

Translation Loss in Translation of the Glorious Quran, with Special Reference to Verbal Similarity

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Abstract

The process of translation is highly delicate and extremely difficult task to undertake when it deals with the translation of the Quran which, of course, transforms the Quran as the WORD of Allah into Arabic to the speech of a human being in another language. Translations of the Quran into all languages are indispensable to communicate the Divine message to Non-Arabic Muslims as well as Non-Muslims around the world. Nowadays, numerous translations are available for non-Arabic speakers. Many English translations have been widely criticized for their inability to capture the intended meaning of Quranic words and expressions. These translations proved the inimitability of the Qur'anic discourse that employs extensive and complex syntactical and rhetoric features and that linguistically the principle of absolute untranslatability applies to the Quran. Consequently, partial or complete grammatical and semantic losses are encountered in translation due to the lack of some of these features in English. These translation losses is particularly apparent in translation of verbal similarity in the Quranic verses, as an abundant phenomenon in the Quran, in the form of over-, under-, or mistranslation of a source text (ST). This study attempted to investigate these translation losses in the translation of the Holy Quran focusing on verbal similarity as an impressive way of expression and a rhetorical figure widely used in the Quran. Qualitative descriptive approach was adopted to analyze the data extracted from among the best known translations of the Quran, (Abdallah Yusuf Ali 1973) *Translation of the Meaning of the Glorious Quran into English* and Pickthall's (1930) *The Meaning of the Holy Quran* and Arthur John Arberry (1905-1969) *The Koran Interpreted*. Their works are adopted for a comparative review and analytic process. This data consists of selected Quranic texts including verbal similarities from the entire Quran. The study revealed losses occurring in translating grammatical aspects such as shifting in the sentence order, pronoun reference switching, and in translating rhetoric features such as metonymic and homonymic words. These frequent grammatical losses mostly resulted in partial semantic loss of the intended meaning of similarities due to linguistic or cultural complexity.

Keywords

Translation loss, Quran Syntax and Rhetoric, Verbal Similarity

Introduction

The Quran is the perfect Word of Allah (SWT) revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in a very special and unique mode of expression in its original Arabic language. The Arabic of the Qur'an is a very rich language, and many of its words have numerous shades of meaning that sometimes cannot be easily found in other languages, including English. The Quran has some very unique characteristics that its translation is bound to lose. Verbal similarity in Quranic verses is one of the frequent rhetoric characteristics that thought by the nonbelievers who lack literary knowledge of the Quranic text and ignore the eloquence of the Quran, to be pointless repetitions that cause boredom and should be avoided in expression of its meanings. As English is actually the dominant language of the world today and so many people of the world, Muslims and non-Muslims, are learning the message of the Qur'an through its English translations, an urgent need to review and assess the current English translations in order to identify the features and differences of these translations as well as to suggest ideas to contribute to improve the future translations of the Quran became more pressing. However, no translation would be the original word of Allah and error-free translation is unavoidable due to linguistic and cultural factors.

The researcher intends to prove, through this study, that each one of these similarities points out to other purposes and different rhetoric functions according to their specific place and linguistic style. She is absolutely convinced that the more words are repeated; the more they serve clarity and eloquence. Therefore, providing more English studies on verbal similarity in the Quran, focusing on the assessment of Quran translations, might contribute to communicate the true message of this syntactical and rhetoric feature of the Glorious Book, the Quran.

Purpose of the Study

The chief interest of this research is to respond to the Divine stimulation to ponder over the verses of the Quran. For this reason, the researcher determined to devote herself to study the verbal difference in similar verses because it reflects the

great eloquence of the Quran as one of its miracles and there is no enough literature available in English on this important aspect of the Quran. The researcher feels this utmost importance and urgent need of contemplating the Quran not only for worship, but, because it is the greatest source of all aspects of knowledge such as social sciences, psychology, economics, anthropology, medicine, jurisprudence, etc.

Translation of the Quran, widely used by non - Arabic speaking populations worldwide, has been a major positive contribution to all humankind because it is the only way that helps to understand the message of the Quran. As English is actually the dominant language of the world today and so many people of the world, Muslims and non-Muslims, are learning the message of the Qur'an through its English translations, an urgent need to review and assess the current English translations in order to identify the lexical and morphological problems encountered in his translation that lead to semantic loss of translation of this Holy text, the Quran. However, no translation would be the original word of Allah and error-free translation is unavoidable. Furthermore, the study aims to investigate the recurrent phenomenon of verbal similarity as a linguistic miracle being used as stylistic, rhetoric and communicative device conveying different meanings that serve the Quranic text. Moreover, it tends to prove that the similarity of words or phrases and even of structures that appears in the Qur'an is not worthless.

Research Objectives

This study aims to investigate the translation loss in translating verbal similarity in Quranic selected verses. It tends to identify the types of these losses and how they affect the intended meaning. The study specifically aims to:

1. Prove that there is no repetition in the Quran and that every verse that is similar to another is unique and introduces something new that is adequate to the theme of its context and may not be replaced with another one.
2. To investigate the "translation loss" of different degrees as result of not only linguistic, but also cultural factors whenever translation of the Quran is attempted.

3. To highlight the importance of the "Verbal Similarity in the Quran" in the context that there is an academic gap and a lack of enough English literature on this subject.
4. To respond to the atheists and other groups that deviated from Islam and who were offensive to the Qur'an assuming that it contains worthless repetitions.

