches, the style of language of a speech, the purpose of the speech, and the audience. Al-Jahiz describes the eloquent orator as a person who differentiates between the style of language of speaking to masters and speaking to slaves (1:92-93). Ong points to the importance of the audience in giving a speech or singing a poem. For him, the words of recorded oral songs changed “depending on audience reaction, the mood of the poet or of the occasion, and other social and psychological factors” (Orality 59-60). However, one of the meanings of Al-Jahiz’s accordance is the equality of meaning and the style of language used in speech to express that meaning.

Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric divides meanings into high meanings and low meanings. Also, he divides words into high words and low words. In both categories, the high and low meanings and words are the degrees of beautifulness. In the first volume of Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen, Al-Jahiz mentions that words, in speech, should not be vernacular or strange unless the speaker is nomadic because the strange words are understood by strange people. Also, ordinary people use and understand the vernacular words. The strata of society indicate that speeches are at levels (Al-Bayan 1:144-145). Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric seeks to prove that clarification is the purpose of rhetoric. Al-Jahiz encourages orators to choose high words to express high meanings. But this choice of the level of words should be made according to the target audience. “Narrators narrate what audiences call for or will tolerate” (Orality 66-67). Also, for Al-Jahiz,
the orator should give a speech that is wanted by the audience. The audience chooses what they understand. What is important in Al-Jahiz’s accordance is that there is no static standard of the high words and meanings. It is a situational issue. To sum up Al-Jahiz’s accordance, he states that a speaker should know the level of the meaning (high or low), and makes a balance between them, the status of listeners, and the situation. Then the speaker can deliver to each level of the audience their special speech. He should divide words according to the level of their meanings, divides meanings based on the situation and types of audience (Al-Bayan 1:136). In this division, there is no single word that would not be used and meaning that would not be expressed (1:91).

Al-Jahiz’s accordance is to consider people who could not speak the pure Arabic language as part of the audience of rhetoric. His caring for non-Arabs and non-eloquent people can be viewed in his philosophy of community, explained in chapter two. Al-Jahiz believes that all members of the community are equal. There are no social, religious, or sex differences. It is a literate view of society. Also, accordance, as a term, is literate because it considers the difference and diversity of the society which is a literate characteristic. In general, as viewed in this chapter, Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric has characteristics of both orality and literacy.

Orality and Literacy in Al-Jahiz’s Theory of Rhetoric

The majority of the focus of the theory of rhetoric in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen is on the oral aspects. Al-Jahiz values the Arabic rhetoric more than the rhetoric of other nations because the Arabic rhetoric is oral. He mentions that Indians and Greeks composed greats books about every field of knowledge. Their books about rhetoric are to study rhetoric, but they cannot give a speech better than the Arabic and Persian speeches because their rhetoric is the result of over-revising and studying rhetorical theories. Their rhetoric depends on books more than spoken words (Al-Bayan 3:27-28). In fact, Al-Jahiz compares oral Arabic rhetoric to the study of the
rhetoric of Greeks such as Aristotle’s Rhetoric. “The Greek rhetor ... means a public speaker” (Orality 109). However, Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen is a trying to keep rhetoric an oral literary genre. Obaid Allah mentions that, in Al-Jahiz’s age, rhetoric began to move to be an occupation linked to writing (56). Al-Jahiz advises parents who want their children to learn rhetoric to avoid grammarians and to look for nomadic Arabs to teach their children rhetoric (Al-Bayan 1:403). Obviously, the nomadic Arabs are oral people. Their way of speaking and thinking is oral. Also, Al-Jahiz prefers old oral rhetoric more than rhetoric at his age. He states that what deserves to be memorized is only the Ignorant oral rhetoric (2:7). Like McLuhan (Wachs 99), Al-Jahiz links rhetoric to orality and grammar to writing (Al-Bayan 403). One of the reasons that Al-Jahiz preferred oral rhetoric over written rhetoric is that oral rhetoric shows the ability of the talent of the orator. But written rhetoric, which can be edited and revised, cannot precisely help to judge the talent of the writing orator because it does not have many main elements of the oral rhetoric such as existed audience, the use of voice, etc. (3:29). For Ong, “the oral performer fears having to pause while composing, the writer need have no such fear” (The Presence 62). Overcoming this fear of oral orator, in Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric, requires rhetorical talent. Rhetorical talent is not only the ability to provide the perfect speech but also the capacity of recalling stories, citing poetry, well treating sudden issues during the speech, and dealing with the audience properly. Al-Jahiz, as a literate person, defends oral rhetoric against written rhetoric. But the rooted literacy in his unconsciousness impacted some aspects of his theory of rhetoric.

Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric can be generally described as a literate analysis of oral rhetoric. Al-Jahiz's theory of rhetoric can be helpful in the present days in which people are entering secondary orality. Al-Jahiz's theory of rhetoric can help to understand the way of giving a speech without the full impact of the writing. Al-Jahiz does not only show the rules of oral
rhetoric but, also, uses his analytic thought to study rhetoric. For example, the types of
significations, mentioned above, cannot be the result of an oral mind but a literate brain.
Pronunciation, gesture, counting, and *nusbah* are oral elements. But oral thought does not have
the ability to divide signification into these types. In fact, most issues that Al-Jahiz discusses in
his *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyen* are oral issues analyzed by a literate mind. However, Al-Jahiz
mentions that writing rhetoric is unable to reach the goal of rhetoric. He suggests that written
rhetoric can be read everywhere and studied at all times but cannot give an impact similar to oral
speech (*Al-Bayan* 1:80). But there are some places in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyen* that mention Al-
Jahiz’s praising of written rhetoric and the role of writers to maintain and produce the perfect
rhetoric. For example, in the first volume of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyen*, Al-Jahiz claims that the
best rhetoric is the rhetoric of writers because they choose high words (137). But the majority of
the book is to praise writing and explain its advantages. Al-Jahiz declares several times in *Al-
Bayan wa Al-Tabyen* the advantage of oral rhetoric over written rhetoric.

**Summary**

This chapter is divided into three main sections, namely a general introduction to Al-
Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyen*, clarification and its importance, and
orality and literacy in Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric. The introduction to Al-Jahiz’s theory of
rhetoric begins with the translation of the title of the book which is the clarification and the
Eloquence. The first section provides an overview of Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric. However,
clarification is the main word in Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric. Al-Jahiz’s clarification is every
type of speaking that reveals a meaning. Clarification has oral and literate aspects. The oral
aspect is that clarification of Al-Jahiz explains issues related to oral rhetoric such as sound,
gesture, etc. The literate aspect is not in the meaning of clarification itself but the analysis of
clarification. In addition, under clarification, Al-Jahiz discusses several issues and topics such as silence and flaws of speech. Issues related to both silence and flaws of speech are oral. The issues relate to sound, the way of performing, etc. Although he mentions some issues that emerged with the help of writing such as grammatical mistakes, he discusses them from an oral perspective. Moreover, Al-Jahiz connects words to meaning from the perspective of signification. He provides five types of significations (pronunciation, gesture, counting, writing, and nusbah.) that reveal meaning. Signification is the medium of communication. Also, Al-Jahiz provides advice to orators. He stresses that rhetoric requires natural talent. It is the first step although it is not enough. In addition to talent, orators need to practice rhetoric and to train themselves. Listening is the key to perfectly training oneself. In his advice, Al-Jahiz touches on issues relate strongly to orality such as agonistic language and intensive listening to high rhetoric. The final topic in the second section is about Al-Jahiz’s accordance which is to give the right speech to the right audience. The chapter’s final section is about the orality and literacy of Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric. The chapter focusing on Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric reinforces the conclusion of the third and fourth chapters which is Al-Jahiz thinks literately and writes orally. In other words, Al-Jahiz analyzes oral rhetoric literately.

