

Grammatical Constraints of Translating the Qur'anic Questions

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: January 15, 2019
Accepted: February 18, 2020
Published: February 28, 2020
Volume: 3
Issue: 2
DOI: 10.32996/ijllt.2020.3.2.9

KEYWORDS

Holy Quran; Constraints; Qur'anic Questions; sentence structure syntax; morphology

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the fundamental grammatical constraints of translating some Qur'anic questions into English. The grammatical constraints are related to syntax, morphology, and sentence structure. The researcher provides an exemplified survey of these grammatical constraints. The findings of the study revealed that the translator should not neglect the grammatical aspects and should care about the sentence structure carefully. The translators of the Holy Quran should be competent in the two languages and the two cultures to avoid any problems in the process of translation. The findings of the study also showed that the translator has to do the best to keep and comprehend the historical and cultural elements of the original text. English translation of the Qur'anic questions should be done under strict quality tests before its approval.

Introduction

Linguistics is the scientific study of language. Language contains sentences and structures. Well-developed structural sentences help readers to understand their meanings. This paper aims at analyzing the sentence structure, on the hidden meaning of the sentence, and on comparing different translations of some Quranic questions. One of the most current modern developments of Quranic translations is sudden of the translations of the Holy Quran in the recent century. The Quranic translation into different languages can result in loss of meaning.

Halliday (1973) pointed out that the structure of the sentence gives readers experience and helps to determine their way of looking at things. Therefore, it requires great efforts to see things any other way than that which our language suggests to us.

Ghazala (1995) stated that the main problems of translation a text are related to style, grammar, and words since the target language has different grammar, words, style, and sounds. According to Halliday (1973), there are some cohesive devices in English which are important for the translation of some questions. Al-subari (2020) stated that there are important needs for religious translation to convey the rules, guidance and concepts of Islam. Translation is a reliable bridge that reduces the gap between communities.

According to Islam (2018), linguistic deviation from the source text was the major causes of partial or complete loss of meaning in the target text. Subsequently, English and Arabic belong to two different language families, so the difference between the two languages can lead to a lack of equivalence in the target language.

Moreover, Alhaj et al. (2019) stated that it is cultural and linguistic constraints that exist between Arabic and English can be investigated. Besides, Hassan and Menacere (2019) pointed out that the major challenges of

translating the Quran are missing the meaning, the rhythmic, and poetic effect of the Quran and the complex of the collocations. Gazar and Tajari (2020) state that Quranic interpretation is functionally different from Quranic translation. Therefore, Quranic translation needs further investigation from the Holy Quran structure.

The Grammatical Constraints

Baker (1992) defines grammar as the set of guidelines that control and determine how words and phrases are going to be combined in a language. She (1992) adds that the rules of a given language will facilitate the use with which time reference or gender can be done explicitly.

Baker (1992) assumes that morphology relates to the structure of words, how the form of a word changes to indicate specific contrasts in the in rules. Moreover, she tells states that syntax covers the structure of phrases, groups, and clauses and the linear sequences of words and their functions such as subject, predicator, and object.

Differences in grammatical structures of the SL and TL often result in some changes in the information content of the message during the process of the translation. Sometimes the TL has a grammatical category which the SL lacks. So, the translator may change the grammatical structure by adding to TT information which is not expressed in the ST. The lacks of a grammatical device can make the translation of the entire conceptual information very difficult indeed. Simpson (1997) defines the term grammar as the group of rules which combine phrases and sentences into well-formed structures.

According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995), grammar refers to the rules that govern the ways in which words combine to form phrases, clauses, and sentences. Moreover, grammar refers to a level of structural organization which can be studied independently of phonology and semantics, and generally divided into the branches of syntax and morphology. In this sense, grammar is the study of the way words, and their parts combine to form sentences.

Kreidler (1998) adds that syntax deals with the grammatical categories like tense, number, and aspect that differ from language to language and which are yet present somehow in all languages. Kreidler also points out that morphology is another part of grammar, the description or the knowledge of word formation: the account of different forms of the same word (cat, cats; connect, connecting, connected) and the derivation of different words which share a basic meaning (connect, disconnect, connection).so, the meaning of a sentence is more than the meanings of the words it contains, and the meaning of a word often depends partly on the company it keeps.

Nemah (1998) defines the sentence as a group of words that contains one or more finite verb and makes complete sense. Moreover, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary states that sentence refers to a set of words expressing statement, a question, or an order, usually containing a subject and a verb.

Enani and Al- Shamy (1995) assume that a sentence is not a sacred order of words the translators likes. Hence, the translators should not follow the same order of the sentence in the ST, but she should follow the meaning of the sentence and put it in the form that is suitable for the TT norms.

The order of the words of the sentences in the Arabic is rather different from that in English. In Arabic, according to Mustafa (2000), there are two types of sentence: nominal and verbal sentence. The nominal word order consists of the topic and comment, and this type consists of two substantives, a noun, and an adjective, or a noun and a verb functioning as a comment when the noun is emphasized. The verbal word order, on the other hand, consists of verb, a subject and an object or complement.