Hypotheses of the Research

- The Quran, the Divine WORD of Allah, is full of miracles that stand as a challenge for Arabs and non-Arabs to imitate its language. The Arabic of the Quran is a very rich language wherein many of its words have numerous shades of meaning that cannot be easily found in other languages including English. Consequently, there will be a "translation loss" of different degrees as result of not only linguistic, morphological but also cultural factors.
- Verbal similarity, as a recurrent phenomenon in the Quran, is one of these miracles. It doesn't cause boredom as some nonbelievers assume, but a pleasing delight. Furthermore, it's a favorable textual issue that leads to much clarity and effectiveness and it is not merely a semantic redundancy.

Significance of the Research

The significance of the present research emerges from the significance of the area of the study, the Glorious Quran. It also aims to contemplate the similarities to highlight the grammatical and rhetorical structure of the Quran in order to illustrate the linguistic structures and characteristics of the perfect Quranic form to show the frequency of eloquence of the Qur'an. Besides, owing to the different ways of expression and tools available to every language, a problematic issue arises when a translation is attempted of repeated words in a target text. So, this research aims to tackle the issue of translation loss encountered in Quran translation investigating selected Quranic verses including similarities.

One of the key interests of this research, as well, is to contribute to solving the shortage problem of English literature available for the verbal similarity in the Quran. Furthermore, the study encourages learning Arabic, the language of the Quran, to read and understand the Quran in its original language to have a perfect and full awareness of its Divine message.

Research Methodology

The present research might be termed as "qualitative research" that adopts descriptive comparative approach. As it relates to the Qur'an, it focuses on two aspects: linguistic interpretation (lexical, grammar and rhetoric) that contrasts and compares similarities in the Quran and contextual dimension that analyze the similar Qur'anic verses. This study extracts five samples of similar verses in the Qur'an based on a specific themes syntactical and rhetoric.(eg. Shifting in word order in the sentence, pronoun reference switching, verb gender and rhetoric features as metonymic and homonymic words) then analyzes the similarities in these verses depending on different sources: Quran exegeses and lexicographical sources for a better understanding of the material presented.

Three from among the best known translations of the Quran, (Abdallah Yusuf Ali 1973) *Translation of the Meaning of the Glorious Quran into English* and Pickthall's (1930) *The Meaning of the Holy Quran* and Arthur John Arberry (1905-1969)*Towards Understanding the Ever-Glorious Quran* (2005) will be adopted for a comparative review and analytic process. They will be studied from the following points of view:

- Effective rendering of recurrence of similarities into the target language
- Faithfulness to the meaning
- Fluency and clarity

Relevant literature

The fact that the Qur'an is in Arabic is an integral part of the definition of the Qur'an. According to many prominent scholars of the Qur'an, such as Al-Zarqani, : "The Qur'an is the Arabic Speech (*kalam*) of Allah, which was revealed to Muhammad (PBUH) in wording and meaning, and that has been preserved and reached us by continuous transmissions, and is a challenge to humankind to produce something similar to it". This revelation from Allah to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is referred to in the Quran itself by the name Quran (Reading/Recitation) this name has been mentioned 23 times in the Quran as, for instance, in Sura *Al-Israa* (The Night Journey/ Children of Israel):

إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلّٰتِي هِيَ أَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَبِيرًا (9)

"Verily this Qur'an does guide to that which is most right. " (17:9)

In addition, Qur'an is the source of numerous branches of Arabic literature and the Qur'anic style has been and remains the standard of excellence in literary Arabic and the crucial reference for many linguistic issues. Its language became the yardstick to measure every literary attempt. Qur'an is so great that it is considered to be the ultimate authority and reference work for the Arabic rhetoric, grammar, and syntax, even by non-Muslim Arabs. The construction of the Qur'anic patterns shows an effective and impressive use of words, presence of complete harmonious ideas and thoughts.

Verbal similarity in the Quran represents one of its linguistic miracles due to the variety of its linguistic structures and context consistency. It is the repetition of Quranic verses in terms of letters, words, sentences, verses and stories). Scholars and commentators of the Quran made great efforts to explain the purposes of verbal similarity in the Quran and expound its importance as one of Arabic stylistic features that are widely used, as an element of good style and a sort of eloquence, for emphasizing and impressing intended meanings on the mind. Verbal similarity has many functions, such as making the meaning stronger, making the sentence longer, showing the importance of the issue and direct the intention, that can be seen in Al-Rahman chapter when God says:

{فَبِأَيِّ آلَّا رَبُّكُمَا تَكَذِّبَانِ}

{Then which of the favors of your Lord will Ye deny?}

This verse was repeated 31 times, because each time God mentions His favors, in a new meaning according to the context, to direct the intention towards its importance. In this Sura, Allah (SWT) talks about the core problem of the non-believers, which is ingratitude. Allah (SWT) keeps questioning their ingratitude and keeps asking one question over and over again.

In The Genesis and Development of “Science of Similarities” in The Qur'an: A Reflection of the Role of al-Ghernaty and Fadhl Al-Samarra'I, Fadhl Al-Samarra'I

says: "The context is the main tool to discover the correct meanings of similar Quranic verses because it is the medium which directs the intended meaning of similar verses, ".