This chapter contributes to the main topic of the project from several points. First, it analyzes a book written in the transitional age. In addition, it studies a theory of rhetoric produced by a literate person lived in the transitional phase. The result of this chapter corresponds with the conclusion of the third and fourth chapters of the project. This chapter proves the difference between the transitional phase, on the one hand, and the pure oral culture and the pure literate culture, on the other hand.
The focus of this chapter is on specific issues and thoughts raised in the transitional phase. This chapter focuses on details of Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric. Al-Jahiz, as mentioned in chapter two, was aware of the difference between spoken words and writing and, also, their impact on people’s life. The next chapter (chapter six) is to look at the transitional phase from a different perspective. It studies *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* as a book and its relationship to the oral way of thinking and the writing way of thinking.
Chapter Six: The Style of Al-Jahiz’s Authoring

The concentration of chapter five was on the orality and literacy of Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. This chapter widens the concentration of the study of orality and literacy in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. It focuses on the impact of orality and literacy on Al-Jahiz’s way of authoring. To reach its goal, the chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section is a brief introduction to *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. The second section of this chapter analyzes the structure of the book. In this section, there is a focus on several themes, namely the division and the system of the book, redundancy and digression, *isnad* and quotation, and collective thought and analytic thought. The third section focuses upon the style of the language used in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. The third section concentrates on the formulaic style of language, oral words and expression, agonistic language, and interactive language.

Analyzing Al-Jahiz’s *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* reveals several aspects related to the main goal of the project. First, *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is a book written in the transitional phase which is the focus time of the project. Second, the chapter explores the implications of orality and literacy in the transitional phase, especially in the way of writing books in the transitional phase. Third, concentration on the impact of orality and literacy on the way of composing *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* contributes to answering one of the important questions of the project which is how a literate person (Al-Jahiz) lived, thought, and wrote in the transitional phase. Fourth, this chapter shows the impact of the oral culture on the intellectual literate life. Fifth, focusing on the impact of both orality and literacy on Al-Jahiz’s way of authoring may reveal the contribution of literate people to the change of oral thought from orality to literacy. Finally, this chapter reveals the type of audience of books in the transitional phase. In the oral phase, the audience is oral people. And in the literate phase, the audience is readers and educators. What
types of the audience of books, in the transitional phase, are is the question that this chapter may answer which contributes to clarifying an aspect of the transitional phase, the main theme of the project.

The analysis of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* as a book written in the traditional phase contributes to the academic understanding of orality and literacy from two aspects. First, this chapter concentrates its study only to the transitional phase and issues raised in this phase as mentioned in previous chapters, especially chapters three and four. This narrow focus reveals issues that are not studied in the oral phase or literate phase such as literate people in the oral culture. Second, studying *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* focuses on the Arabic transitional phase which has not gained the deep and required attention of media ecologists. The majority of the focus of the studies of orality and literacy has been upon Western cultures.

**An Introduction to Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen**

*Al-Jahiz's Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is one of the most important books in the Arabic culture. Al-Jahiz authored *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* at the end of his life. In the editor's introduction of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, Abdulsalam Haroon mentions that Al-Jahiz composed the book in his last days. It was authored after *Al-Hayawan*. Al-Jahiz gave the book Ahmed ben Dawood (776-854), a well-known Islamic religious judge, as a gift. Ben Dawood rewarded Al-Jahiz five thousand Dinar for his *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* (15). The book is valued by Arabic rhetoricians due to its precedence in making and studying the rules of the oral traditional Arabic rhetoric.

Rhetoric is the main topic of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* as mentioned in the previous chapter. Ahmed Meliani states that *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is a book of rhetoric because it...

29 In chapters three and four, there were a focus on issues related only to the transitional phase such as aloud reading, *isnad*, oral writing, and oral reading.
studies and analyzes the rules and measurements of eloquent speech. But Al-Jahiz hides these rules and measurements in his books. They cannot be revealed without a deep studying of the book (50). As mentioned in the introduction of Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric in chapter five of this project, Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* cannot easily be revealed because Al-Jahiz’s approach to analyzing the Arabic rhetoric is unique. As mentioned later in this chapter, Al-Jahiz does not study every rhetorical issue in a separate chapter or section but scattered his rhetorical ideas in the four volumes of his book. Some of his issues were discussed in each volume. However, Abdulhakeem Radi describes *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* as the oldest book that studies the theory of literary art exemplified in rhetoric, dialectic, argument, poetry, letters, etc. (31). In fact, oral rhetoric is the dominant type of rhetoric in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. The dominance of oral rhetoric is one of the reasons that this project studies the book. The project analyzes *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* from two different aspects related to orality and literacy, the theory of rhetoric in *Al-Bayan wa Al-tabyeen* (the topic of chapter five) and the style of authoring the book (the topic of this chapter).

Al-Jahiz’s age can be described as a transitional phase. Chapters one and two confirm that the culture and society of Al-Jahiz’s age were oral more than literate. As mentioned several times in this project, Al-Jahiz is a literate person who lived in an oral society. Muhammad Obaid Allah states that Al-Jahiz exemplifies the overlapping between orality and literacy in the Arabic culture. Duality of orality and literacy exists in his personality, works, and philosophy (17). This duality of his personality is obvious when one studies any two different works of Al-Jahiz. Mustafa Nasif compares *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* to his *Al-Hayawan* (both works are for Al-Jahiz). Nasif concludes that Al-Jahiz’s personality is oral in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* and literate in *Al-Hayawan*. Nasif states that, in *Al-Hayawan*, Al-Jahiz moved out of the world of listening
and listeners to the world of reading and readers. *Al-Hayawan* makes the rule of the new rhetoric which is read more than listened (56). In this project, the reason for choosing *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, not *Al-Hayawan*, is that one of the goals of the project is to understand and reveal how a literate person intentionally changes his way of expressing and thinking from orality to literacy.

In sum, Al-Jahiz’s *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is considered one of the most important books in the Arabic culture. It is the first book that analyzes Arabic rhetoric and makes its rules. In fact, rhetoric is the main topic of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. But Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric cannot easily be found due to his unique style of authoring. Al-Jahiz, in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, narrowed his focus on oral rhetoric. In general, *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is described as an oral book. This chapter is to find the oral and literate elements in the structure and style of the language of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*.

**The Structure of Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen**

This section analyzes the structure of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. The section focuses on five issues related to the structure of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, which are the division and the system of the book: redundancy and digression, *isnad* and quotation, and collective thought and analytic thought. These four subsections help to clarify the structure of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* such as how ideas develops in the book and how Al-Jahiz discusses and analyzes different opinions.

**The Division and the system of Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen**

The uniqueness of the system of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* led to the contradiction in the descriptions of the book. However, some scholars and rhetoricians explicitly claim that there is no system or clear approach in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. Abo Hilal Al-Askari (920-1005) is one of the scholars who describes *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* as a random book. For him, determining
the boundaries of rhetoric, eloquence, the divisions of clarifications are scattered in the entire book. They were hidden between examples and cannot be discovered without an accurate and a long contemplated studying of the book (5-6). Also, the editor of Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen states that Al-Jahiz did not limit himself, in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen, by a system. This type of authoring is the general approach of authors in Al-Jahiz’s age. Also, the beginning of authoring in the Arabic culture was in Al-Jahiz’s time (6). Also, Radi assures that there is no system and divisions in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen (33). These opinions picture Al-Jahiz as an oral person who just held a pen and began to write Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen as a group of stories, poetry, and rhetoric without paying attention to the logical sequence of the book’s topics. However, Radi claims that Al-Jahiz was aware of his authoring approach in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen (43). Al-Jahiz compares his authoring approach in Al-Hayawan to his approach in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen. For him, in Al-Hayawan, he provides ten pages of Arabs’ stories, poetry, and rhetoric in each chapter. But in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen, he decided to increase the amount of these stories, poetry, and rhetoric (Al-Bayan 3:302). Al-Jahiz indirectly points to a system in his Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen. The question is why some Arab scholars and rhetoricians describe his book as an unsystematic book. The answer to this question can be provided by media ecology. Walter J. Ong mentions that readers of books "are so literate that it is very difficult for [them] to conceive of an oral universe of communication or thought except as a variant of a literate universe" (Orality 2). In fact, this answer implies that Al-Jahiz’s way of authoring is oral. But does this suggestion of Al-Jahiz’s oral approach is correct? The answer to this question is the task of this chapter. Radi describes Al-Jahiz’s approach in authoring Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen as the approach of literary people who depend on frequent citation of stories, poetry, and rhetoric and less on analyzing and studying (24). But although Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen consists of
stories, poetry, and rhetoric, there are topics that he discusses and studies such as what is mentioned in chapter five, rhetoric.

