

The Arabic Language's Capacity for Influence, Expansion, and Spread and the Perils of Neglecting It

(Translated)

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One of the primary factors contributing to the decline of the Islamic Ummah and its lands, indeed, the root cause of most of the calamities it currently faces, is the profound weakness that has afflicted Muslims' understanding of Islam. This weakness stems from the decoupling of Arab vitality from Islamic vitality, specifically through the neglect of the Arabic language, the language of Islam and an integral part of it. It is the language through which the Deen was conveyed and must continue to be conveyed; for the texts of the Revelation, whether the direct words of Allah (swt) or the expressions of the Noble Messenger (saw), are in Arabic. Consequently, grasping these texts and their meanings is impossible if one neglects the language itself. As for the meanings and concepts contained within them, however, it is permissible, and indeed a Shariah obligation, to convey them to the world and invite others to believe in them. These are truthful ideas and sublime concepts that address the human intellect; any rational human being possesses the capacity to comprehend their meanings and grasp their objectives.

Since the Muslim has transcended the narrow confines of nationalism to issue a Dawah to the entire world, and since Islam establishes that distinction among people rests solely on piety ﴿إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ﴾ **“Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware”** [TMQ Surah Al-Hujurat, 49:13], the individual addressed by these ideas is not asked to become a second-class follower. Instead, he is addressed simply as a human being. Should he embrace these ideas, the path lies open for him to stand on equal footing with the earliest believers in Islam, whether Arab or non-Arab. Furthermore, the opportunity remains open for him to assume a position of leadership and shoulder the responsibility of carrying the Dawah of Islam, the fundamental mission of both the individual Muslim and the Islamic state.

This concerns the impact of the Arabic language on the Muslim, shifting him from a state of following and imitation, to a position of competence and leadership, as well as its impact on society in addressing its ever-evolving problems. These issues must be resolved in accordance with the Will of Allah (swt), for He (swt) has informed us that He (swt) will hold us accountable for every word we utter and every action we undertake. Indeed, He (swt) even promised to hold us accountable for the thoughts that cross our minds, yet He (swt) granted us relief by limiting responsibility to what we actively acquire and act upon. Allah (swt) says, ﴿لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِنْ تُبْذَرُوا مَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوْ تُخَفَوْهُ يُحَاسِبْكُمْ بِهِ اللَّهُ فَيَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ﴾ **“To Allah alone belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Whether you reveal what is in your hearts or conceal it, Allah will call you to account for it. He forgives whoever He wills, and punishes whoever He wills.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:284]. The Prophet (saw) also said, ﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَجَاوَزَ لِأُمَّتِي مَا حَدَّثَتْ بِهِ أَنْفُسَهَا، مَا لَمْ تَقُلْ أَوْ تَعْمَلْ﴾ **“Allah has pardoned my Ummah for the thoughts that cross their minds, provided they do not speak of them or act upon them.”**

Yes, the ruler, the employee, the husband, the wife, the daughter, and the trader will all be held accountable, each according to the responsibilities entrusted to them. This implies that Allah (swt) has ordained a law for people to follow and by which to organize their affairs; for accountability is akin to the meticulous grading of exam papers, and an examination must necessarily be based on a pre-established curriculum, ﴿لِنَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ

عَزِيزاً حَكِيماً” **“So humanity should have no excuse before Allah after the coming of the messengers. And Allah is Almighty, All-Wise.”** [TMQ Surah An-Nisa, 4:165].

Establishing the argument requires clarifying the intended meaning, and grasping that intended meaning is impossible without the Arabic language. For instance, anyone wishing to sit for an exam at a German or English university cannot study the curriculum or answer the questions unless they have acquired enough of the language to comprehend the subject matter and respond, a self-evident fact. Consequently, for anyone seeking admission to an Islamic university, where passing such an exam is mandatory, understanding the university's language is essential for success. Furthermore, since we believe our primary mission there is to call people to Islam, it has become incumbent upon us to combine the vitality of the Arabic language with the vitality of Islam, given the immense power of influence, expansion, and dissemination inherent in such a union. Without doing so, we will be utterly unable to uplift this Ummah; indeed, we will fail to halt the ongoing deterioration or curb this decline, ultimately plunging into the abyss and facing certain annihilation, not merely for individuals, but for the Ummah itself.