In the third Sura of the Quran, 'Al- Imran' (Imran family), Allah the Almighty, says that the Qur'an contains two kinds of verses (ayaat), both of which are fundamental components of the book, and both of which must be accepted:

قال الله تعالى : { هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُّحَكَّمَاتٌ نَّأُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ ۖ فَمَا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ رَبِيعٌ فَيَتَبَعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ ۖ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلُهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ۖ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ أَمَّا بِهِ كُلُّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا ۖ وَمَا يَذَكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ } (3:7)

{He it is who has sent down to thee the Book: in it are **verses basic or fundamental (of established meaning)**; they are the foundation of the book: others are **allegorical**, that is those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part thereof that is allegorical, seeking discord and searching for its hidden meanings, but no one knows its hidden meanings except God and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in the book; the whole of it is from our Lord;" and none will grasp the message except men of understanding} (Al-Qur'an 3:7)

The verse mentioned above (3:7) states that the Qur'an contains two types of verses. First type: Muhkam of Quranic Verses (Un-ambiguous): Imam Qurtubi (died 671AH) said "The Muhkam is the (phrase or word) the interpretation of which is known, its meaning understood and its exposition is clear." (I'anat Al-Huffadh.174) Here Muhkamat are described as something with only one dimension, sufficient in meaning and requiring no further explanation. Such as the saying of Allah the Almighty (SWT):

{الَّذِينَ يَكْلُمُونَ الرَّبَّا لَا يُقْوِمُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يُقْوِمُ الَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ مِنَ الْمَسِّ ۚ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا الْبَيْعُ مِثْلُ الرَّبَّا ۖ وَأَحَلَّ اللَّهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحْرَمَ الرَّبَّا ۖ فَمَنْ جَاءَهُ مَوْعِظَةً مِنْ رَبِّهِ فَأَنْتَهَى فَلَهُ مَا سَلَفَ وَأَمْرُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ ۖ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ} (2:275)

{Those who devour usury will not stand except as stand one whom the Evil one by his touch Hath driven to madness. That is because they say: "Trade is like usury," but

Allah hath permitted trade and forbidden usury. Those who after receiving direction from their Lord, desist, shall be pardoned for the past; their case is for Allah (to judge); but those who repeat (The offence) are companions of the Fire: They will abide therein (for ever).} (2:275)

Second type is Mutashabih of Quranic Verses (Ambiguous): It is the opposite of Muhkam. It means resemblance; one thing resembles another thing so much so that one is mistaken for the other. It is the text which is open to more than one meaning; i.e. a number of confusing meanings. They are repeated verses with some difference of words or phrases in terms ellipsis, gender, singular and plural form, pronoun reference and some other rhetoric functions such as synonymy, polysemy, homonymy, metonymy and others.

So, in the Quran, Mutashabihat are described as something with more than one dimension and requiring further explanation. This second type that deals with similar Quranic verses of meanings consistency is the core interest of the present research to acquire deep knowledge about it.

{ إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُّتَشَابِهًا مَثَانِيٍ تَقْشِعُ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الْذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلَيْنُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ هُدْيٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ }

“Allah has sent down the best statements, a Book that is mutashaabih, oft recited..”

(39:23)

The meaning of Mutashaabih in this verse is that the verses of the Qur'an resemble and complete one another in their eloquence and beauty, and in their beliefs and laws, so that there are no contradictions or differences in them.

Translation Loss of Similarities

Translations of the Quran into all languages are indispensable to communicate the Divine message to Non-Arabic Muslims as well as Non-Muslims around the world. Robert Johnson defines translation as: "The closest natural equivalent of the source language message in the target language, first in terms of meaning and second

in terms of style. Translation, after all, is communication between nations and bridging the linguistic and cultural gaps among them." One of the difficulties in translating the Holy Qur'an is that some lexicons are Qur'an specific, and they do not have equivalents in English. Thus, when an attempt is made to translate such words into English, its original meaning could be lost. Newmark (1988) has suggested communicative and semantic approaches to translation. By definition communicative translation attempts to produce for its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained by the readers of the source language. Semantic translation, on the other hand, attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original - as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the target language will allow. Semantic translation is accurate, but may not communicate well, whereas communicative translation communicates well, but may not be very precise. Another thing is that there are some deviations and under-translations as a result of not referring to the interpretations of the Holy Qur'an, lack of understanding of Arabic linguistics, and inability to decode and convey the nuances of polysemous words (Abdul-Raof, 2004). Arberry (1982) concedes the relevancy of the orthodox Muslim view that the Qur'an is untranslatable; the rhetoric, he believes, and rhythm of the Qur'an are so characteristic, so powerful, and so highly emotive, that any version whatsoever is bound to be but a poor copy of the glittering splendor of the original.

Results and Discussion

To discuss this issue, selected examples of similarities in particular verses in a number of Suras in the Glorious Quran are analyzed in this research. The analysis focuses on studying the meaning(s) of similar words and clarifying their different syntactical and rhetoric functions by referring to the exegeses and how they are translated by Ali, Pickthall and Arberry. The lexical items analyzed are underlined and equivalents are highlighted in bold and underlined and the three translations are compared against the meaning of the lexical items in the source Arabic language text. The translations are then assessed in terms of accuracy by referring to renowned exegetes: Ibn Katheer, Al-Tabari, Al-Suytui and Al-Ghernaty and others.

In the analysis process, the researcher tries to answer these questions:

1. To what extent have each of the three translators succeeded in capturing the rhetorical meaning and functions of similarities in the selected verses?

- Do repeated words or phrases lose some of the significance and poetic eloquence when translated into English?

Shifting of Word Order in Sentences

Sentences in Arabic language are of two types verbal and nominal. *Verbal sentence* starts with a verb and then is followed by explicit doer. Then the doer is followed by direct or indirect object. If the direct object is an attached pronoun then it comes after the explicit doer. In nominal sentences, the subject is followed by the predicate. The predicate is one of three types a word/word construction (singular), a genitive noun construction or a sentence, verbal or nominal.