Chapter five implicitly proved that Al-Jahiz did not only depend on stories, poetry, and rhetoric in his *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. Meliani mentions that *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* can be divided into two large parts: parts of speech and parts of eloquence. The parts of speech section consist of chapters related to pronunciation, flaws of speech, different performance, grammatical mistakes, and clarification. And the parts of eloquence section consists of chapters related to clarification, rhetoric, oratory, and their lore and conditions (51). Meliani does not provide the physical place of these two parts in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. However, Haroon, the editor of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* mentions that the issues discussed in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* are clarification and rhetoric, rules of eloquence, the middle approach of Al-Jahiz, oratory, poetry, assonance, examples of letters and advice, examples of the rhetoric of worshippers and storytellers, examples of jokes, and examples of rhetorical speeches (7). In addition to these topics, Haroon mentions that Al-Jahiz divides his book into three volumes as he mentioned in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* (17). The difference between Meliani and Haroon’s determination of the topics of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is that Meliani depends on issues discussed in the book whereas Haroon classifies the examples provided in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. In fact, these divisions mentioned by Meliani and Haroon indicate the existence of an approach in authoring *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* although it is not clear for them or for us. Leonard Shlain assures that alphabet allowed people to systematize knowledge (66). In this context, Shlain’s idea is not to describe *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* as a literate book but to point to the impact of writing on Al-Jahiz’s thoughts, not on his expression in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. In fact, there is a need for a close study of the topics and way of dividing *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* guided by media ecology.
Al-Jahiz divides his *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* into chapters although some scholars, mentioned previously, deny that he divided the book. For example, Al-Jahiz makes a chapter for clarification (*Al-Bayan* 1:75), a chapter for genealogy and genealogists (1:370), and chapters on deleted words (2:278). In addition, as mentioned, he divides *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* into three volumes. However, some of the chapters that he makes do not discuss any issue, they are only stories, poetry, and rhetoric such as the chapter on assonance (1:297). What shows his unsystematic approach is that Al-Jahiz provides more than a chapter to discuss one issue. Before the chapter on assonance, there is a chapter named “Another Chapter of Assonance in Speech” (1: 284). The unsystematic approach of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*’s chapters implies that Al-Jahiz tried to be oral in the book because the main topic of the book is rhetoric which is oral according to his view. But his literate characteristics appear unsystematically, especially in the dividing of his book into chapters and other issues which will be mentioned later in this chapter. In addition, to the unsystematic divisions of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, Al-Jahiz begins his volumes with an overview of what is the volume is about. Without a clear system, Al-Jahiz overviews and summarizes his thoughts.

One of the literate characteristics of Al-Jahiz’s way of writing is mentioning his next topic and summarizing his thought. In some cases, when Al-Jahiz discusses an issue and another issue appears, he explicitly points to his plan to study the latter issue later in the book. For example, after analyzing the prophet Moses’ story, Al-Jahiz states that the book will study another issue related to clarification in another place in this book (*Al-Bayan* 1:8). In addition, Al-Jahiz reminds the readers of his book the topic that he left to provide stories, poems, or rhetoric.

---

30 Al-Jahiz divides his book (*Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*) into three volumes. But the editor of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* (Abdulsalam Haroon) divides the book into four volumes.

31 Chapter five discussed Al-Jahiz’s rhetoric and concludes that rhetoric, for Al-Jahiz, is oral. In addition, chapter three cited Al-Jahiz to prove that he wrote the book for an oral audience more than a literate audience.
that do not relate to the topic that he discussed. In the first volume of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, Al-Jahiz studies some flaws of speech. Then he provides stories and poems that do not relate to the flaw of speech. After these stories and poems, he states that “I am going back to the flaws of speech” (1:57). Another form of mentioning his new topic is the connection between the previous topic and the next topic. For example, after mentioning the accent of eloquent people, orators, poets, and presidents, Al-Jahiz points to his upcoming issue which is the accent of ordinary people (1:69). Also, at the beginning of each volume, Al-Jahiz provides an overview of the topics of the volume. At the beginning of the third volume, he states that this is the third volume of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, which is to provide examples of the perfect rhetoric and poetry (3:5). Moreover, Al-Jahiz summarizes his thoughts. In the second volume, he states that in the first volume and some of the second volume, there is a mention of eloquent people’s speeches, the approach of wise people, children’s speeches, and insane people’s speeches. Some of these speeches are mentioned for preaching and another for humor (2:222). In addition to this kind of summary, Al-Jahiz ends his *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* with the following words:

this is the end of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, and I hope that I am not remiss in what I provide. If the book achieves my goal, covers what I want, and gains a high position, it is achieved by Allah’s grace and help. And if the book does not achieve the goal, I want you [the readers] to know that I did my best, but I miss Allah’s grace. And God Almighty knows best (4:101).

In fact, Al-Jahiz’s words at the end of his book do not summarize the book but are written in an oral style to the readers. His last words sound like speaking to someone, not writing to him. In the context of explaining the upcoming topics and providing an overview and summary, Al-Jahiz writes about his latter topics that should be at the beginning of his book. For instance, after explaining the meanings and the types of significations, he mentions that this topic should be mentioned at the beginning of the book, but he delays the topic for a purpose (1:76). And he does
not mention his purpose. In these seven situations, Al-Jahiz’s approach seems literate. The literate aspect can be understood as he explicitly returns to the main topic after he finishes and discusses another topic. It is a kind of organized thought. “A script is an organized system of writing” (*The Present* 36). Giving an overview and summary is a kind of organized system of writing. However, Al-Jahiz’s organized system of writing is shown in his ability to be within the boundaries of the main topic of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*.

Al-Jahiz’s *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is about rhetoric and eloquence. And he reminds his readers every time about the importance to stay within the boundaries of rhetoric and eloquence. When Al-Jahiz finds himself writing about a topic that does not relate to rhetoric and eloquence, he, sometimes, apologizes to the readers. Radi describes Al-Jahiz’s apology as an awareness of the organized system of the book and its boundaries (43). It seems that Al-Jahiz struggles to keep himself within the boundaries of rhetoric and eloquence. In fact, it is a struggle that exemplifies the struggle between his personality (a literate personality) and the characteristics of the culture of his age (oral culture). However, in the first volume, from pages 166 to 191, Al-Jahiz praised clarification and provides the history of human beings. At the end of pages 190 to 191, he begins to mention the difference between men and women. Al-Jahiz realized that the difference between men and women does not relate to rhetoric and eloquence, so he states that this topic is about human beings and belongs to a book about men and women. *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is not the right place for this topic. But it is mentioned to activate the mind of the readers of this book (*Al-Bayan* 1:186). Al-Jahiz, in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, stood in the middle between orality and literacy. “Eliminating redundancy ... demands a time-obviating technology, writing, which imposes some kind of strain on the psyche in preventing expression from falling into its more
natural patterns” (Orality 39). Redundancy is a great issue in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen. It is not exaggeration if one says that Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen is built based on redundancy.

