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## All About Arabic

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Some day, you might hear the words "Get this translated into Arabic." You look down at the English version of the document that has just been thrown onto your desk, a document that, by the way, you helped create, and say nothing. You gaze fondly at the way English words travel logically from left to right across the page. You celebrate the familiar elements—the soaring capital letters and the playful lower case of each carefully selected word. You glory in the even staccato of the letters and words as they trip across the page. And then, joy turns to fear.

If you're like most Americans, your exposure to Arabic and Arabs has been limited to the bobbing signs of a group of crazed protesters on the nightly news and that 'Introduction to World Cultures' class you took your sophomore year at the university. Unfortunately for you, Middle Eastern culture was squeezed into about two weeks, the class was at 0800 and the professor spoke in a monotone that could put even an espresso drinking, chain-smoking hyperactive to sleep.

But there is really no reason to fear, for Arabic is a logical and beautiful language. Knowing a few facts about the language can help reduce your anxiety and help you get through the process more comfortably.

First, feel great that the translation of your document into Arabic will help your company reach over 215 million people around the world who use Arabic as a first language. In fact, Arabic was recognized formally as a major world language in 1973, when it was made the sixth official language of the United Nations (the others are English, French, Spanish, Russian, and Chinese). Arabic is the official language of Saudi Arabia, Yemen, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. Because it is the language of the Moslem faith and of the sacred Qur'an (or Koran, the holy book of Islam), there are many millions of Moslems in other countries that have some knowledge of Arabic too.

Arabic is not the language of choice for all people of the Middle East, however. If you plan to do business in Iran, for example, you would be better served to translate your document into Persian Farsi. Turkey will require Turkish, of course, and Israel should get Hebrew.

Arabic is a Semitic language closely related to several languages such as Hebrew, Syriac, Amharic, and Aramaic, the language Christ spoke. It kept to the Arabian