Shifting of word order in sentences is very frequent in the Quranic Arabic and it's an important aspect of Quran inimitability. It refers to "bringing something forward and delaying the rest" with respect to sentence structure. In other words, there is an "abnormal" sentence structure for specific grammatical reason. It may be for different functions as emphasis, exclusivity, highlighting order, quantity.....etc. Mostly, this specific reason for shifting word order has to do with the overall context of the respective passage or section of the Quranic verses. For example, in a conventional verbal sentence, the direct object is mentioned after the verb. If it is mentioned before the verb intentionally, then something important is going on grammatically with direct object that is being brought forward (i.e. it is not a mistake)

To investigate the extent to which the translators succeed in transferring reference-switching in the Qur'an to the target language, an excellent example that highlights this shifting is the following verse (5) of Surah Al-Fatiha (The Opening) where the shift is done from the 3rd person to the 2nd person:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ (5)

Transliteration

('Iyāka Na`budu Wa 'Iyāka Nasta`īnu)

Translations

(*Thee do we worship, and Thee aid we seek.*) **Ali**

(*Thee (**alone**) we worship; Thee (**alone**) we ask for help.*) (1:5) **Pickthall**

(*Thee **only** we serve; to Thee **alone** we pray for succor.*) **Arberry**

Zamakhsharī explains (and he is repeatedly quoted) that when the servant talks about Allah (SWT) Who is worthy of praise, and the great qualities mentioned, his

mind thinks of this great Creator who is worthy of praise, of full submission to Him, and whose help should be sought in important matters. The servant then addresses this distinguished Lord, 'You alone do we worship': after the introduction which demonstrates that He is truly worthy of being worshipped, direct address is more indicative of the fact that He is being worshipped for that distinction. One may add that the shift to 2nd person is also important here because the servant is about to ask Him to: 'Guide us to the straight path. . .'.(verse 6th of Al-Fatiha) The 3rd person was suitable at the beginning to name the Lord Who should be praised and served at the beginning of the book of **tawhīd**. No pronoun of any kind would have served here, and as was said, in Islam praise most truly belongs to that particular name – Allah. Honoring by addressing is observed in such examples as those speaking of the blessed in Paradise: 'Happy in what their Lord has given them . . "Eat and drink in health as a reward for what you need to do "' (Q. 52:18 – 19). The address here is announced without an introduction such as 'it will be said to them' – a feature of Qur'ānic style known as **hadhf al-qawl**(deletion of speech) which gives a statement immediate and dramatic effect.

Here in this verse the direct object is placed **before** its respective verb to function in **exclusivity**. In fact, if we did not have this occurring there would be a drastic change in the meaning of the Ayah. It would instead be "we worship you and seek help from you". This would not hold the meaning of "you alone", and would even contradict the principles of Tawhid (monotheism), since most of those who practice 'Shirk' (polytheism) also worship and ask Allah, but not exclusively. Bringing some words forward can also be done for other grammatical purposes, not only for exclusivity or emphasis

The translation of Arberry and Pickthall succeeded to deliver the uniqueness of Allah in their translation (alone/ only) while Ali's translation failed to deliver this meaning and did not specify the exclusivity of worshipping Allah alone (monotheism).

Pronoun Reference Switching (Iltifat)

Another beautiful aspect of the Quran is its switching of narrative tenses termed [Iltifat] which means 'turning'. Sometimes there can be a sudden shift by addressing reference away from a targeted audience for a specific reason (shift in topic, admonition, discussion of their sins and wrongdoings, or mistakes, etc.). This shift of

pronouns is mostly between 1st, 2nd and 3rd person, which is the most common and is usually divided into six kinds. Change in number, between singular, dual and plural, change in addressee, change in the tense of the verb, change in case marker and using noun in place of pronoun. This shift in narrative is a rhetorical tool that further enhances and empowers its message. At this point, translators of the Quran should recognize where these narrative shifting occur and choose the suitable strategies to render their intended meanings.

To investigate the extent to which the translators succeed in transferring reference-switching in the Qur'an to the target language, an excellent example that highlights this shifting is from Sura Al-Baqara (The Cow), verse (196) where the shift is done from the 2nd person (plural) to 3rd person (singular) to 2nd person (plural) to 3rd person (plural).

قال تعالى ... "فَإِذَا أَمِنْتُمْ فَمَنْ تَمَّنَعَ بِالْعُمْرَةِ إِلَى الْحَجَّ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامٌ
ثَلَاثَةُ أَيَّامٍ فِي الْحَجَّ وَسَبْعَةٌ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ تِلْكَ عَشَرَةُ كَامِلَةٌ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ أَهْلُهُ حَاضِرٍ يَالْمَسْجِدِ
الْحَرَامِ وَأَنْقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ. (196)

Transliteration

(fa izaaa amintum faman tamatta'a bil 'Umrati ilal Hajji famastaisara minal hady; famal lam yajid fa Siyaamu salaasti ayyaamin fil Hajji wa sab'atin izaa raja'tum; tilka 'asharatun kaamilah; zaalika limal lam yakun ahluhoo haadiril Masjidil Haraam; wattaqul laaha wa'lamoo annal laaha shadeedul'iqaab)