To sum up, Al-Jahiz's Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen is described as an unsystematic book. Al-Jahiz did not pay enough attention to the linear logical sequence\(^\text{32}\) of the topic of the book. One of his modes of literate writing is providing an overview and summaries of his ideas. In addition, Al-Jahiz reminds and apologizes to the readers of his book when he touched a topic that is not within the boundaries of rhetoric and Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen. The issue of redundancy is one of the main problems that Al-Jahiz had in his Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen.

**Redundancy and Digression**

Redundancy and digression are the clearest issues in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen. Redundancy and digression are mentioned together because Al-Jahiz repeats his ideas several times in the digression. In all his digressions, he cites rhetoric, poems, and stories to prove the issues mentioned in the digression. The intensive redundancy and digression in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen make readers and researchers of the book lost. They cannot determine what the book is about and what the issue is that Al-Jahiz discusses. At the end of the first volume, Al-Jahiz gives a promise to discuss shobbiah (a racist campaign, thought, or ideology against Arabs) at the beginning of the second volume, but he did not speak of the issue. What happened is that Al-Jahiz begins his second volume by mentioning that he will discuss the shobbiah. But he digresses to another topic about the stick and its role in rhetoric (Al-Bayan 2:5). Al-Jahiz discussed the issue of shobbiah at the beginning of the third volume. In addition to this form of redundancy and digression, Al-Jahiz makes chapters to provide only poems and oratories without discussing

\(^{32}\) Ong states that “linear or analytic thought and speech are artificial creations, structured by the technology of writing” (39). In this sense, Al-Jahiz did not use analytic thought in his book because, as mentioned several times, he wrote Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen for oral people.
any issues. In the first volume, there is a chapter named “Poems and Examples of Rhetoric” (1:231). Also, after a digression, he returns to the main topic of the chapter. But, in some cases, when he returns to the original topics, he immediately digresses to another topic. For instance, after twenty pages of digression, Al-Jahiz states that the attention should return to stick and its helpfulness in performing speeches. But, in the same paragraph, he digresses to the benefit and features of toothpicks (3:114). In fact, the majority of the digression is providing stories, poems, and rhetoric that does not relate to the main topic that Al-Jahiz discusses. Moreover, in some Al-Jahiz’s digressions, he digresses from topic to topic (all are digressions) before returning to the main issue. When he studies the rhetoric of ordinary people, he digresses to the rhetoric of children and women (1:244-247), then he digresses to the rhetoric of teachers (1:248-249), and, finally, he returns to the main topic, the rhetoric of ordinary people (1:250-253). However, these are the main forms of digressions in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen. Before discussing the relationship between redundancy, digression, orality, and literacy, it is important to answer a question about the reason for the intensive existence of redundancy and digression.

Al-Jahiz was aware of his intensive redundancy and digression in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen. At the beginning of the third volume, he states that this is the third volume in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen which consists of various beautiful talking, rhetoric, and poems for studying and contemplating (Al-Bayan 3:5). Although he does not explicitly state that he digresses, the majority of his digression and redundancy are stories, rhetoric, and poems. But, in another place of Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen, when he compares Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen to Al-Hayawan, Al-Jahiz clearly mentions that Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen has many oral Arabic stories and unique poems (3:302). Al-Hayawan is about animals. The question is what is the need for providing Arabic traditional oral stories, rhetoric, and poems in Al-Hayawan? The answer to this question
is mentioned in chapter two of this project about his approach. Al-Jahiz did not want the readers of his books to be bored. Answering the question, also, reveals the link between what he mentions at the beginning of the third volume (stated at the beginning of this paragraph) and his digression and redundancy. Al-Jahiz advises authors of scientific books to provide stories, rhetoric, and poems to reactivate the reader’s mind during the reading of the book. His idea of activating the reader’s mind implies that the books are read out loud. Reading aloud was a technique practiced in every transitional culture such as in the Middle Ages (Gutenberg 83).

Readers can use different techniques to keep their minds active during reading. But in the case of the hearing, stories, poems, and rhetoric are provided to keep listeners’ focus on what is being said activated. It is an oral technique. Unlike reading, the listeners’ need of maintaining their focus is not their task, but the speaker’s task.

Both redundancy and digression are oral characteristics of speech. Al-Jahiz’s oral way of writing in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen appears in the intensive existence of redundancy and digression in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen. Abd Rabboh justifies Al-Jahiz’s redundancy and digression in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen. For him, redundancy and digression of Al-Jahiz resulted from the characteristics of his age. Al-Jahiz’s age did not know the well-organized academic approach of writing (118). Al-Jahiz wanted his book to be read aloud. And because most people in his culture are oral, he used redundancy and digression to make his book capable of maintaining an oral audience’s attention. Ong mentions that in the oral culture “[n]arrators narrate what audiences call for or will tolerate” (Orality 66-67). Although Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen is written to establish the oral Arabic rhetorical rules, Al-Jahiz intentionally provides stories, rhetoric, and poems to keep the minds of the book’s readers active, as mentioned. It is an oral way of teaching. Ong describes the process of learning in the oral culture as a fun process.
that happens in an atmosphere of celebration or play (30). The atmosphere of celebration or play cannot exist in the pages of books. But what can exist in the pages of a book is providing what can make the readers learn and enjoy at the same time, namely stories, poems, and rhetoric. However, the overlapping of rhetoric and poetry with the main topics in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is an oral tradition. It became a transitional tradition when writers, such as Al-Jahiz, provided rhetoric and poems in their writing. Ong describes Chinese ‘detective novels’ as a genre “interlarding their texts with ‘lengthy poems, philosophical digressions, and what not’” (147). For Ong, the digression in the oral narrative causes a collapse in the structure of the narrative although “a good narrator skilled in digression and flashback techniques” is not interrupted by the digression (161). Al-Jahiz, as mentioned, was aware of the digression and redundancy in his *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. But the question why did he provide unrelated stories, rhetoric, and poems in his *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* although he was conscious of the difference between the style of writing and speaking? The answer to this question is mentioned above which is to provide an oral text that consists of literate knowledge to oral people.

In sum, Al-Jahiz uses in his *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* redundancy and digression. There are several forms of digression such as digressing entire chapters and digressing multiple times at once. However, the redundancy is linked to digression because most digressions in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* are several old oral Arabic stories, poems, and rhetoric, all are mentioned to serve only one point. Al-Jahiz was aware of this redundancy and digression. He explicitly declares the need of the book for many speeches and poems. Redundancy and digression are oral traditions. Al-Jahiz who is a literate person uses redundancy and digression because he writes *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* to oral people. This technique of writing orally is a technique of the transitional phase. In fact, In *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, Al-Jahiz tried to be close to both oral culture and
literate culture. The way of writing was oral, but the way of thinking was literate. One of the techniques that Al-Jahiz used in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* related to the transitional phase is the frequent use of *isnad*. *Isnad*, as mentioned above, is not merely oral tradition or a literate issue. It is a transitional characteristic.

**Isnad and Citation**

Al-Jahiz uses *isnad* in the vast majority of stories, rhetoric, and poems provided in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. In a few cases, Al-Jahiz provides poems or oratories without *isnad*. But, in these examples, he directly mentions the reason for not providing the *isnad*. For example, before citing an orator, he writes that: “there is another oratory that I forget its *isnad*” (*Al-Bayan* 2:121). His indirect apology indicates the importance of *isnad* either in oral speeches or in writings. In addition, his apology means that people, in Al-Jahiz’s age, did not distinguish the style of writing from the spoken word. In addition to *isnad*, Al-Jahiz cites other books and people. In fact, citation and *isnad* are akin to each other in that they both attribute sayings and ideas to whom say them. An instance of citation is that when Al-Jahiz discusses the relationship between the tongue and enunciation, he cites Aristotle and names the book of Aristotle (1:62). One of the differences between citation and *isnad* is that citation is literate whereas *isnad* is transitional (related to the transitional phase). Ways of attributing thoughts and sayings to whom say them differ from phase to phase. In the oral culture, the narration is the way of attributing ideas and sayings. In the transitional phase of Arabic culture, *isnad* replaced narration. And in the literate ages, “citation” as a term emerged in scholarly writing. Today, Arab writers do not use *isnad* because it is replaced by “citation.” But Al-Jahiz did not replace *isnad* with citation. He used both approaches, the transitional approach and the literate approach. Therefore, the use of both the *isnad* and citation in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* indicates Al-Jahiz’s transitional and
literate technique in his book. The structure of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, redundancy and digression, and *isnad* and citation relate to the style of organizing the book and its contents. Al-Jahiz’s way of discussing the topics in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* relates not to the style of organizing the book, but to his way of thinking (oral or literate).

