
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Semantic and Stylistic Problems Encountered in Translating Qur'anic Digression "Iltifât" into English: A Contrastive Linguistic Study

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ABSTRACT

This research paper aims to explore the digression "Iltifât" as one of the effective rhetorical devices used generally in the language of the Holy Quran. The purposive sample of the study was selected randomly from Qur'anic verses containing Iltifât or digression and their renditions by three translators, namely, Abdel Haleem, Khan Hilali, and Pickthall. The study's findings revealed that the translations of the three translators adopted several translation strategies such as literal translation, couplet translation to render the Qur'anic digression, or shifting (Iltifat) expressions into English. Moreover, the study also indicated that both literal translation and couplet translation are not always adequate for translating the Qur'anic digression or shifting (Iltifat) expressions because they have not successfully maintained the meaning of the Qur'anic Arabic digression "Iltifât" (ST) into the Qur'anic digression "Iltifât" English version (TT).

KEYWORDS

The Holy Quran; translation; linguistic semantic; problems; stylistic; digression "Iltifât"; contrastive.

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1. Introduction

Iltifât or digression is a well-liked style of the Holy Qur'ân. Nevertheless, this stylistic trait creates linguistic, stylistic, and cultural problems and challenges for the translators of the Holy Quran and the receptor of the Message. In iltifât or digression, there is a swift transition and change in person or addressee during the discourse. Moreover, iltifât or digression is considered to be difficult in the rendition of the Holy Quran into the English language because the divergences between the Arabic language and English language are more difficult when it occurs in the rendition of Holy Qur'ân.

The problems and challenges discussed in this study are analogous to the method whereby the meanings of the ayahs containing types of Iltifât or digression are translated into English. Unfamiliarity on the part of the translators of the importance of Iltifât or digression markers may lead to an inaccurate understanding of the ayah, which may lead to an inadequate rendition that necessitates being tackled successfully.

1.1 The Problems of the Study

It is supposed that the translators of the Noble Qur'an faced many semantic and stylistic problems and constraints in rendering Iltifât or digression into English. These problems are immersed in the process of rendering the Qur'anic text to the extent that at some stage, translators presumed it is untranslatable. It is noted that different translations produce different effects on common readers with varying degrees of comprehension of the message of the Qur'anic in general and Iltifât or digression expressions in particular.

1.2 Research Objectives

The study intends to achieve the following objectives:

1. To probe the semantic and stylistic problems encountered by the three translators, namely Abdel Haleem, Khan Hilali, and Pickthall, in their renderings Iltifāt or digression expressions.
2. To examine how these semantic and stylistic problems can be managed by the three translators??
3. To investigate the influence of employing translation strategies on managing these semantic and stylistic problems?

1.3 Research Questions

To meet the stated objectives, the following research question was raised:

1. What are the semantic and stylistic problems encountered by the three translators, namely Abdel Haleem, Khan Hilali, and Pickthall, in their renderings Iltifāt or digression expressions?
2. How can these semantic and stylistic problems be managed from both theoretical and practical perspectives?
3. What is the influence of employing translation strategies on tackling these semantic and stylistic problems?

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Concept of Digression (Iltifat)

2.1.1 The Meaning of Iltifāt

Lexically iltifāt means 'to turn/turn one's face to'

من بين التسميات التي أطلقت على الظاهرة: والتي نجدها في كتب البلاغة كما سيشار إلى ذلك لاحقاً "الصرف" و"الانصراف" و"التلويح" و"الشتجاعة العربية" وغيرها كثير،

Many terms have been used to refer to grammatical shift. It was referred to as al-Sarf by Ibn Wahb, al-Insiraf by Ibn Munqidh, al-tiradh by al-San'ani, al-Udool by al-Zamalkani, and al-Talween by al-Qurtubi and shajd'at al-'arabi by Ibn Al-Atheer.