Gloss: and when **you**(plural) are in peaceful condition if anyone/wishes/to continue the *Umra* to the *Hajj* (pilgrimage) **he** must make an offering such as he can afford but if he cannot afford it he should fast three days during the hajj and seven when **you** (plural) have returned (home) making ten days in all/ this is/for those /whose household is not in (the precincts of) the Sacred Mosque/And fear (plural)Allah/and know(plural) /that Allah is strict in punishment/

Translations:

(...And when **you are** in peaceful conditions (again), if **any one wishes** to continue the 'umra on to the hajj, **He** must make an offering, such as **he** can afford, but if **he** cannot afford it, **He** should fast three days during the hajj and seven days on **his return**, Making ten days in all. This is for those whose household is not in (the

precincts of) the Sacred Mosque. And fear Allah, and know that Allah is strict in punishment.) (2:196) **Ali**

(....And if **ye** are in safety, then whosoever contenteth **himself** with the Visit for the Pilgrimage (shall give) such gifts as can be had with ease. And whosoever cannot find (such gifts, then a fast of three days while on the pilgrimage, and of seven when **ye** have returned; that is, ten in all. That is for **him** whose folk are not present at the Inviolable Place of Worship. Observe **your** duty to Allah, and know that Allah is severe in punishment. (2:196) **Pickthall**

(...When **you** are secure, then whosoever enjoys the Visitation until the Pilgrimage, let **his** offering be such as may be feasible; or if **he** finds none, then a fast of three days in the Pilgrimage, and of seven when **you** return, that is ten completely; that is for **him** whose family are not present at the Holy Mosque. And fear God, and know that God is terrible in retribution)(2:196) **Arberry**

In this verse *Iltifāt* occurs in the switch from the third person singular pronoun as in “فَمَنْ تَمْتَعُ بِالْعُمْرَةِ” “if **anyone wishes** to continue the *Umra*”, into the second person plural pronoun as in “إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ” “on **his** return” (Abū-Sucūd, 1544) & Al-Alūsi (1853). This reference switching into addressing contradicts the absence form in plurality and person (Al-Alūsī, 1270 H/1853).

Translation Assessment

In Ali's translation, the switch is not indicated. He makes a pronoun consistency and translates the plural that is obvious in the original text as singular. In the second part of the switch, the second person plural pronoun (you) in “إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ” “on your (plural) return” is changed into the third person singular pronoun “on **his** return” which can be translated as “إِذَا رَجَعَ”. Ali has translated the verse freely. It is obvious that right from the middle of the verse, the third person pronoun is used starting from “if **any one wishes** to continue; **He** must make; and if **he** cannot afford it; **He** should fast. The switch occurs after this part starting with “إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ” (when you (plural) have returned) that is transparent as existing in the second person plural pronoun. However, in Ali's translation, it is used in the third person singular as “on his return” which can be translated as “إِذَا رَجَعَ ” Ali makes a pronoun consistency, unaware of the loss of

meaning created. Allah, the Almighty has shifted from the absence form to addressing all the pilgrims. This switch does not occur randomly but with an intention and a purpose. However, the translator does not point out this switch. In comparison with other verses where reference switching is translated semantically by Pickthall and Arberry, target readers notice a switch in pronoun and may inquire about such a switch. However, in this verse neither form nor content of reference switching is conveyed in Ali's **free** translation which failed to deliver the intended Divine message precisely as far as reference switching is concerned.

The researcher notices that the reason other than using free translation in this case, is due to the differences in Arabic and English grammars and structures, so that it is quite natural that these differences pose great difficulties and challenges for a translator especially in Quranic discourse. Reference switching is a common style in Arabic but not in the English language. Ali focuses on the content rather than on the form. He focuses primarily on the conformity of the target text content in attempting to make pronoun consistency in the target text, perhaps thinking that correct pronoun reference can be achieved by ensuring agreement between pronoun and its antecedent in terms of person, number and gender. However, this does not work in the instances of reference switching where one pronoun suddenly switches into another for a function and a particular significance. So the researcher discovers that through free translation adopted by Yusuf Ali, the switch that is crystal clear in the source text is not reflected to the target readers in form nor in function while it is retained through semantic translation adopted by Pickthall and Arberry.

Loss of Verb Gender

Verb is defined as an action connected to a specific time period (past, present or future). In the Quran, there are occasions where the gender of a verb can be switched for rhetorical effect. This can occur when the Doer is structurally feminine. For example, we have the Verbal Sentence [حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الْضَّلَالَةُ], which means, “Error was decreed upon them”. Here, there is no anomaly or discrepancy in this Verbal Sentence, which is found in Sūrah Nahl. However, we find the following in Sūrah An‘ām:

(حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْضَّلَالَةُ).

Here we expect the verb to be [حَقَّتْ] but it is not.

(وَأَقْدَمْ بَعْثَنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنَّ اعْنُدُوا أَللَّهَ وَاجْتَنَبُوا أَطْرَافَهُ مَنْ مِنْهُمْ مَنْ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ الظَّلَالُ فَسَيِّرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ) (16:36)

Transliteration

Wa laqad ba'asnaa fee kulli ummatir Rasoolan ani'budul laaha wajtanibut Taaghoota faminhum man hadal laahu wa minhum man haqqat 'alaihid dalaalah; faseeroo fil ardi fanzuroo kaifa kaana 'aaqibatul mukazzibeen

Translations

Ali: (For We assuredly sent amongst every People an apostle, (with the Command), "Serve Allah, and eschew Evil": of the People were some whom Allah guided, and some on whom error became inevitably (established). So travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who denied (the Truth.)) (16:36)

Pickthall: And verily We have raised in every nation a messenger, (proclaiming): Serve Allah and shun false gods. Then some of them (there were) whom Allah guided, and some of them (there were) upon whom error had just hold. Do but travel in the land and see the nature of the consequence for the deniers! (16:36)

Arberry: (Indeed, We sent forth among every nation a Messenger,; saying: 'Serve you God, and eschew idols.' Then some of them God guided, and some were justly disposed to error. So journey in the land, and behold how was the end of them that cried lies.)