*Collective Thought vs. Analytic Thought*

Al-Jahiz’s thought appears, in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, as literate thought. In this project, specifically in chapter five, Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric is the result of a literate way of thinking. Al-Jahiz writes his literate thought orally. In addition, Al-Jahiz analyzes and studies the Arabic language in a new way (in his time, his way of analysis and study was new). For example, Al-Jahiz explains that, in the Arabic language, the letter *jeem* (ﺞ), the fifth letter in the Arabic alphabet, and the letter *da* (ظ), the seventeenth letter in the Arabic alphabet, do not come together in one word (*Al-Bayan* 1:69). This way of analysis is the result of the analytic mind. The analytic mind is literate. The collective mind is oral. Another different example is what is mentioned in chapter five about meanings and types of significations. The oral mind could not analyze realize that there are media of communication that help to convey and reveal the meaning. Ong states that the oral mind is not analytic and could not be due to “the unifying, centralizing, interiorizing economy of sound.” But the literate mind is analytic (*Orality* 73-74).

According to Ong’s idea, oral people do not have a choice. They are oral and cannot think literately. But can literate people choose to think orally? Ong suggests that today’s readers cannot conceive the “oral universe of communication or thought except as a variant of a literate universe” (2). In fact, answering the last question according to Ong’s idea is not an accurate answer because Ong’s idea is about literate people who live in a literate culture. In Al-Jahiz’s
case, he was a literate person and lived in an oral society and his time is called the transitional phase.

The idea “Al-Jahiz’s literate thoughts were written orally” is repeated several times in this project. But the question that should be answered is can Al-Jahiz think orally? The matter is about the way of thinking, not the way of expression because the way of expression depends on the type of thoughts (oral or literate). Al-Jahiz’s *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* focuses only on language and its ways of use, including topics such as eloquence, clarification, meanings, etc. As mentioned, Al-Jahiz struggles to keep his ideas, even when he digresses, within the boundaries of language as the main topic of the book. Devoting a book to one topic regardless of the way of writing the book (orally or literately) is a literate way of thinking because, in an oral culture, oral people do not stick to one topic in a poem, for example. In his analysis of the Homeric epic, Ong mentions that the epic consists of many clichés which may give the impression that it is an overlaying of several texts (*Orality* 23-24). However, returning to the question about the ability of literate people to think orally, although the book does not have more than one topic, in the book, Al-Jahiz makes chapters that its content are stories, poems, and rhetoric without analyzing these examples. It is a way of thinking orally. In the oral culture, stories and wisdom are used for education (40-41). Al-Jahiz uses the oral technique to convey his knowledge to his readers and listeners.

In sum, this section analyzes the structure of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* to reveal the implications of both orality and literacy in Al-Jahiz’s thoughts and way of authoring. The section touches four topics which are the division and the system of the book, redundancy and digression, *isnad* and quotation, and collective thought and analytic thought. In this section, Al-Jahiz divides his books into chapters. But these chapters do not stick to their main topics.
Redundancy and digression dominate the book. They are oral tradition. In addition, Al-Jahiz depends, in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, on the isnad which is a phenomenon that appeared in the transitional phase of the Arabic culture. In fact, Al-Jahiz uses another way of referring ideas and thoughts to their creators which is a citation. Citation is a literate way to refer ideas and thoughts to their sources. And the final topic in this section is the analysis of the type of thinking Al-Jahiz used in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. Al-Jahiz’s way of thinking in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is both oral and literate, i.e., transitional. He used his analytic mind to study issues related to clarification and, also, an oral way of thinking to convey his knowledge. But the dominant way of thinking is literate thought. Therefore, the structure of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* shows Al-Jahiz’s combination of oral style and literate style. What is remaining in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* and needs to be studied depending on the implications of orality and literacy is the style of the language of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* which is the theme of the next section.

The Style of Language of Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen

This section focuses on the style of language that Al-Jahiz uses in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. The style of language, in this section, means oral way of expression or literate way of expression. To determine Al-Jahiz’s way of writing, this section concentrates on four themes. The themes are the formulaic style of language, oral words and expression, agonistic language, and interactive language.

The Formulaic Language

The oral formulaic expression has a strong connection with memory. Al-Jahiz in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* uses both the oral formulaic expression as well as literate abstract language. The latter is used when Al-Jahiz analyzes the language such as his analysis of the types of significations and their relationship to the meanings. But the abstract style of expression
is not common in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. The majority of the style of the language in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is formulaic. One of the obstacles and difficulties that this subsection faces is the translation of Al-Jahiz’s words. To show the formulaic language, in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, the readers of this project need to know the Arabic language. However, there is a style of expression that Al-Jahiz uses in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* which can be translated and considered formulaic expression. The style is called in Arabic eloquence and rhetoric the style of symmetry. The style of symmetry is to express meaning and its opposite with a metric language in one sentence. For example, in the introduction of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* Al-Jahiz states that O Allah, I seek refuge in You from the temptation of saying as we seek refuge in You from the temptation of action. And I seek refuge in You from being affectation to do what I am not good in, as I seek refuge in You from self-admiration of what I can do well. And I seek refuge in You from chatter, as I seek refuge in You from *aley* and *alhasr* (*Al-Bayan* 1:3). *Aley* and *alhasr* are explained in chapter five and mean problems related to both silence and speaking. Al-Jahiz, in this indirect quotation, uses two different oral styles of speaking which are assonance and symmetry. Ong connects the formulaic style of language to the memory in which it is used to facilitate memorization (*Orality* 33-34). Oral memory requires verbal templates to manage the knowledge in groups. The abstract style of language does not help oral memory to memorize the knowledge. The symmetric style has a kind of repetition. It is a repetition of the meaning by bringing its opposite. If a speaker says I am not happy, the listeners will understand the opposite meaning which is that the speaker is sad. But the sentence “I am happy, and I am not sad” has two words that point to one meaning. In addition to the formulaic language in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, Al-Jahiz also uses words that are frequently used in spoken words.
Oral Words and Expression

In *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, Al-Jahiz’s tone is the tone of a speaker, not a writer. The first word in the book is “Abu Otham, Amr ben Bahr, says” (*Al-Bayan* 1:3). Abu Otham is his title, and “Amr” and “Bahr” are his first and middle names. In fact, when Al-Jahiz wanted to write his own opinion, he uses the above phrase (Abu Otham says). Words such as “say” and “hear” are mentioned frequently in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. On the other side, Al-Jahiz never uses the word “write” or words related to “writing” when he expresses his opinion. The potential reason for using these words as Saad Al-Sowayyan mentions is that *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* was written to be read aloud (34). “The mind has initially no properly chirographic resources. You scratch out on a surface words you imagine yourself saying aloud in some realizable oral setting” (Orality 26). In fact, the use of these words of the spoken style in writing was not only in the Arabic transitional phase but also in other transitional cultures. Rachel Zelnick-Abramovitz states that Polybius’ in his books used “the verb “hear” ... in the context of reading historical texts: their reading by readers is *anagnōsis*, but the readers also “listen” and are “listeners.” For Zelnick-Abramovitz, “[t]his might imply that reading in public was so common that Polybius’ language is influenced by it even when he refers to silent reading by the individual reader” (179). In sum, Al-Jahiz’s use of “say” and “hear” can be understood in the context of his awareness of the way of receiving his book. In addition, to “say” and “hear,” there are expressions related to the spoken word more than writing in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* such praying for the readers.