Digression or shifting (Iltifat) is a well-liked style rhetorical device of the Holy Quran. –known as 'conversion', or 'turning one's face to'; i.e. "the change of speech from one mode to the other, for the sake of freshness, variety, causing interest, renewing matter and avoiding boredom for the listener " Mirdehghan et al. (2012). This well-known stylistic characteristic creates difficulties for the translators of the Holy Quran as well as the receptor of the Message (Khan,2008, Alhaj, 2019). As Ahmed (2004) opines," the Quran performs the function of a speaker who addresses different people all over the world". Abdel Haleem (1992) says: 'a grasp of certain features of the Qur'ānic style is essential for proper understanding". It means that an English reader must be familiar with the common stylistic features of the Qur'ān, for instance, ellipsis, repetition digression, or iltifāt. to avoid confusion and misinterpretation of the Message

Digression (Iltifat) is a combination of two pieces of speech with different purposes smoothly without mediation (Al-QurTājni (1966/1990, p.250). Some other scholars and rhetoricians say that" Digression" Iltifāt" is used to honour Allah almighty and to instigate the addressee's imagination and feeling of the addressee". Al-Kheero (2006, p.36) Abdel-Haleem (1992) points out:

It (the glorious Qur'an) employs this feature far more extensively and in more variation than does Arabic poetry. It is, therefore, natural to find no one seems to quote references other than from the Qur'an. (p.39)

Digression (Iltifat) has been called by rhetoricians shajd'at al-Arabia as it shows, in their opinion, the daring nature of the Arabic language. If any 'daring' is to be attached to it, it should above all be the daring of the language of the Qur'an since, for reasons that will be shown below, it employs this feature far more extensively and, in more variations, than does Arabic poetry. (As quoted by Abdel Haleem, M. (1992). Al-Atsir (2010) asserts that the use of artifacts shows syaja'ah 'arabiyyah (courage of the Arabs) in composing their literary works. Ultimate is even seen as the courage of the Arabs in speaking. This is because of the emotional rhyme categorization of risk and, therefore, potentially cause misunderstanding in the utterance (Al Farisi,2012). Ultimate use is still widely carried out by contemporary Arab poets. Hatim and Mason (1997, p. 12) show that the rhetoric of some languages in general, and the Arabic language in particular, digression (Iltifat), involves a sudden and unexpected shift from the use of one form (a particular tense or pronominal reference) to another form within the same set. According to Zainuddin (2009), 89 chapters in the Koran contain several verses that use the artifact speech act. It is possible that such kind of speech act potentially could result in a misunderstanding in the translation text. Ibn Al-Atheer(1933/1990), Al-'Umari,(1985) and Abdul Haleem (1992)define Digression (Iltifat) as "shift or departure from one of the usages of the normal language to another one in a given context for rhetorical purposes".

2.2 Classification of Iltifāt /Digression

Consideration of Iltifat has resulted in different typical classifications, among which Abdel Haleem (1992) notifies the following types of Iltifat: Change in person, between first, second, and third person. He subdivides this type into the following: 1. Shift from third to first person. 2. Shift from first to third person. 3. Shift from third to second person. 4. Shift from second to third person. 5. Shift from first to the second person. 6. Shift from second to third person. Change in number, between singular, dual, and plural. c. Change in addressee. d. Change in the tense of the verb, which Abdul Haleem subdivides into the following: 1. A shift from perfect to imperfect. 2. A shift from imperfect to perfect tense. 3. A shift from the indicative to the imperative mood. e. Change in case marker. f. Putting a noun in place of pronoun. (Abdel Haleem,1992, Khan,2009).

2.3 Artifact /digression Stylistics in the Holy Qur'an

Iltifāt or digression is a well-liked style of the Holy Qur'an. Nevertheless, this stylistic trait creates linguistic, stylistic, and cultural problems and challenges for the translators of the Holy Quran and the receptor of the Message. In iltifāt or digression, there is a swift transition and change in person or addressee during the discourse. Moreover, iltifāt or digression is considered to be difficult in the rendition of the Holy Quran into the English language because the divergences between the Arabic language and English language are more difficult when it occurs in the rendition of Holy Qur'an.

In the rendition of the Holy Quran, the shift of a person deixis element in an artifact ayah is a multiplex issue, not only for the receptor but also for the translator of the Holy Quran. This complexity is because of the extent of two different person deixis relating to the same entity in one or more ayahs of the Holy Qur'an. (Larson, 1984,Al- Badani et al., 2015).

There are notable divergences between iltifāt or digression in the text of Holy Quran and its equivalents that are afforded in the European English literature where we found the terms such as apostrophe, phantasm, and rhetorical deixis, and the like do not wholly match the meaning and function of iltifāt or digression in Qur'ānic text, in which this trope has more variation and implication markedly. Al-Badani et al., *ibid*,2015). Moreover, the Quran gives a *reasonable* foundation for elongating the interpretation of iltifāt or digression in traditional Arabic stylistics.

