

Cultural Encounters in the Translation into English of Culture-Specific Expressions in the Qur'ān

Arabic and English are two divergent languages on both the linguistic and the cultural level. Both languages descended from two different language families. On the one hand, Arabic is one of the South Central Semitic languages. On the other hand, English is one of the West-Germanic languages, which are originally members of the Indo-European family. In addition, the cultural context in which the Qur'ān was revealed is remarkably distinct from the context in which modern English is used.

In this context, the present research is an attempt to bridge the linguistic and cultural gap involved in the Arabic-English translation of culture-specific expressions in the Qur'ān. Two research questions are raised:

- (1) How far does the Arabic-English translation of culture-specific expressions in the Qur'ān constitute a lexical as well as a cultural challenge?
- (2) How effective are 'context of situation' and 'context of culture' in narrowing the linguistic as well as cultural gap involved in the translation into English of culture-specific expressions in the Qur'ān?

The current research adopts a culture-oriented approach to translation. This approach prioritizes both the 'context of situation' and the 'context of culture' in which the source text was revealed. It looks at the source text as a product of the history and social structure of a particular culture. This is due to the fact that the context in which the Qur'ān was revealed is historically as well as socially matchless. Consequently, the source text performs an intended primary function in the source culture. The central argument postulated is that this particular function should be prioritized, because a better understanding of the implications involved in using source-text expressions requires contextualizing these expressions both linguistically and culturally.