

to the volume considered religion as a secondary variable to be treated within the existing secular, positivistic framework. Paradoxically, this anthology implicitly calls for a critical assessment of the discipline of psychology as a champion in positivistic agenda within the social sciences. Inclusion of religion would render it difficult to operationalize human experiences and hence to study the problem from a purely quantitative perspective. Perhaps out of innocence, the authors in this volume are calling for a qualitative approach when human experiences give meaning to nomothetic data.

---

*Islam and Language* by Ahmad Sehu Abdussalam. Kuala Lumpur: Al-Hilal Publishing, 1999, 92 pp. ISBN 983-2151-03-1.

Reviewer: Dahnil Adnani, Department of English Language and Literature, International Islamic University Malaysia.

In the book under review, the author proposes to present Islamic and Muslim views of language, its systems and actions in situations of communication. This is to be done through presentations and discussions of the contributions of some Muslim scholars to the study of language and related studies. Specifically, the author proposes to present introductory readings in views and theories of language presented by some Muslim scholars and an in-depth reading of some of their selected works on language, social sciences and textual analysis. Specifically the author intends to draw attention to theoretical bases that are drawn from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, and the Islamic heritage in general.

This presentation is deemed necessary in view of the need to bring to the attention of students of linguistics the existence, within the Islamic heritage, of a wealth of treasures of theories and views related to language. Muslim contributions in this area are not confined to the study of the various aspects of the linguistic system of the Arabic Language, but they include the integration of linguistics with Sharī'ah as well as with other branches of knowledge. This integration resulted in the development of advanced linguistic theories. The wealth of treasures available for studies do not only reflect serious intellectual endeavors and outstanding achievements, it should also encourage and stimulate regeneration of such endeavors.

In the past, Muslims contributed to the development of the linguistic tradition of the Greeks, enriching it in many ways. In the area of

semantics particularly, such contributions can be said to be as, if not more, important as those of great scholars cherished by Western linguists. In spite of this, such contributions remain unknown to linguistic students in the West. Notable contributions of the Muslims reflect a serious cultural and intellectual engagement. They brought about the integration of linguistics with religious studies, which coordinates the examination of two most important and intimately related factors in human life—language and religion. Discussions on various issues in Islamic heritage would make a great contribution towards creating an Islamic linguistics, which presents Muslim perspectives on language.

The presentation covers quite a wide range of topics each giving a brief description of Muslim efforts in dealing with a particular area of interest in language studies. It is organized into five sections: Introduction, The Islamic Language and Linguistics, Islamic Linguistic Thoughts, Muslim Macro-linguistic Theories, and Conclusion. Basically the author has brought our attentions to some important contributions made by Muslim scholars in the various areas of language study listed above. Noteworthy among these are the various views expressed in the Qur'ān. The author begins by stating that language relates to man and its importance in human life. Language is a universal attribute of man, which is necessary for his existence regardless of space, time, and diversity of culture. Every human being is biologically and intellectually endowed with the natural ability to acquire and use languages. The function of language is not limited to that of a mere means of social interaction. It is also a medium for relating one's identity and affiliation to society, a medium for interacting with other members of the human race, to create material, cultural and spiritual relationships.

Then he presents some views of language and language studies found in selected verses in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, and in the works of some notable linguistic scholars. Among the Qur'ānic views cited is that, language is not merely a means of communication among members of human communities. The Qur'ān refers to language as a means of expression, but most important of all, it is one of the countless blessings of Allah. It is part of the various mercies of Allah. It is a quality, which distinguishes man from other creatures. It complements the mind in establishing man's superiority over other creatures. Indeed, the blessing of language was enumerated together with that of the creation of man itself. The Qur'ān says: The most gracious. It is he who has taught the

Qur'ān. He has created man. He taught him an eloquent expression (55:1-4)

Language is a sign of Allah's greatness and it is a tool given to man to enable him to shoulder his responsibilities as Allah's *Khalifah* on earth. It is to be used mainly to carry out certain obligatory duties and avoid vices and dangers. To do this the Qur'ān provides principles which man is required to observe when using language. Besides, man also faces various challenges in the use of language. The Qur'ān also states that differences in human language are also an indication of Allah's absolute control over all creation. The Qur'ān says: And among his signs is the creation of the heaven and the earth and the difference in your languages and colours. Verily, in that are indeed signs for men of sound knowledge. (30:22) This means that differences in human language are also an indication of Allah's absolute control over all creation. Man is invited to ponder its implications. One is the challenge to create and maintain harmonious relations among different tribes and nations. This is in line with the message of the Qur'ān which says: O Mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one other (49:13)

Among the scholars whose views are highlighted are Ibn Taymiah, Al-Jurjānī, Ibn Ḥazm, and Ibn Khaldūn on the nature of language competence, language learning and some aspects of language use. On description of language sound, references are made to the views of Ibn Khaldun. Views of Al-Farūqī, Al-Attas and Sa'ad al-Dīn are mentioned in relation to idea of Islamic language and of Islamization of language. As a whole, the author has indeed succeeded in bringing to our attention the many contributions Muslim scholars have made in the study of language apart from their effort in integrating language and religious studies.

The author, unfortunately, has failed to do justice either to the topic or to the contributions Muslim scholars have made. The ideas mentioned in this monograph and the linguistic contributions made by Muslim scholars like Ibn Khaldūn deserve a full-length volume. Instead what we have is a cursory look at many of the ideas or views presented. However, if the author's intention is merely to create interest in the subject and encourage closer examination of the various issues raised, then the author has indeed succeeded in his endeavor and he deserves to be congratulated.