According to Hubal (2015, p.25), the digression (Iltifat) is the style of the Holy Qur'an that generally tends to enrich a discourse by bringing shifts from one discourse style to another talk style. The aim is, among others, to honour, criticize, or attract interlocutors. Consequently, the deixis system in the artifact or digression is distinctive because it presents two-person deixis that refers to one entity in a speech with a particular goal and purpose.

2.4 Previous Studies:

A study has been conducted by Abdul Aziz, May M. et al. (2007), entitled " Translational Aspects of Iltifāt in the Glorious Qur'an". The study revealed that All kinds of Iltifāt play a vital role in adding aesthetic and rhetorical meaning to the Qur'ānic discourse and communicating the religious purposes behind the Qur'ānic text.

A study has been conducted by Maitham M. N. et al. (2008). The Art of Iltifat in the Seven Qura'nic Reciting: Al-Baqarah as an Example. *Adab alrafeydain*. (38). The study showed Al-Iltifat is one of the Arabic on Qura'nic rhetorical styles. This style has been mentioned abundantly in the seven Qura'nic reciting. It is worth noting that verses of Al-Baqarah various types of this styles concerning the seven Qura'nic reciting.

A study has been conducted by Zainuddin et al., A.(2015) The Transfer of the Implicatures of Iltifāt from Arabic to English. The study revealed that: Translating implicatures from iltifāt requires intertextual cross-checking from exegeses in order to attain the meanings of iltifāt that would otherwise be lost in translation.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

To achieve the aforementioned objectives of the current study, the four researchers will analyze some examples of selected verses containing some iltifāt or digressions from the Holy Quran into English and examine these ayahs relying upon Semantic and Stylistic approaches. Furthermore, the researchers identify the digression (Iltifat based on the definition of the commentaries of Tafsir Ibn Kathir (2010) and Tafsir Al-Jalalayn (1975/2010). Then, after selecting and reading this Quranic iltifāt or digression from three English translations of the meaning of the Holy Quran, namely by Mohammed, A, S, Abdel Hakeem, Mohammed M.Khan and Mohammed Taj Al-Din Al-Hilali, and Pickthall. Furthermore, the researchers identify the overt (direct meaning) and covert (oblique meaning) of iltifāt or digression and highlight them. After that, compare their meanings with the two commentaries to ensure the iltifāt or digression senses whether it has helped or differently. To end, the results of the study are worked out based on the data analysis.

3.2 Data Collection

To attain the objectives of the research, the analytical-qualitative research method is utilized by the researchers. Moreover, this method is suitable for the current study because the rendition of the Holy Quran is a difficult task and cannot be enormously and

profoundly explored using any other possible approaches (Creswell,2007). In practice, some ayahs (verses) of the phenomena under the study, namely, constraints and challenges encountered in translating some Qur'anic iltifât or digression into English. Fittingly, three famous translations of the meanings of the Holy Quran were used, Mohammed, A, S, Abdel Hakeem, Mohammed M.Khan and Mohammed Taj Al-Din Al-Hilali and Pickthall.

4. Results and Discussion

In this part of the study, some collected examples of Quranic iltifât or digression meaning into English are analyzed by the researchers to identify the semantic and stylistic losses. Also, this section of the study aims to identify the translation strategies employed by the three translators, namely Mohammed, A, S, Abdel Hakeem, Mohammed M.Khan, and Mohammed Taj Al-Din Al-Hilali and Pichthall, in translating the Arabic Quranic iltifât or digression into English.

Example 1

The Rhetorical Benefits of Digression (Iltifat)

Digression (Iltifat) is used for the intention to alert as in the following ayahs:

1. The Rhetorical Benefits: Intent to alert **قصد التنبيه**

Source Surrah : 'Yassin, ayah, verse 22

(وَمَا لِي لَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ) (يسن:22):ST

Transliteration: Wa maa liya laaa a'budul lazee fatarane wa ilaihi turja'oon

Target Text: (and why should I not worship Him(Allah Alone) Who has created me, and to Whom you shall be returned.