Regarding the Arabic language's capacity for influence, expansion, and dissemination, its power to affect others becomes evident when one considers the very nature of influence, which arises from the ability to embody reality and highlight specific aspects one wishes to convey. A close examination of the Arabic language reveals a wealth of vocabulary capable of vividly embodying ideas; it captures the finest details and paints a picture so expressive that the idea resonates directly with the heart, removing any barrier between the expression and the listener's emotions. Arabs imbued their language with a vocabulary sufficient to describe reality exactly as it is, creating vivid imagery through their words. Consider the poet's description of a warrior, (مَكَرٍ مَقْبِلٍ مَدْبِرٍ مَعاً كَجَلْمُودٍ صَخْرٍ حَطَّ السَّيْلُ مِنْ عِلٍّ) “Charging and retreating, advancing and withdrawing all at once, like a massive boulder cast down from the heights by a torrent.” He vividly embodies the hero's momentum for the listener, evoking the very fear of colliding with that rock as it hurtles down the mountainside. Furthermore, the language employs metaphor to depict and embody meanings in ways that astonish the mind and captivate the soul. Take, for instance, the poet's verse, (فَأَمْطَرَتْ لَوْلُؤاً مِنْ نَرْجِسٍ فَسَقَّتْ وَرْداً) “Tears welled from abundant eyes, as if watering flowers, while biting down on lips with teeth like hailstones.” This exquisite artistic imagery uses metaphor to depict tears rolling down a sorrow-stricken face, illustrating the physical traces left upon her lips by the intensity of her grief and emotion.

The eloquence of a word and the precision of imagery have been described in terms that approach the truth, specifically as the “magic of eloquence (سحر البيان).” Indeed, employing the right word, considering both its meaning and its phonetic cadence, within the appropriate sentence and context exerts a magical effect upon the heart. It is recounted that a certain amir ordered an enemy of his to be brought before him; the man then recited a poem so compelling that the prince wished he were the one being addressed by such words, that famous poem which begins with the lines:

علو في الحياة وفي الممات *** لحقُّ تلك إحدى المعجزات

“Exalted in life and in death, truly, this is one of the miracles.”

كأن الناس حولك حين قاموا *** وفود نداك أيام الصلات

“When the people gathered around you, they seemed like the throngs who once sought your bounty in times of generosity.”

كأنك قائم فيهم خطيباً *** وكلهم وقوف للصلاة

“It was as if you stood before them delivering a sermon, while they stood in solemn Salah.”

مددت يديك نحوهم احتفاءً *** كمدتهما إليهم بالهبات

“You extended your hands toward them in welcome, just as you once extended them to bestow your gifts.”

What, then, happens when this immense expressive power blends with sublime meanings and elevated ideas? What impact does it leave, and what emotions does it stir?

Let us pause for a moment to consider a Shariah ruling, one whose terrifying nature Allah (swt) wished to vividly illustrate for humanity: the prohibition against following an act of charity with reminders of the favor or with hurtful words. Allah (swt) says, **﴿أَيُّدُ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونَ لَهُ جَنَّةٌ مِّنْ نَّخِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ لَهُ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ وَأَصَابَهُ الْكِبَرُ وَلَهُ ذُرِّيَّةٌ ضُعَفَاءُ فَأَصَابَهَا إِعْصَارٌ فِيهِ نَارٌ فَجَاءَتْ أَشْدُّ مِنْ نَّخِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ لَهُ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ وَأَصَابَهُ الْكِبَرُ وَلَهُ ذُرِّيَّةٌ ضُعَفَاءُ فَأَصَابَهَا إِعْصَارٌ فِيهِ نَارٌ فَجَاءَتْ أَشْدُّ مِنْ نَّخِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ﴾** **“Would any of you wish to have a garden with palm trees, grapevines, and all kinds of fruits with rivers flowing underneath and as they grow very old with dependent children, a fiery whirlwind hits the garden, burning it all up? This is how Allah makes His revelations clear to you, so perhaps you will reflect.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:266]. This passage inflames the feelings and stirs the emotions with a vivid, dynamic image that seems to speak for itself, thereby inviting deep reflection. It is through such means that impact is achieved, creating a profound impression within the listener’s soul, driven by elevated ideas, sublime meanings, magnificent imagery, and a language that is rich in vocabulary, accessible in its wording, robust in its grammatical foundations, and steadfast in its standards and meters.

It is through this dynamic of mutual influence that Islam must be conveyed, to spark a revolution within the human soul and elevate the community to the highest pinnacles of perfection, thereby restoring the glory of Muslims and the honor and vital impact of Islam in the world.

