

ON THE DIFFERENCE IN MEANING OF THE WORDS “MUSLIM” AND “ISLAMIC”

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В статье рассматривается явление синонимии и два конкретных представителя синонимов – прилагательные “Muslim” и “Islamic”. В статье приводится определение синонимии и рассматриваются несколько существующих классификаций синонимов. Анализируются прилагательные “Muslim” и “Islamic”. Путем анализа информации, данной в словарях, и примеров использования данных прилагательных в контексте устанавливается разница в их значениях.

Ключевые слова: синонимы; семантические (идеографические) синонимы; стилистические синонимы; семантико-стилистические синонимы.

The importance of using precise words for expressing one’s thought or for transmitting one’s ideas from one language into another is well-known. As a famous cognitive scientist Steven Pinker states, correct usage of language “ensures that writers will get their meaning across, sparing readers from squandering their precious moments on earth deciphering opaque prose” [Pinker 2014: 19].

Recently, due to the events in the world, the word «мусульманский» has often been used in various mass media sources. The problem arises when one tries to render this word into English or use its English equivalents. According to the Linguee dictionary, the word *мусульманский* can be translated as either *Muslim* or *Islamic* [Linguee: URL]. Thus, these words must be synonyms. Then, a natural question arises: when either word can be used, that is, what is the difference between them, if any?

R.S. Ginzburg defines synonyms as words which are “different in their sound-form, but similar in their denotational meaning or meanings and interchangeable at least in some contexts” [Гинзбург и др. 1979: 58]. He also points out that, even though they have common components in their denotational meanings, these meaning are not identical. On the whole, he states that the differentiating components can be found either in connotational or in denotational meaning [Гинзбург и др. 1979: 56].

When considering criteria of synonymy, G.B. Antrushina mentions several of them:

- in traditional approach, the conceptual criterion is predominant, that is, synonyms are “words of the same category of parts of speech conveying the same concept but differing either in shades of meaning or in stylistic characteristics”;

- in contemporary approach, the semantic criterion is favoured, that is, synonyms are “words with the same denotation or denotative components, but differing in connotations, or connotative components” [Антрушина и др. 2001: 187–188].

Thus, based on the abovementioned definitions, we can say that the synonyms are words with common denotative component or components, having distinct connotative component, being used in different styles of having denotative components which do not coincide for these words.

Considering types of the synonyms, V.V. Vinogradov was first to single out three types of synonyms: ideographic (which are differentiated by their connotative components), stylistic (differentiated by the sphere of usage) and full (completely coincide in their meaning and usage) [quat. after: Шевченко 2004: 52]. However, many scholars later pointed out that full synonyms are rather rare in the language because “they would simply become a useless ballast in the vocabulary” [Антрушина и др. 2001: 190].

I.V. Zytkova states that “synonyms are characterised by either the semantic relations of equivalence or by the semantic relations of proximity” [Зыкова 2008: 43]. In the former case, we are dealing the full, or total, synonyms, which are extremely rare; in the latter case, there are three types of synonyms based on the aforementioned aspects of meaning:

- stylistic synonyms are used in distinct styles and, therefore, cannot be used interchangeably in the same context;
- ideographic synonyms coincide in their connotational and pragmatic (that is, can be used in one and the same context, one and the same style of speech) usage, but have distinct denotative components in their meaning;
- ideographic-stylistic synonyms “differ both in their denotational and/or the pragmatic aspect of meaning” [Зыкова 2008: 43–44].

In this article, we will use the latter classification since it takes into consideration the three aspects of meaning of the word.

The first step in determining the difference in the meaning of synonyms is considering their dictionary definitions [Антрушина и др. 2001: 188].