Al-Jahiz treated his book’s readers as to how an oral orator deals face to face with his audience. In other words, Al-Jahiz imagines his audience as an oral audience, so he was eager to write for everyone as he states in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* (1:375). For instance, in the second volume of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, he states that “I already said, may God bless you, at the
beginning of the first volume and some places of the second volume ...” (2:222). In fact, this quotation has two issues related to the use of oral style in writing. First, Al-Jahiz prays for the reader. Praying is to gain the attention of the listeners. It is a direct saying, not writing. It is to build an emotional relationship between the listeners (readers in Al-Jahiz’s case) and the speaker (Al-Jahiz). Shlain points to the necessity of the emotional tenor in the spoken word. For him, it is an unconscious process. Writing brought (43). The second issue relates to the issues mentioned above (words used in the spoken word). Instead of writing “I mentioned” or “I wrote,” Al-Jahiz writes: “I already said.” Both issues were used frequently in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen. To sum up, Al-Jahiz in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen uses the oral style of expression. In fact, he does not only use the words of the spoken word in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen, but also there are other oral styles of language that he uses in the book such as the agonistic language.

*Agonistic Language*

Agonistic language was not used frequently in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen. The only topic that Al-Jahiz uses the agonistic language for is shobbiah. As mentioned earlier, shobbiah is a racist ideology against Arabs. It mocked the Arabs and the way they perform oratory. Before defending the Arabic oratory and rhetoric, Al-Jahiz states the detailed opinion of shobbiah. He devotes the first fifteen pages of the third volume of Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen to providing every point and argument of shobbiah. But what is notable is that when Al-Jahiz defends the Arabic oratory, he does not disvalue the rhetoric of other cultures although the people who created and supported shobbiah are from these cultures (Persians, Indians, and Romans). He states that, in general, oral rhetoric is only known as Arabic and Persian rhetoric. Indians have written meanings. The writers of these meanings are unknown. Greeks have philosophy and logic. And Aristotle who created logic is not known as an orator, but as a rhetorician. In addition, the
rhetoric of Persians is not completely oral. In fact, their oratories are produced after a long time of studying the books and over-revising. But Arabs’ rhetoric is innate (Al-Bayan 1:27-28). Then Al-Jahiz provides orators as examples of Arab ingenuity in rhetoric. The majority of the third volume consists of these examples. Abd Rabboh states that these examples are to prove that the clarification and rhetoric of Arabs are based on innateness and improvisation (139). Al-Jahiz, in his argument, responds to each point mentioned in the shobbiah’s argument. In his response, Al-Jahiz keeps himself in the middle between orality and literacy. Some points were close to literacy, and others were akin to orality.

In the argument of shobbiah, there are two aspects: oral and literate. The oral aspect appears in Al-Jahiz’s agonistic language, and the literate aspect exists in the way of thinking. For the first aspect, Al-Jahiz argues to prove that the argument of people who believe in shobbiah is wrong. He uses words to elevate the status of Arabs and their rhetoric such as what is mentioned above when he compares Arabic rhetoric to other rhetoric of other cultures. He concludes that Arabs’ oral rhetoric is in the highest position. Ong, in the context of agonistic language, mentions that bragging about one’s culture or ‘verbal tongue-lashings of an opponent figure regularly in encounters between characters in narrative: in the Iliad, in Beowulf, throughout medieval European romance, in The Mwindo Epic and countless other African stories” -is an oral characteristic (Orality 41). In fact, Ong links the agonistic language of the oral culture to the characteristic of the oral society. For Ong, when oral people are under the pressure of emotion, they tend “to break out in frenzied rages which often lead to indiscriminate slaughter” (The Presence 131-132). Obviously, the language used in frenzied rages is agonistic language. However, the literate aspect of Al-Jahiz’s way of argument relates to his way of thinking. Unlike oral people, Al-Jahiz does not completely admire the Arabic culture and rhetoric. He mentions
what every culture is good at. In fact, this admiring of some aspects of other cultures is used as a way to prove the advantage of Arabic rhetoric over the rhetoric of other cultures. The frenzied rage of the oral people does not give them a chance to admit some aspects of the opponents for the sake of self-praising. But, in general, Al-Jahiz’s style of language in his argument with people who believed in shobbiah is agonistic language. In addition, he uses another oral aspect in his argument which is interactive language, especially when he interprets oral texts to clarify their mysterious side.

Interactive Language

Readers of Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen can feel that Al-Jahiz speaks to them more than writes to them. Al-Jahiz uses the interactive style of language. Interactive language is an oral tradition. “With speech, both speaker and listener must occupy proximate physical spaces at the same moment for any interaction to take place” (Shlain 42-43). But although the writer (Al-Jahiz) and the readers cannot have a physical space at the same time in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen, Al-Jahiz uses interactive language. The interactive language takes several forms in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen. One of them is Al-Jahiz’s interpretation of some words and meanings of a poem or an oratory. An example of this form is when he provides a conversation between a scholar and his pupil, he explained two words and gives several poems and oratorios as examples of the way of using these words (Al-Bayan 1:85-87). Another form of interactive language is his use of words used only in the spoken word. This type of form is explained above in the section of “Oral Words and Expressions.” In fact, Ong connects the interactive language to the agonistic language. For him, “[i]n oral cultures a request for information is commonly interpreted interactively, as agonistic” (Orality 68). The intensive existence of poems and oratorios in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen can be viewed as a way of challenging, especially in his argument of
shobbiah. Al-Jahiz provides the Arabic poems and oratories to challenge people who believed in shobbiah to provide better than them (the poems and oratories). Ong’s ‘verbomotor’ culture indicates cultures that its “courses of action and attitudes toward issues depend significantly more on effective use of words, and thus on human interaction” (68). Al-Jahiz’s formulaic expression, oral words, agonistic language, and interactive language in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen indicate his oral way of writing.

To sum up, this section studies the style of language of Al-Jahiz in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen. It focuses only on four themes which are the formulaic style of language, oral words and expression, agonistic language, and interactive language. Al-Jahiz wrote his book for oral people. For this reason, Al-Jahiz depends heavily on oral formulaic expression although he rarely uses the abstract style of writing. In addition, Al-Jahiz deals with his audience as an oral audience existing physically in front of him, so he frequently uses oral words and expression and, also, interactive language. Readers of Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen can face several words used only in the oral speeches and conversations such as “say” and “hear.” Al-Jahiz, also, interprets some words from poems and oratories and provides examples to prove the way of using these words. In the context of the oral words and interactive language, Al-Jahiz’s style of language when he argues against shobbiah is agonistic. The agonistic language is an oral tradition. It is a similar image of the oral agonistic life. Therefore, Al-Jahiz’s style of language in Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen is close to orality more than literacy.