(Yassin:22)

(1) **Abdelhaleem:** " Why should I not worship the One Who created me? It is to Him that you will be returned."(Yassin:22)

(2) **Khan and Al-Hilali:** " Why should I not worship him (Allah alone) Who has created me and to Whom you shall be returned

(Yassin:22)

(3) **Pickthall:** "for what cause should I not serve Him Who hath created me, and unto Whom ye will be brought back"(Yassin:22)

The meaning of the verse

"And why should I not worship Him (Allah Alone) Who has created me."

Meaning, What is there to keep me from sincerely worshipping, the One Who has created me, without ascribing others alongside Him in worship." and to Whom you shall be returned," i.e. on the day of Appointment (Day of Judgment) when He will require you for your deeds. If they are good, then yours will be the good and (Paradise), and in case they are bad, yours will surely be bad. (Hellfire).

The Rhetorical Benefits of Digression (Iltifat): **قصد التنبيه**

Example 2

2. The Rhetorical Benefits: Intent to Exaggeration 1: **قصد المبالغة**

Source Surrah: ' , Yunus ,ayah, verse 22

(هُوَ الَّذِي يُسَيِّرُكُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِي الْفُلِكِ وَجَرَّتْ بِرِيحٍ طَيِّبَةٍ وَقَرَحُوا بِهَا) (يونس:22): Source Text

Transliteration: Huwal lazee yusayyirukum fil barri walbahri hattaataa iza kuntum fil fulki wa jaraina bihim bi reehin tayyibatiniw wa farihoo bihaa

Target Text: He It is who enables you to travel through land and sea till when you are in ships, and they sail with them with a favourable wind, and they are glad therein. (Yunus: 22)

(1) **Abdel Haleem:** " It is He enables you to travel on land and sea until when you are sailing on ships and rejoicing in the favouring wind, as storm arrives; waves come at those on board. (Yunus: 22)

(2) **Khan and Al-Hilali:** "He it is Who enables you to travel through land and sea, till when you are in the ship, and they sail with them with favouring wind, and they are glad therein, then comes a stormy wind and the wave come to them from all sides

(Yunus: 22)

(3) **Pickthall:** "He it is Who maketh you to go on the land and the sea till, when ye are in the ships, and they sail with them with a fair breeze, and they are glad therein, a storm-wind reacheth them and the wave cometh unto them from every side (Yunus: 22)

The meaning of the verse:

This statement of Allah: (**He** It is who enables you to travel through land and sea), means that Allah preserves you and with His Care, He surely secures you .''till when you are in ships, and they sail with them with a favourable wind, and they are glad therein." i.e. while enjoying such tender sailing, thereto these ships come.

The Rhetorical Benefits: Intent to Exaggeration: قصد المبالغة

For exaggeration, Iltifāt appears in the above verse in the change of plural addressee " you" to the third third-person pronouns (them).

Example 3:**3. The Rhetorical Benefits: Intent to Exaggeration 2: قصد المبالغة**

Source Surrah : An Nahl: ayah, verse 51.

وَقَالَ اللَّهُ لَا تَتَّخِذُوا إِلَهَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ فَإِذَا تَوَلَّوْا فَارْهَبُوا (النحل ٥١):ST

Transliteration: Wa qaalal laahu laa tatta khizooo ilaahainis naini innamaa Huwa Ilaahunw Waahid; fa iyyaaya farhaboon

Target Text: do not take to yourself two gods. **He** is only one God; so have awe of **me**.

1. **AbdelHaleem:** God said, 'Do not take two gods'– for He is the One God–' I alone am the One that you should hold in awe.' A Nahl: 51)
2. **Khan and Al-Hilali:** And Allah said (O mankind!): "Take not again (two gods in worship, etc.). Verily, He (Allah) is (the) only One Allah (God). Then, fear Me (Allah SWT) much [and Me (Alone), i.e. be away from all kinds of sins and evil deeds that Allah has forbidden and do all that Allah has ordained and worship none but Allah' A Nahl: 51)
3. **Pickthall:** Allah hath said: Choose not two gods. There is only One Allah. So of Me, Me only, be in awe. A Nahl: 51)

The meaning of the verse:

Allah, the Almighty, affirms the fact that there is no deity worthy of worship except Him and that He is the Owner, Creator, and Lord of all and everything.