(فَرِيقًا هَدَى وَفَرِيقًا حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الظَّلَالُ إِنَّهُمْ أَنْجَدُوا الشَّيَاطِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ أَللَّهِ وَيَحْسِبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ) (30)

Transliteration

Fareeqan hadaa wa fareeqan haqqa 'alaihimud dalaalah; innahumut takhazush Shayaateena awliyaaa'a min doonil laahi wa yahsabonna annnahum muhtadoon

Translations

Ali: (Some He hath guided: Others have (by their choice) deserved the loss of their way; in that they took the evil ones, in preference to Allah, for their friends and protectors, and think that they receive guidance.)(7:30)

Pickthall: (*A party hath He led a right, while error hath just hold over (another) party, for lo! they choose the devils for protecting supporters instead of Allah and deem that they are rightly guided*) (7:30)

Arberry: (*a part He guided, and a part justly disposed to error -- they have taken Satans for friends instead of God, and think them guided*)

Gloss: In Arabic, it is allowed to change the gender of the verb for rhetorical reasons. For example, changing the gender to male can denote a meaning of harshness or severity, while keeping the female verb can impart softness or gentleness (As Samurai). Furthermore, the changing of gender can be also related to the number or quantity of the Doer. In this implication, the male verb denotes a small number while the female verb denotes a large number or quantity. In Example (1) from Surah Al-Nahl (The Bee) (16:36), the reason for the verb retaining or changing its gender relates to the harshness of the tone. In the ayah of Surah Al-An'am (The Cattle) (7:30), the tone regarding those for whom error was deserved is harsher contextually. Thus, the female verb is appropriate while in the other ayah (16:36), the tone is softer and is male.

These nuances of meaning embedded in both verses can never be rendered into English. Consequently, all translators opted for the literal translation. Hence, this resulted in partial loss of syntactic (verb gender) and rhetoric features these similar verses have.

Metonymy

Arab rhetoricians define metonymy as a word used to refer to a meaning other than its literal meaning. Such substitution is conditioned by the existence of a contiguity relation between the literal and figurative meanings and the existence of an implicit or explicit clue which indicates that the literal meaning is not intended.

According to Newmark (1988: 125), metonymy occurs "where the name of an object is transferred to take the place of something else with which it is associated".

Metonymy in the Holy Quran is not a useless substitution because it usually serves a purpose.

Consider this example from Sura al-Baqarah (2:194).

(الشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْحُرُمَاتُ قِصَاصٌ فَمَنْ اعْتَدَى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا
اعْتَدَى عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ) (194)

(One who **attacketh you, attack him**) (p. 31).

Transliteration

Ash Shahrul Haraamu bish Shahril Haraami wal hurumaatu qisaas; famani'tadaa 'alaikum fa'tadoo 'alaihi bimithli ma'tadaa 'alaikum; wattaql laaha wa'lamooo annal laaha ma'al muttaqeen. (2:194)

Translations:

- (*The prohibited month for the prohibited month, - and so for all things prohibited, - there is the law of equality. If then any **one transgresses the prohibition** against you, Transgress ye likewise against him. But fear Allah, and know that Allah is with those who restrain themselves.*) (2:194) **Ali**
- (*The forbidden month for the forbidden month, and forbidden things in retaliation. And **one who attacketh you, attack him in like manner as he attacked you. Observe your duty to Allah, and know that Allah is with those who ward off (evil).*** (2:194)

Pickthall.

(*The holy month for the holy month; holy things demand retaliation. Whoso commits aggression against you, do you commit aggression against him like as he has committed against you, and fear you God, and know that God is with the god fearing.*)
(2:194) **Arberry**

In the sixth year of Hegira (prophet's immigration), the Prophet and his companions headed for Makah to perform Umrah. The disbelievers prevented them from reaching Makah, and an agreement was held that the Muslims return to Medina and come back the year after. In the seventh year of Hegira, the Muslims headed for Makah again. They entered it, but they were fearful that the disbelievers might fight them and the Muslims would not be able to defend themselves because they were in a sacred place and in the month of Thul-Qaidah (a month when fighting is prohibited both in Islam and in pre- Islamic Arab tradition). This verse states permission from Allah to the Muslims to fight back if they have to, even though they are in the vicinity of Al-Kabah and in the month of Thul-Qaidah (At-Tabariy, 2001, vol. 2, pp. 235-9).

The word **فَاعْتَدُوا** /f'a'tadu:/ (commit a hostile act against somebody) is used when the intended meaning is "punish" or "retaliate". Possible purpose of substitution: It is common in the Qur'an that a word may denote an action and its punishment. Other examples are {وَمَكَرُوا وَمَكَرَ اللَّهُ} [And they planned ..., but Allah planned] (*The Qur'an*, 1997, p. 71), Sura Al- Imraan, verse 54; and {وَجَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ مِّثْلُهَا} [And the retribution for an evil act is an evil one like it] (*The Qur'an*, p. 685), Sura Ash-Shu araa (The Poets), verse 40. This style creates a stronger connection in the mind of the recipient between the evil action and its punishment. The recipient is thus discouraged from doing evil because he/she knows that punishment is inevitable. Also, the substitution should tell Muslims not to hesitate to fight back as forcefully as the aggressors regardless of time and place.