Summary

This chapter concentrates on the impacts of orality and literacy on Al-Jahiz’s style of authoring. The chapter is divided into three main sections, namely a brief introduction to Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen, the structure of Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen, and the style of the language
used in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. However, *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is one of the most important Arabic books in Arabic rhetoric. The focus of the book is on Arabic oral rhetoric and topics related to rhetoric such as eloquence, clarification. Moreover, the second section of this chapter concentrates on four themes which are the division and the system of the book, redundancy and digression, isnad and quotation, and collective thought and analytic thought. Al-Jahiz divides his books into chapters. But Al-Jahiz, in most of these chapters, did not stick to the main topics of the chapters. He discusses several issues besides the main topics. This approach of digression leads to describing *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* as unsystematic. In addition, Al-Jahiz does not discuss any issue in some chapters. They consist of poems and oratories although their titles imply issues that need to be discussed and studied. In addition to the unsystematic approach of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, the book contains a large number of Arabic poems and oratories. Al-Jahiz provides them as examples, a way of interpreting an issue, and a way of proving his view. The last two ways indicate his oral style of structuring the book, as mentioned. These examples are described in this chapter as redundancy and digression. When Al-Jahiz explains a certain topic, he provides many examples to prove his viewpoint. In addition, in many places, Al-Jahiz provides poems and oratories that do not have any connection to the main topic of the chapter. However, the last two themes in the second section show Al-Jahiz as a transitional and literate person. Al-Jahiz, in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, uses both isnad and citation. *Isnad* and citation are not oral traditions. *Isnad*, as mentioned in the first and fourth chapters, emerged in the Arabic transitional phase. And citation is a literate characteristic. Moreover, Al-Jahiz’s thought in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is analytic although he tries to deal with some issues orally by providing stories, poems, and rhetoric to explain an issue without using his own words. The final section of this chapter is divided into the formulaic style of language, oral words and
expression, agonistic language, and interactive language. The oral formulaic expression exists in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* which is an oral traditional way of expression. Al-Jahiz who wrote his book to an oral audience uses this style of expression to make his book readable. In addition to the oral formulaic expression, Al-Jahiz frequently uses oral words and expressions. These words and expression of oral language is part of Al-Jahiz’s interactive language which gives the readers of the book the feeling of listening more than reading. Also, Al-Jahiz’s oral way of writing can be viewed in his agonistic language, especially when he discusses the issue of *shobbiah*.

This chapter contributes to the main goal of the project from several aspects. First, focusing and analyzing *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is the concentration on a work in the transitional phase which is the focused phase of this project. Second, the chapter shows that a literate person thinks literately and writes orally. Al-Jahiz’s thoughts are literate (the second section of the chapter), but his style of writing is oral (the third section of the chapter). Third, unlike modern literate people, a literate person in the transitional phase can think orally. Al-Jahiz makes chapters that consist only of poems, stories, and oratories. Al-Jahiz did not explain the main issues of these chapters in his own words. Instead, he uses the oral technique of learning which is providing these examples to teach the readers. Although this way of teaching does not directly show Al-Jahiz’s oral way of thinking, it implies that Al-Jahiz knew the way of thinking orally. Finally, in the transitional phase, writing, for literate people, is a kind of suffering and pain. This chapter shows how Al-Jahiz apologizes and directly writes to his readers when he did not discuss an issue that is not within the boundaries of rhetoric, the main topic of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*.

The main two focuses of this dissertation are the transitional phase and the old Arabic traditional oral and literate cultures. The dissertation begins by concentrating on the orality and
literacy of old Arabic culture. The first chapter of this dissertation studied the oral Arabic culture which is called the Ignorant Age (pre-Islamic age). In addition, chapter one of this dissertation analyzed the transitional phase which was after the death of the Prophet Muhammad to the beginning of the Abbasid Caliphate. The most unique characteristics of these two phases (oral phase and transitional phase of the Arabic culture) are that the Arabic language was seen as a sacred language by Muslims because the language of the Qur’an is Arabic. This new status of the Arabic language triggered intensive care for the Arabic language because the early Arabic linguists did not want the language of the Qur’an to be changed. They believed that the Arabic language should be pure which means unchangeable. For this reason, the early Arabic linguists sought to maintain the pureness of the Arabic language by traveling to the Arabian Peninsula to write the Arabic oral traditions such as poems, rhetoric, stories, proverbs, etc. Their efforts strengthened the connection between the Arabic language and orality. In addition, Arabic scholars who came after the first generation of Arabic linguists, such as Al-Jahiz, found the oral traditions and studied them as a field of knowledge. In the Arabic transitional phase, isnad emerged as a unique Arabic transitional way of preserving oral and literate knowledges. Islam brought a literate knowledge such as sharia (Islamic law). Instead of depending on the custom and tradition as a law of the oral time, Islam brought its law to be the standard to rule the society. Early Muslims saw the importance of Islamic law and wants to preserve Islamic teachings. At that time (early days of Islam) writing was not widespread. The solution to persevere the Islamic teaching was isnad. Isnad was not established. What was known to convey oral knowledge is narration. Isnad developed narration to become qualified to convey the literate knowledge brought by isnad. Isnad is a characteristic of the Arabic oral and transitional phase to convey literate knowledge. At the beginning of the transitional phase, writing equipment was not largely
Al-Jahiz’s life, thoughts, philosophy explained in chapter two of the project as a figure of the Arabic transitional phase. Chapter two gave a close focus on a transitional person lived in the main phase of the project (the transitional phase). The contribution of chapter one to media ecology, especially the study of orality and literacy can be seen in the unique characteristics of the Arabic oral and transitional cultures such as the sacred language and its implications on the transition from orality to literacy and isnad. Isnad shows the ability of the oral human mind to produce and maintain literate knowledge.

The second chapter of this project focused on a transitional figure, namely Al-Jahiz. Al-Jahiz was born at the beginning of the widespread of writing. He is considered one of the first authors in the Arabic culture. Despite his early time, Al-Jahiz created his own approach. His approach made him one of the most distinguished scholars in Arabic culture. He depended on his own approach to write his 360 books and letters on every field of knowledge known in his time. Al-Jahiz’s approach depends on doubt, criticism, and experiment and experience. Reason is the main factor used to control and determine the procedure of these three factors (doubt, criticism, and experiment and experience). However, In Al-Jahiz’s transitional time, he suffered to make his works valued. Orality, at his time, was esteemed more than writing. At the beginning of his early intellectual life, Al-Jahiz attributed his books to other Arabic scholars who were known as oral scholars conveying oral knowledge. Al-Jahiz’s purpose in attributing his books to other scholars is to see the extent of acceptance of his works. One of Al-Jahiz’s unique characteristics is his awareness of the impact of writing on people’s life. Al-Jahiz believed that writing could change people’s personalities. His studying of rhetoric as an oral literary genre, as explained in chapter five, was not only studying its way of composing and performing but also studying sound as the main instrument in oral communication. In fact, in several works, Al-Jahiz studied
and analyzed sound and compare it to writing and the different impact of both on people.

Concluding the chapter of Al-Jahiz by focusing on his awareness of the impact of orality and literacy on people’s life opens questions about orality and literacy, as studied by Western scholars, especially their understanding and studying of the transitional phase. Chapter two provides Al-Jahiz’s thoughts and works as an example of a transitional figure of the Arabic transitional culture. If chapter one contributed to media ecology by focusing on the Arabic oral and transitional phase, chapter two explained Al-Jahiz’s thought and works to show specifically the transitional Arabic mind and works.