The Rhetorical Benefits: Intent to Exaggeration: قصد المبالغة

For Exaggeration: Iltifāt appears in the above verse in the change of the third-person pronouns (he) to the first-person pronouns (me).

Example 4:**4. The Rhetorical Benefits: Intent to Reproach: قصد التوبيخ**

Source Surrah : Maryam;ayahs, verses:88&89

Source Text وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا (٨٨) لَقَدْ جِئْتُم شَيْئًا إِدًّا (مريم:٨٩)

Transliteration: Wa qaalut takhazar Rahmaanu waladaa(Maryam:88) Laqad ji'tum shai'an iddaa((Maryam:89)

Target Text: And they say, "The Most Merciful has taken [for Himself] a son." (Maryam:88). You have done an atrocious thing. (Maryam::89)

1. **Abdel Haleem:** The disbelievers say, 'The Lord of Mercy has offspring.'(88) How terrible is this thing you assert:(Maryam:89)
2. **Khan and Al-Hilali:** And they say: "The Most Beneficent (Allah) has begotten a son (or offspring or children) [as the Jews say: 'Uzair (Ezra) is the son of Allah, and the Christians say that He has begotten a son ['Iesa (Christ)], and the pagan Arabs say that He has begotten daughters (angels, etc.)]."(88). indeed you have brought forth (said) a terrible evil thing. (Maryam:89)
3. **Pickthall:** And they say: The Beneficent hath taken unto Himself a son(88) Assuredly ye utter a disastrous thing:(Maryam:89)

The meaning of the verse

After Allah affirms in this noble Surah that Jesus (peace be upon him) was a worshipper and a servant. Stating that his birth from his mother Maryam was without a father, He then begins refuting those who claim that He has a son(Allah forbids). Holy be He

and far Exalted. He above such a statement. Allah says: (**And they say, "The Most Merciful has taken [for Himself] a son."** (Maryam:88). You have done an atrocious thing. Maryam::89)

The Rhetorical Benefits: Intent to Reproach: قصد التوبيخ

For reproach: Itifât appears in the above verse in the change from the third-person pronouns in (they said) (absence form) to the second-person in (you came) (speaking form) because whoever claims that Allah the Most Merciful has taken a son, there is no doubt that he is intrigued in his religion, and he denounces this sinful saying, and he should be reprimanded for him, and reprimanding the present is always worse than reprimanding the absent, and this is the secret of digression (Itifât) in this noble ayah. **The Most Merciful has taken [for Himself] a son.**" (Maryam:88). You have done an atrocious thing. Maryam::89) (مریم:٨٩) لَقَدْ جِئْتُمْ شَيْئًا إِدًّا (٨٨) وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا

In this verse, Allah turns to rebuke that unbeliever He has been talking about in order to strengthen the force of rebuke (Ibn Ashur, 1990. Vol. 8: 175).

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the semantic and stylistic problems faced as well the translation strategies adopted by the three translators of the Holy Quran, namely, Mohammed, A, S, Abdel Hakeem, Mohammed M.Khan and Mohammed Taj Al-Din Al-Hilali, and Pickthall in the translation of the Qur'anic digression or shifting (Itifât) into English. Moreover, the rendition of 4 ayahs(verses) containing digression or shifting (Itifât) meanings were purposively selected and then analyzed by the researchers. The findings of the study indicated that the three translators adopted several translation strategies such as literal translation, couplet translation to render the Qur'anic digression, or shifting (Itifât) into English expressions into English. Moreover, the study also indicated that both literal translation and couplet translation are not always adequate for translating the Qur'anic digression or shifting (Itifât) expressions because they have not successfully maintained the meaning of the Qur'anic Arabic language (ST) into the Qur'anic English version (TT). Furthermore, the study revealed that translation of untranslatable Qur'anic digression or shifting (Itifât) expressions into English and their representative lexemes might cause further confusion in the comprehension of the Holy Qur'an Message. (See example 3). In some examples of translating the Qur'anic digression or shifting (Itifât) expressions into English, the equivalence of this Arabic lexis is problematic. (see examples, 2,4). Finally, the research suggests that the equivalence in the translation of the Holy Quran should be explored as a concept that holds a place on a scale that can begin very equivalent to inequivalent. The research also suggests that a better rendition of the Noble Quran should bear intelligibility in terms of the total impact of the Message on the language receptor.

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