

224977 - Ruling on making up educational dialogues

the question

I work as a Spanish teacher on the Internet, teaching some students over Skype. Sometimes I need to explain some things, so I explain them by making up a dialogue, which I then read to them. Is this regarded as coming under the heading of prohibited acting? These dialogues are read by one person, either the teacher or the student, and there is no type of acting at all.

Detailed answer

Regarding the making up and preparation of educational dialogues, which are then read by the teacher or student, the scholars have issued fatwas stating that it is permissible, because it serves an educational purpose.

Ibn Hajar al-Haytami ash-Shafa'i (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

In the authentic hadith, it says: "Narrate from the Children of Israel, with no reservations." According to another report: "... because there were stories of wonders among them." This indicates that it is permissible to listen to those stories of wonders for the purpose of entertainment, not for the purpose of proving a point. End quote.

From this it may be understood that it is permissible to listen to wonderful and strange stories so long as you are not certain that it is a lie told merely for the purpose of entertainment, or even when you are certain that it is a lie, but the aim is to give a parable, exhort and teach things like courage, whether the dialogue is on the lips of humans or animals. (*Tuhfat al-Muhtaj bi Sharh al-Minhaj*, 9/398).

Shaykh Muhammad Rashid Rida (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

These stories that are acted out are like what our early scholars wrote of entertaining stories which are read in religious schools and other schools, such as *Maqamat al-Badi'* and *Maqamat al-Hariri*... He – that is, al-Hariri – said that he did not know of any scholar of the ummah until

his time who forbade such stories in which the characters are animals, such as Kalilah wa Dimnah and so on, because the purpose of them is to exhort and teach some wisdom, and the events in the story are not necessarily accurate. We have not heard of any scholar after his time who forbade reading his Maqamat. (*Fatawa al-Imam Muhammad Rashid Rida*, 3/1091-1092).

But it is stipulated that such dialogues must meet two conditions:

The first condition is that they should be free of any prohibited content.

The second condition is that the dialogue should not be attributed to a real person, because in that case it constitutes lying and deceit.

Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

If a person gives a parable in a story, such as saying: I tell you the parable of a man who said such and such, or did such and such, and such and such happened, and the outcome was such and such – there is nothing wrong with that. Some scholars even said regarding the words of Allah, may He be Exalted (interpretation of the meaning): {And present to them an example of two men: We granted to one of them two gardens of grapevines, and We bordered them with palm trees and placed between them [fields of] crops} [al-Kahf 18:32]: This did not really happen. And in the Quran it says: {Allah presents an example: a slave owned by quarreling partners and another belonging exclusively to one man - are they equal in comparison? Praise be to Allah! But most of them do not know} [az-Zumar 39:29]. So if a man tells a story and does not attribute it to a specific person, rather he tells it as if he is assuming that something happened and that the consequences were such and such, there is nothing wrong with that.

But if he attributes it to a real person, but it is not true, then this is prohibited because it is lying. The same applies if the purpose behind it is to make people laugh, because it was narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that he said: “Woe to the one who speaks and tells lies to make people laugh; woe to him, then woe to him.” (*Liqa’ al-Bab al-Maftuh*, 77/23).

Educational dialogues do not come under the heading of acting, because the essence of acting is playing the role of some character, and acting out scenarios connected to him.

That is not the purpose of educational dialogues; rather the only purpose of these dialogues is to teach pronunciation and how to express oneself properly.

And Allah knows best.