According to the Collins dictionary, *Islamic* (adj.) is “belonging or relating to Islam”, while *Muslim* (adj.) is defined as “relating to Islam or Muslims” or “of or relating to Islam, its doctrines, culture, etc.” [Collins Dictionary: URL]. Thus, these definitions do not make it clearer when either word is used, though one of them does suggest that the word *Muslim* has an additional component in its meaning (‘relating to Muslims’). The definitions suggested by the Oxford dictionary are roughly the same: “relating to Islam” for the former, and “relating to Muslims or their religion” for the latter [Oxford Dictionary: URL].

Since the definitions have not clarified the issue, it might be useful to

consider the example sentences provided by the dictionaries. The following collocations were found in the Oxford dictionary, the Cambridge dictionary, and the Macmillan dictionary:

Muslim rule, Muslim nations, Muslim doctrine, Muslim women, Muslim community, Muslim girls, Muslim country, Muslim family, Muslim society, Muslim communities, Muslim organisations and mosques, Muslim votes, Muslim veils, Muslim children, Muslim people, Muslim man, Muslim religious group, Muslim religion, Muslim country, Muslim holy man, Muslim religious leader, Muslim doctor, Muslim societies, Muslim home, Muslim system of counting years, Muslim priest, Muslim name, Muslim religious building, Muslim ruler, Muslim year, Muslim custom, Muslim countries, Muslim country/state, Muslim family.

Islamic world, Islamic law, Islamic religious law, Islamic armed group, Islamic religious group, Islamic countries, Islamic culture/beliefs/art/law [Oxford Dictionary: URL; Cambridge Dictionary: URL; Macmillan Dictionary: URL].

As we can see from these examples, whenever the adjective is used to refer to a person, the word *Muslim* is preferred. Moreover, it seems that the same word is used in the meaning ‘proper of, belonging to, or consisting of the Muslims’, while the adjective *Islamic* seems to emphasise the religious nature of the matter (as can be implied from such collocations as *Islamic law* and *Islamic beliefs*). Therefore, we can suppose that such collocations as *Islamic armed group* highlight the fact that the group is based on Islamic beliefs and tries to defend and promote them. Thus, it would be logical to suppose that the adjective *Muslim* points out the “human nature” of the matter, the fact that something is characteristic of the Muslims, while *Islamic* places emphasis on the part of religion in the matter. Then, for example, collocations *Muslim organisation* and *Islamic organisation* would slightly differ in the aspect they highlight.

However, there are still such collocations as *Muslim/Islamic religious group* and *Muslim/Islamic countries* where the words seem to be used interchangeably. In order to try and proof our hypothesis and find out whether in some expressions the words can be considered full synonyms, we will analyse two texts: “The Religions Book. Big Ideas Simply Explained” and “The Routledge Handbook of Modern Turkey”. Using continuous sampling method, we will select all the cases of usage of the adjectives and analyse their meaning in the context where they used to see whether our hypothesis holds true.

In the works in question, the following collocations have been singled out:

Muslim faith, Muslim call to prayer, Muslim congregation, Muslim sphere of influence, Muslim occupation, Muslim political and religious state, Muslim majority, Muslim communities/community (used 18 times), Muslim tradition (3 times), Muslim view, Muslim belief, Muslim life (3 times), Muslim baby, non-Muslim observers, Muslim scientists, Muslim world, Muslim pilgrims, Muslim travel agencies, Muslim society (3 times), Muslim scholars and religious leaders, non-Muslim societies, Muslim state, Muslim theologians, Muslim scholar, Muslim concepts of hope and paradise, Muslim philosopher,

Muslim thought, Muslim scholar, Muslim religious and secular identity, Muslim elite, orthodox Muslim thinking, the world's great Muslim powers, predominantly Muslim areas, Muslim revivalists, Muslim writers, Muslim countries and communities, Muslim revivalists' minds, Muslim activist, Muslim Brotherhood (5 times), Muslim family, Muslim Brotherhood members, Muslim world, Muslim countries (2 times), Muslim scholars, Muslim relations, Muslim integration, Muslim emigration, Muslim Mughal Empire, Muslim rulers, Muslim minstrel, Muslim rights, orthodox Muslim groups, Muslim population, model for Muslim conduct, fundamental Muslim belief, Muslim profession of faith, non-Muslim communities, Muslim majority (3 times).

