

## A Qur'anic Approach toward Developing Materials for English Language Teaching: the Concept of Water

Nargess Nourizadeh<sup>1</sup>  
Sue-san Ghahremani Ghajar<sup>2</sup>  
Shahla Bakhtiari<sup>3</sup>

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### Abstract

We have been teaching English in Iran for decades now; however, the materials used at schools and in institutes have been adopted from or influenced by the commercial textbooks published by dominating powers. The themes, topics, and the lexical networks dispose learners toward internalizing secular and materialistic values in life. There have been attempts on the part of Iranian material developers to detach from the inconsistencies of the commercial materials with Islamic and Iranian values; however, the ideal Islamic life<sup>4</sup>, which is the ultimate goal of education in Islam has rarely received due attention. Moving toward such a lifestyle demands a harmony among all the parts of the educational system, including all the different school subjects and their corresponding materials and methods. Nevertheless, English language courses have remained unaffected by Islamic teachings and have focused on the lowest level of life without considering the critical questions regarding the meaning of life.

One of the main steps toward understanding the purpose of life in the Glorious Qur'an is to look around at nature which is one of the richest sources of understanding for people in Islamic thought. Therefore, in this research, the verses about nature in the Glorious Qur'an, specifically the ones about water as the element of life and the source of all living creatures, were studied carefully to find out how the divine language of Qur'an reminds people of the purpose of life by referring them to natural phenomena.

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<sup>1</sup> PhD Candidate, Department of English Language and Literature, Alzahra University, (Corresponding Author); [nourizadeh\\_n@yahoo.com](mailto:nourizadeh_n@yahoo.com)

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Alzahra University; [s.ghahremani@alzahra.ac.ir](mailto:s.ghahremani@alzahra.ac.ir)

<sup>3</sup> Associate Professor, Department of History, Alzahra University; [sh.bakhtiari@alzahra.ac.ir](mailto:sh.bakhtiari@alzahra.ac.ir)

Accordingly, the verses from the Glorious Qur'an related to the subject of water, including verses containing the words "water", "rain", "spring", "river", and "the sea", along with their interpretations in Tasnim (Javadi Amoli, 2012), Nasime Hayat (Bahrapour, 2013), and Noor (Gharaati, 2009), were checked and analyzed. In these verses, a picture from nature is first described and explained in carefully selected words and then people are urged to think about it. These verses also refer to the people's responsibility and what they should do in different contexts and situations and try to help them understand how they should manage their likes and dislikes according to God's Words.

The pictures were taken from the verses of the Glorious Qur'an and organized into four images including "life-giving water", relating to the fact that rain from the sky gives life to the dead land and brings back hope to people; "creation from water", which is about water as the main element of life from which a great percentage of the creatures' body is made; "a divine living from the sky: the water we drink, the food we eat", reminding people of the source of whatever they have and need for life; and at last "such a short life it is", which refers to the picture shown in some verses of a dead land which is brought back to life by rain, the greenness which is created, and how soon it changes to something like straw which is spread all over with the wind.

For the purpose of developing materials, these pictures were summarized into sentences from Qur'an with a list of words from the same verses, which together will take thoughts closer to the concepts intended by the Glorious Qur'an. In these scenes, pictured through words for people, they are reminded that it is God who has created and controls everything and He is the One who is praiseworthy. This is referred to as the foundational concept of "Tawhid" or the oneness of God which has a leading role in different aspects of life and stands against the positivistic view toward the natural phenomena assumed to be bestowed upon us by Mother Nature. Furthermore, people are reminded about death and life afterwards by being strongly advised to look at the death and life happening around in spring, when the earth gets green. These two concepts are fundamental in Islamic ideology of life and determine every aspect of life style; therefore, the purpose of materials should be to delineate these concepts and their applications.

The language of the Glorious Qur'an has presented these concepts in stories, metaphors, and similes, in all of which words come together beautifully to serve the purpose of teaching man the divine concepts essential to both worldly and spiritual life. Moreover, man is asked questions to rise from the death of ignorance and be challenged to think by being addressed in these verses.

Based on these findings, the units in the materials can be organized around the structure of "look, think, and live", in which learners will be shown a picture from nature, descriptions of which should be worded according to the words and sentences from the Glorious Qur'an. Some questions are also suggested for each picture which can be formed into a writing or speaking task in class, which are Tawhid- and Maa'd-based. These questions can help learners relate these concepts to their real life, broaden their views toward nature, and deepen their thoughts by stepping beyond mere enjoyment and worldly benefits from nature.

**Keywords:** Material development, English language teaching, The ideal Islamic life, Nature, Water