Chapters three and four of the project focused academically on the transitional phase. Chapter three depends on Western media ecologists such as Marshall McLuhan, Walter J. Ong, Harold Innis, James W. Carey, Anthony Wachs. The main scholar for chapter three is Ong. However, the chapter began by focusing on media ecology as the field of orality and literacy. It briefly explains media ecology. Then the chapter focused on orality and literacy as explained by scholars and shown in the academic scholarship. The final section in this chapter narrowed the focus of the chapter to the transitional phase. This dissertation does not claim that the transitional phase is not studied but is not distinguished as a phase that has its own characteristics. McLuhan’s focus on the classical trivium (rhetoric, grammar, and dialectic) is a focus on orality, transitional phase, and literacy. However, chapter four comes to deepen our understanding of the transitional phase. Chapter four does not only explain the transitional phase depending on the Western works (e.g. Orality and Literacy, The Presence of the Word, The Alphabet versus the Goddess, The Bias of Communication, etc.), but it, also, discusses other issues that are not mentioned in chapter three and in the Western works on orality and literacy such as knowledge and forming human mind, isnad, and how literate people and oral people live together in the
transitional phase. Chapter four supposes that each medium of communication has its own unique characteristics and forms the thoughts and expressions of cultures according to its characteristics. But the characteristics of the medium form the thoughts and expression of people and culture with the help of knowledge. The characteristics of each medium of communication help people to create new types of knowledge. In addition, chapter four focuses on two issues related to isnad and literate knowledge. First, the section on isnad focused on the reason for describing isnad as literate knowledge. Second, isnad is unique because it is literate knowledge produced by the oral mind. The reason for the emergence of literate knowledge in the oral culture is the desire of oral people to maintain the authenticity of their knowledge. The last section of chapter four is about how a literate person lives in an oral culture. The section concludes that although the literate person produces literate knowledge, he conveys the literate knowledge orally. In addition, in the transitional phase, literate people use the oral style of gaining and teaching knowledge. They travel although they can read what they traveled for.

although the four chapters of the project discussed the main issues of the project (e.g., oral and literate Arabic cultures and transitional phase), they can be viewed as a theoretical introduction to analyzing Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabeen (the main transitional book for chapters five and six). The contribution of chapters three and four to media ecology can be seen in the studying of chapter three of the analysis of Western scholars of the transitional phase. Chapter three, also, can be viewed as an introduction to chapter four which widens the analysis of the transitional phase.

Chapter four made “knowledge” the main word in the transitional process. Chapter four enlarged the deep focus of Western transitional cultures to include the unique characteristics of the oral, transitional, and literate phases of the oral Arabic culture.
The last two chapters of this project analyzed Al-Jahiz’s *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. Chapter five studied Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*. It explained the theory of rhetoric and showed the implications of orality and literacy in the theory. Al-Jahiz’s main word in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is “clarification.” Al-Jahiz’s clarification has both oral and literate aspects. The oral aspect of the clarification is that it has issues related to oral rhetoric such as sound and gesture. The literate aspect relates to the analysis of clarification. Although there are issues, in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*, relate to writing such as grammatical mistakes, they were discussed from an oral aspect. Al-Jahiz touches on issues relate strongly to orality such as agonistic language and intensive listening to high rhetoric. The final topic in the second section of the fifth chapter of this project is about Al-Jahiz’s “accordance” which is to give the right speech to the right audience. The chapter’s final section studies the orality and literacy of Al-Jahiz’s rhetorical theory. The final section concludes that Al-Jahiz thinks literately and writes orally. However, the final chapter of this dissertation is about the impact of orality and literacy on Al-Jahiz’s way of authoring. The final chapter concludes that the structure of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is not clear. Al-Jahiz’s redundancy and digression dominate the entire book. Redundancy and digression are oral characteristics. In some of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen*’s chapters, Al-Jahiz uses an oral way of teaching which is providing poems, oratories, and stories without explanation of the main issue. Al-Jahiz provides a large number of poems, oratories, and stories to prove his own view. This way of providing many examples of oral literature is an oral tradition to demonstrate an opinion. However, the last two themes in the second section of the last chapter of this project show Al-Jahiz as a transitional and literate person. Al-Jahiz uses both isnad and citation. Isnad and citation are not oral. Isnad, in the Arabic transitional phase, is transitional. And citation is literate. In addition to isnad and citation, Al-Jahiz’s analytic mind
appears in his way of studying some issues such as meanings and types of significations, explained in his theory of rhetoric in chapter five. In sum, Al-Jahiz who wrote *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* to an oral people. He used an oral thought and style of expression. The analysis of chapters five and six of *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* contribute to media ecology from several points. First, chapter five focused on rhetoric as an oral genre analyzed by a transitional figure (Al-Jahiz). As explained in this dissertation, the transitional people lived in an oral society and had some the literate characteristics. Their thoughts and expression are different than the oral people and literate people. Analyzing Al-Jahiz theory of rhetoric in *Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen* is not only to understand the oral Arabic rhetoric but also to know how a transitional people think, explain their thought, deal with their oral society. Second, the concentration of chapter two on Al-Jahiz’s theory of rhetoric can help to live rhetorically in the secondary orality (today). Finally, both chapters five and six gave a specific example of the thoughts and expressions of transitional figures.

This dissertation concludes that the transitional phase is distinguished from orality and literacy. It is a phase that has its own characteristics although it shares with orality and literacy some of their characteristics. A transitional person is not oral or literate. He is in a place that enables him to see both sides. Writing for him is not an easy task. He should write his literate thought orally. However, this dissertation gained its importance from focusing on the orality, transition, and literacy of the old Arabic culture. The old Arabic culture had some features that its analysis and studying can make a significant contribution to media ecology as a field. First, the detailed history of the transition from orality and literacy was recorded. Second, the Arabic language became a sacred language before the transitional process which made the process of transferring from orality to literacy different than the process in other cultures. Third, there are
unique issues that appeared in the Arabic transitional phase such as *isnad*. *Isnad* is transitional phenomena that helps media ecologists to understand the importance of the transitional phase, not only in the Arabic culture but also in every culture. In addition, this dissertation showed the transitional phase not as a bridge that transfers thoughts, expressions, and cultures from orality to literacy, but as an independent phase that has its own characteristics and importance in the history of human beings. In the transitional phase, writing was not a mere medium of communication. It did not transfer people from orality to literacy but to “transition” which is a phase made people understand both orality and literacy. However, although this dissertation is about the transition from orality to literacy as a phase, it can pose questions in its readers’ mind about transitional phase from literacy to the new technology, especially with the widespread of the social media. Studying the transitional phases (from orality to literacy and from literacy to new technologies) helps the society to move smoothly to the new phase and avoid obstacles that contribute to delaying this transition. In addition, understanding the characteristics of each transitional phase clears the sight and lights the dark side of the transitional phase. Also, the transitional phase makes people in the middle between two mediums of communication. Studying this phase (the transitional phase) opens people’s eyes to benefit from the two different sides and predicts the near future.
Works Cited

1 and 2 Chronicles. NavPress, 2014.


Al-Asad, Nasir Al-Deen. *Masader Al-She’r Al-Jahili wa Qematha Al-Tarekhyyeh [The Sources of Pre-Islamic Poetry and its Historical Value]*. Dar Al-Jeel, 1996.


—. *Al-Bukhala* [*The Misers*]. Dar Al-Ma’arf, n.d.

—. *Al-Bursan wa Al-Orjan wa Al-OMian wa Al-Holan* [*The Lepers, the Lamers, the Blinds, and the Squints*]. Edited by Abdussalam Haroon, Dar Al-Jeel, 1990.


—. *Al-Tarbee’a wa Al-Tadweer* [*The Quadrature and the Rotate*]. Al-Ma’ahad Al-Faranci be-Demashq Leldirasat Al-‘Arabiah, 1955.


Al-Jarrah, Abbas Hani. *Al-Magamat Al-Adabyeyah wa A’tharaha fi Al-A’dab Al-A’lameyah* [*Literary Magamat and their Effects on World’s Literature*]. Dar Al-Redwan Lelnashr wa Al-Tawzee’a, 2014.


Al-Maqreezi, Taqy Al-Deen Ahemd Ali. *Emta’ a Al-Asma’a Bema Lelnaby men Al-Ahwal wa Al-Amwal wa Al-Havadah, wa Al-Mata’a* [*Enjoying Hearing: By What the Messenger had of News, Money, Grandchildren, and Belongings*]. Matba’at Lajnat Al-Talef wa Al-Tarjamah wa Al-Nashr, 1941.


—. *Al-Fan wa Mathahebuh fi Al-Nathr Al-'Arabi* [*The Art and its Schools in the Arabic Prose*]. Dar Al-Ma’arf, 1960.


—. *Al-Sh’ar wa Al-Shu’ara [Poetry and Poets]*. Dar Al-Ma’aref, 1958.