Arabic and English belong to two different and distant language families: Semitic and Germanic, respectively. Consequently, their grammar is sharply different. Several grammatical features of Arabic pose variable problems of translation into English. The most serious mistake that translators should be warned against in the first place is their wrong presupposition that Arabic grammar is identical with English grammar, and, hence, they can translate each other in a straight forward way.

Discussion

This section presents the morphological and syntactical aspects of this language and the complexity of the sentence structure in the Quranic questions. The following are some of the grammatical problems that may face any translator:

1- وكيف يحكمونك وعندهم التوراه فيها حكم الله (المائده 43)

The three translations are:

YUSUF ALI: But why do they come to thee for decision, when they have (their own) law before them? There is the (plain) command of Allah.

PICKTHAL: How come they unto thee for judgment when they have the Torah, wherein Allah hath delivered judgment (for them).

SHAKIR: And how do they make you a judge, and they have the Taurat wherein is Allah's judgment? (Maeda: 43).

In the above examples, the Arabic letter (و) ' and' refers to the status in which those people are asking the prophet (PBUH). It is used in Arabic grammar to express manner. The English words ' when' and 'and' don't give the same grammatical meaning. ' when' expresses time while 'and' is a conjunction. The structural meaning in the ST is different from that of the TT.

2- امنتم به قبل ان اذن لكم (الاعراف:123)

YUSUF ALI: believe ye in him before I give you permission?

PICKTHAL: Ye believe in Him before I give you leave!

SHAKIR: Do you believe in Him before I have given you permission?

3- آمَنْتُمْ لَهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ أَدْنَ لَكُمْ (طه:71)

YUSUF ALI: Believe ye in Him before I permit you?

PICKTHAL: Ye put faith in him before I give you leave.

SHAKIR: You believe in him before I give you leave.

Here, there are two questions which are nearly the same. But there is only one difference in the use of the words 'به' and 'له.' The three translators neglected this difference and translated the two words into the English preposition; " in." There is subtle difference of meaning in the original text between the examples. The first examples which uses 'به.' In the second example, he wants to deny their belief in Moses's act not in this person using the other word 'له.'

The main problem facing the translator here is the complexity of the sentence. The sentence may belong. A single sentence may consist of many word classes, which may lead to ambiguity. The following are examples.

1- أَلَيْسَ يُحْيِي هَذِهِ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا الْبَقْرَه(:259)

YUSUF ALI: Oh! How shall Allah bring it (ever) to life after (this) its death?

PICKTHAL: How shall Allah give this township life after its death?

SHAKIR: when will Allah give it life after its death?

In this example, all the three translators neglected the confrontation of the word ' هذه ' ' this' before the subject of the sentence, Allah. By this mistake, the purpose of the question, which is wonder of a dead village that will come

to life, disappears in translation. They changed the question from inquiring about the subject. This confuses the non- Arabic reader, who doesn't get the pragmatic or the implied meaning of the Qur'anic question.

The following verses show the problems of translating Sentence Structure.

1- أَلَمْ أَقُلْ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا (الكهف: 72)

YUSUF ALI: Did I not tell thee that thou canst have no patience with me?

PICKTHAL: Did I not tell thee thou couldst not bear with me?

SHAKIR: Did I not say that you will not be able to have patience with me?

2- أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا (الكهف: 75)

YUSUF ALI: Did I not tell thee that thou canst have no patience with me?

PICKTHAL: Did I not tell thee that thou couldst not bear with me?

SHAKIR: Did I not say you that will not be able to have patience with me?

In the previous two examples, only Shakir translated the prepositional phrase (لك) in the second example. But both Ali and Pickthal translated it in all classes although it is not found in the verse of the ST. The fact that this prepositional phrase is not present in the first verse of the ST means that the state of the anger between Moses and the servant of Allah is still low. Its presence in the second verse reflects the state furiousness and anger in the discourse of the servant of Allah to Moses.

Conclusion

This study discusses the grammatical constraints of translating some Quranic questions with reference to three translations: Yusuf Ali, Pickthal and Shakir. The grammatical constraints are related to syntax, morphology, and sentence structure. The results of the study showed that the translator should not neglect and grammatical aspects and should care of the sentence structure carefully. The translation of the Holy Quran faces some grammatical challenges. This state of affairs is related to the marked nature of the language of the words of Allah i.e., Classical Arabic. The structure of the Quran has been shown to show specific structural features that either have no equivalence in the target language or is translated differently. Thus, there is a need to minimize and reduce the grammatical asymmetries in the English translation of the Quranic questions. Moreover, there is necessary demand of foregrounding grammatical analysis as a request attempt that goes before the translation process. Given the results of this study, a number of recommendations are suggested. Firstly, the translators of the Holy Quran should be competent in the two languages and the two cultures to avoid any constrains and problems. Secondly, the translator has to do the best to keep and comprehend the historical and cultural elements of the original text. Thirdly, English translation of the Quranic questions should be done under strict quality tests before its approval. Finally, translators should provide people with samples of the Quranic translations to check them orally to get the effect of the translation on them.

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