Regarding its capacity for expansion, the Arabic language possesses limitless potential to articulate any event or any field of knowledge, whether existing or yet to emerge. Arabic has already demonstrated this capability; as Muslims carried the language forward and established a state that stood preeminent in the known world of that era, the language proved itself capable of generating a body of knowledge vast enough to encompass all the sciences and disciplines that either emerged during that time or were inherited from civilizations of the past.

How beautifully Hafiz Ibrahim described the Arabic language, speaking as if the language itself were voicing its own nature:

وَسِعَتْ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ لَفْظاً وَغَايَةً * وَمَا ضِيقَتْ عَنْ آيٍ بِهِ وَعِظَاتٍ

“I beheld the Book of Allah in both word and meaning, never narrowed by its verses or its words of wisdom.”

فَكَيْفَ أَضْيَقُ الْيَوْمَ عَنْ وَصْفِ آلَةٍ * وَتَنْسِيقِ أَسْمَاءٍ لِمَخْتَرَعَاتِ

“How, then, could I falter today in describing a machine? Or in arranging names for modern inventions?”

أَنَا الْبَحْرُ فِي أَحْشَائِهِ الدُّرُّ كَامِنٌ * فَهَلْ سَأَلُوا الْعَوَّاصَ عَنْ صَدَفَاتِي

“I am the ocean; within my depths, pearls lie hidden, Have they asked the diver about the shells I hold?”

A vast avenue available to us is semantic derivation (الاشتقاق ishtiqaaq), through which we can coin terms and expressions that enable us to articulate our intent effectively. Deriving nouns from verbs, or vice versa, serves to enrich the Arabic language with new vocabulary and modern structures capable of conveying lofty meanings to the public.

In addition to this, there is the avenue of Arabization (تعريب ta'reeb). This process is straightforward and accessible; it essentially involves adapting a foreign term to fit an Arabic morphological pattern. New foreign nouns are adopted as they are, using their original names, rather than attempting to translate their meanings, a pitfall into which the Academy of the Arabic Language once stumbled. If a foreign noun already conforms to an Arabic pattern,

such as telephone (تلفون), it remains unchanged. If it does not, such as television (تلفزيون), letters are added or removed to align it with an Arabic pattern. Subsequently, verbs can be derived from these adapted nouns, such as 'to telephone' (تلفن، يتلفن، تلفنة) and 'to televise' (تلفز، يتلفز، تلفزة). This process facilitates the expansion of the Arabic language, thereby enabling the formulation of new linguistic solutions for emerging issues.

As for its spread, the Arabic language, with its vocabulary, structures, and grammatical rules, is accessible and manageable; it is governed by rhythmic balance, possesses straightforward rules, and is light on the tongue. Arabic has successfully navigated this experience. It became the language of the majority of the known world at that time, and people found it easy to learn, so much so that non-Arabs, such as Sibawayh and others, achieved mastery in it. Far from being an obstacle to the spread of Islam, the language facilitated it; Islam addresses the human intellect and possesses the power to influence minds, leading people to enter Allah's Deen in droves. Moreover, because Arabic is the language of the Noble Quran, and was not viewed merely as the language of a specific people, people embraced its study as their own; it was the language of their scripture, the Noble Quran, and of their Deen. They eagerly sought to understand its literary nuances and meanings, aiming to appreciate the eloquence of the Quranic verses, internalize their concepts, perceive the miraculous nature of the Book, and find spiritual devotion in its recitation.

These are some observations regarding the importance of the Arabic language and the fusion of its inherent power, characterized by its capacity for influence, expansion, and dissemination, with the power of Islam. Unless Muslims return to prioritizing the Arabic language and integrating it with Islam, there is no hope for improvement, nor even for halting the current decline, given that it is the language of Muslims. The consequences of this separation between Arabic and Islam will remain a crushing nightmare for all Muslims; for, as previously stated, Arabic is an integral part of Islam, and the Deen cannot be truly understood without it. Therefore, it falls upon the upcoming Khilafah Rashidah (Rightly-Guided Caliphate), by Allah's will, to restore the Arabic language to its rightful status and renew focus upon it, ensuring it once again becomes the language of the entire Muslim Ummah. By fusing Islamic energy with Arabic energy, the Ummah can reclaim its stature and its leadership role in the world.

وآخر دعوانا أن الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلاة والسلام على نبينا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين.

And our final supplications: Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, and may peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad (saw), and upon all his family (ra) and Companions (ra).