Mustansir Mir (1989) in Verbal Idioms of the Quran refers to as *Mushikalah*, "formal identity." In *mushikalah*, a construction is repeated in form but does not necessarily carry the same meaning. An example is 2:194: *fa mani itadi 'alaykum fa 'tadu 'alayhi bi mithli ma 'tadi 'alaykum*, "Then, if they should commit aggression against you, you may commit aggression against them, in the same manner in which they have committed aggression against you." The second use of *I'tada* (= *fa 'tadu alayhi ...*) is not a license to commit aggression, but only a permission to punish the offense (and that according to specific rules), but the word *I'tada* has been repeated to indicate that the punishment is to match the offense.

Translation Assessment

All the translators render the substitution literally, maintaining the emphasis on the cause-and-effect relationship. However, Ali chose the word **transgress the prohibition** as an equivalent for the words **اعتدى** /*I'tada*/ ([he] committed aggression) and **اعتدوا** /*I' tadu*/ ([you, plural, imperative] commit aggression). "Transgress" means "to break or violate a law", and has the Arabic equivalent **تعدى** /*ta'dda:/ rather than **اعتدى** . Although both **اعتدى** and **تعدى** refer to the same event, the component of aggression associated with the word **اعتدى** is absent in the meaning of **تعدى** , for law can be violated in a number of ways.*

Arberry uses the phrase *commits aggression* which means "to commit an offensive action or procedure". This makes it equivalent to and on the same level of generality as the source text word **اعتدى** . On the other hand, Pickthall's choice of the word *attack* is unsuitable since its scope of meaning is narrower than that of the original word.

Thus, Arberry's word choice seems to be the best. However, Arberry's use of the emphatic structure (i.e. "do you commit") is unjustified since the original structure is not emphatic.

Homonymy

It refers to "two similar words with different meaning" since not every two similar words imply an actual use of homonymy or a covert intention to create a homonymic effect for producing a greater awareness on the part of the reader and a more aesthetic value in the text itself .

The following verse "Ar Rum, verse 55" is a good example for homonymous words that create a translation problem.

(وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ يُقْسِمُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ مَا لَبِثُوا غَيْرَ سَاعَةٍ كَذَلِكَ كَانُوا يُؤْكَلُونَ . (55))

Transliteration

Wa Yawma Taqūmu As-Sā`atu Yuqsimu Al-Mujrimūna Mā Labithū Ghayra Sā`atin
Kadhālika Kānū Yu'ufakūna

Translations

(On the Day that **the Hour** (of Reckoning) will be established, the transgressors will swear that they tarried not but **an hour**: thus were they used to being deluded!) **Ali**

(And on the day when **the Hour** riseth the guilty will vow that they did tarry but **an hour** – thus were they ever deceived.) **Pickthall**

(Upon the day when **the Hour** is come, the sinners shall swear they have not tarried above **an hour**; so they were perverted.) **Arberry**

Translation Assessment

In this Glorious verse, the homonymic expression lies in the words **سَاعَةٍ** and **السَّاعَةُ** . Al-Tabari(1987 , 37) interprets **السَّاعَةُ** as " Day of Resurrection" and Al-Sabouni(2004 ,444) interprets it as "the Day of Judgment".

Picktall and Arberry rendered the word السَّاعَةُ as “ the Hour” by using the capital H, maybe to indicate that the first word "Hour" differs in meaning from the next one ,but they don't provide any clarification or explanation . However, Ali uses the same translation "the Hour" but he wrote (of Reckoning) in parentheses within the main text to clarify that السَّاعَةُ refers to the Judgment time . Moreover, he provides a commentary in the footnote (1992 ,1023) :

Whatever the seeming inequalities may be now – when the good appear to be weak and the strong seem to oppress- will be removed when the balance will be finally redressed. That will happen in good time- indeed so quickly that the Transgressors will be taken by surprise. They were deluded by the fact that what they took to be their triumph or their freedom to do what they liked was only a reprieve ,a “Term Appointed”, in which they could repent and amend and get Allah’s Mercy. Failing this they will then be up against the Penalties which they thought they had evaded or defied.

Ibn Katheer(1998 , 292) ,Al-Tabari(1987 , 37) and Al-Sabouni (2004, 444) interpret the second Arabic word سَاعَةٍ as “an hour” but they differ in the place that *Mujrimun* swear that they spend this hour in . Ibn katheer and Al-Sabouni indicate that this hour is spent in this word. However, Al-Tabari interprets that they stay an hour in their graves.

All above mentioned translators rendered the second word سَاعَةٍ as “an hour”. Consequently, the accurate translation is one done by Ali since he added “of Reckoning” in parentheses to indicate that “the Hour” might mean the Day of Judgment but it would have been better if he had added in parentheses the place where they spend the hour after the translation of the second word. However, Picktall and Arberry miss the concept of homonymy in this Glorious verse since they render both Arabic words as" hour" although they capitalize its first letter.