Islamic studies, Islamic persecution, Islamic Mughal Empire (2), Islamic prayers, Islamic Caliphate, Islamic Empire (5 times), Islamic countries (3 times), first Islamic city-state, Islamic theology, Islamic Golden Age (2 times), Islamic Caliphate, Islamic writing and poetry, Islamic states, Islamic governments, Islamic tradition (4 times), Islamic faith (7 times), Islamic living, Islamic law (9 times), Islamic holy scripture, Islamic education, Islamic art, Islamic arabesque style, Islamic life and practice, Islamic prayer rituals, Islamic scholarship, Islamic lunar calendar, pre-Islamic times, Islamic history, Islamic territories, Islamic scholar/scholars (6 times), Islamic thought (2 times), Islamic judges, Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic principles and values, Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic legal thought, Islamic theology, Islamic theology, Islamic world (3 times), Islamic theology, Islamic expansion, Islamic philosopher, Islamic theology, Islamic orthodoxy, Islamic sciences, Islamic thinking, Islamic terminology, Islamic leaders, Islamic revivalism, Islamic thinkers and reformers, Islamic community, Islamic principles, Islamic revivalism, un-Islamic forces, Islamic systems, Islamic topics, Islamic ideology, Islamic governance, Islamic way of life, un-Islamic forces, un-Islamic pressures, Islamic revivalists, Islamic Ottoman Empire, Islamic authorities, Islamic rule, exemplary Islamic conduct, core Islamic beliefs, Islamic theology, Islamic calendar, Islamic orders, Islamic groups, Islamic content of the education, pro-Islamic policy, traditional Islamic art forms, Islamic jurists, pre- and post-Islamic heritage, Islamic art (2 times), pre-Islamic artistic traditions, Islamic monuments, Islamic aspect of the Anatolian heritage, Islamic symbology, Islamic life of Anatolia, Islamic practice, Islamic revolution, Turkish-Islamic synthesis, Islamic society.

On the whole, we can conclude that the adjective *Muslim* is generally used in the meaning 'consisting of/populated by Muslims, for Muslims, proper of Muslims or done by them'. The adjective *Islamic* conveys the meaning 'for Islam, characteristic of Islam, influenced by it or based on its doctrine'. So, it becomes clear that the difference is in the aspect emphasised by the words. The former highlights the significance of people, while the latter places emphasis on the part of the religion.

Still, when both aspects are believed to be of equal importance, the terms are used interchangeably (as is the case with *Muslim/Islamic society*, *Muslim/Islamic world* and *Muslim/Islamic Mughal Empire*). In this case, they can be considered full synonyms. Still, it should be remembered that in other occasions there is a certain difference in their meanings. For instance, *Islamic life/living* means life in accordance with the laws of Islam, while *Muslim life* means life of a Muslim. It is also worth pointing out the difference between such collocations *Muslim scholar* and *Islamic scholar*. While the former means

‘a follower of Islam which is engaged in studies of a particular subject’, the latter means ‘one who is engaged in Islamic studies, that is, study of the religion of Islam’. In this context the adjectives are by no means interchangeable.

Thus, the two words are used in the writings of the same style, do not demonstrate any difference in their connotations but indeed differ in the denotational components, being, therefore, ideographic synonyms. Even though in some context one word can substitute the other, in order not to breed confusion, it is worth remembering that there is a difference between them.

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The article deals with the phenomenon of synonymy and two particular examples of synonyms, adjectives *Muslim* and *Islamic*. It gives an overview of the term “synonym” and of several existing classifications of synonyms. It proceeds with the analysis of two synonymous adjectives *Muslim* and *Islamic*, establishing the difference in their meanings through the analysis of dictionary and information and their usage in the context.

Keywords: synonyms; ideographic synonyms; stylistic synonyms; ideographic-stylistic synonyms; “Islamic”, “Muslim”.