Another Example from Surah Ghafir, verse 53, 54

(وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْهُدَىٰ وَأَوْرَثْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْكِتَابَ (53) هُدَىٰ وَذِكْرَىٰ لِأُولَى الْأَلْبَابِ (54))

Transliteration

(Wa laqad aatainna Moosal hudaa wa awrasnaa Baneee Israaa 'eelal Kitaab(53))

(Hudanw wa zikraa li ulil albaab(54))

Translation

Pickthall: *And We verily gave Moses the guidance, and We caused The Children of Israel to inherit the Scripture, A guide and a reminder for men of understanding.*

Yusuf Ali: *We did aforetime give Moses the (Book of) Guidance, and We gave the book in inheritance to the Children of Israel,- A Guide and a Message to men of Understanding.*

Arberry: *We also gave Moses the guidance, and We bequeathed upon the Children of Israel the Book for a guidance and for a reminder to men possessed of minds.*

In these two Glorious verses, the homonymic expression lies in the word هدی .Ibn Katheer (1998,137) interprets the first word الْهُدَى in verse {53} as “what Allah sent Moses of guidance and light” (وَهُوَ مَا بَعَثَهُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ مِنَ النُّورِ وَالْهُدَى) Al-Tabari(1987,49) interprets الْهُدَى as “the manifestation of the truth that Allah sent Moses with ” . Al-Sabouni(2004 , 98) interprets الْهُدَى as “Allah gave Moses what guides people to religion, of miracles, religio-legal way and Scriptures. Pickthall and Arberry rendered the first Arabic word الْهُدَى in verse {53} as “guidance” but they did not provide an explanation or clarification to indicate what "guidance " means .Ali also used "Guidance" and wrote " the book " in parenthesis within the main text , then he provided a commentary in the footnote (1992,1220) to clarify his rendition of al-huda :“ Moses was given a Revelation , and it was given in heritage to the Children of Israel , to preserve it, guide their conduct by , and hold aloft its message , but they failed in all these particulars .”Thus, Ali 'translation is nearly similar to the exegeses' interpretations of the word الْهُدَى. Consequently, it is the most accurate translation of the word هدی . Al-Tabari (1987 ,49) interprets the second word هدی in verse{ 54} as " a manifestation of the issue of their religion and the duties Allah obliged on them " Al-Sabouni interprets the second word هدی as " a guide " . Picktall and Ali translate the second word هدی as “ a guide', Arberry translates it as a " guidance ", which is similar to Al-Sabouni interpretation of the word . Judging by the exegeses, the most accurate translation for both words is one done by Ali, since his rendition is similar to

the exegesis. However, it would have been better if he had included Al-Tabari's interpretation of both words.

Reasons for Errors Encountered by Quran Translators

Khalifa(2005) has classified the reasons of errors encountered by non-Muslims translators who translated the Quran as follows:

1. Lack of knowledge of the exact meanings of the Arabic words. For example, verse (18:26) utilizes a certain tense that signifies amazement and wonder. This tense was apparently not understood by Sale, who translated the verse as: *"Do thou make Him to see and to hear,"* thus understanding the tense as implying a question. A more accurate translation of the verse is Pickthall's:

"How clear of sight is He and keen of hearing".

2. Awareness of only one shade of meaning. For example, Jeffery translates 17:60 as, *"Verily thy Lord is round about the people,"*

The word that he translated as 'round about' in reality means encompassed," meaning that Allah has full control over His creatures and none of them can evade His Judgment.

3. Confusion between different Arabic words. For example, Menezes mistakenly translated Abu Bakr (the name of the famous Companion) as "the father of the virgin." Apart from the fact that this is a proper name, and is not meant to be translated, the word for virgin is *bikr* and not *bakr*.

4. Limited knowledge of Arabic combined with figments of imagination. For example, Bell understood the 'Qur'an' to be different from the '*Furqan*' and the '*Kitab*' while they are both merely different names of the Qur'an.

5. Mistaking Arabic for Hebrew or Syriac. Watt concluded that the meaning of *rujz* in 74:4 was the same as the Syriac *rugza*, which means "wrath," whereas the real meaning is "pollution" (which is used in the verse to signify idols).

6. Some confusion with Hebrew traditions. For example, Jeffery confused the Arabic '*sakinah*' in 48:4, which means tranquility, with the Hebrew '*shekinah*', which has a different meaning.

The three most common causes for errors by Muslim translators, briefly, *are due to*: Incorrect understanding of a word, a misunderstanding of the intent of the verse and unfamiliarity with the rules of Arabic grammar.

Conclusion

This study has focused on the investigation of the translation loss in the translation of the Holy Quran. The study has also particularly referred to verbal similarity in the Quran to study the different linguistic and rhetoric meanings those repeated verses have. This investigation is attempted through extracted translated Quranic verses to shed the light on the translation losses encountered by translators that affect the syntactical and rhetoric meanings of similar words and the extent these different types of losses cause partial or complete semantic loss. The findings of the study revealed that shift in meaning occurs in the translation of syntactic order, reference switching, metonymic and homonymic words occur due to inaccuracy of selected vocabulary, non-equivalence problems and cultural gaps; the Qur'anic language has its own lexicons that are culturally bound. In this light, many approaches of translation such as literal translation and communicative or semantic translation have been used by translators. However, literal translation approach is not suitable because the Holy *Qur'an* cannot be translated literally, and the communicative one creates loss of meaning. Thus, to accurately deliver the complexities of the message conveyed in the *Qur'an*, it recommended adopting the exegetical translation- based on exegesis books which will guide a translator in attaining accurate meaning of the TT- to produce translations with minimum shortcomings. In addition, translation of the Holy Qur'an should be carried out by a team of scholars, who are experts in the different branches of knowledge related to the Holy Qur'an and who know thoroughly and fluently both languages in use: Arabic language as the language of the Quran (SL) and its complex grammar as well as the language of translation (TL) for non-English natives.

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