
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Influence of Translators' Cultural Backgrounds on their Performance: Translation of the Quran as a Case-study

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| ABSTRACT

It is in the nature of central religious scriptures to be open to endless interpretations and to be utilised to justify all shades of opinion. The Quran, in this regard, is no exception. In order to cope with the progress of time and avoid place constraints, the Quranic text relies on the technique of generality. Unfortunately, this generality has left the door open for different interpretations, some correct but many wrong, which in turn leads to extremist groups twisting the Quranic text to suit their own beliefs and attitudes, especially since the openness and comprehensiveness of Quranic wording give translators the chance to interpret the same Quranic passage differently and, hence, sometimes to ideologically manipulate the text in a way that suits their misguided beliefs. This paper deals with Quranic discourse according to translators' cultural profiles and their intentions when translating the Quran, in terms of whether those dealing with such an authoritative text remain invisible (as required) or whether they have fallen victim to the influence of their cultural ideologies. In a larger context, it will focus on translators' variables, such as the degree of professionalism (loyalty in particular) employed from a cultural perspective; religious background, and ideological attitudes, in order to discover to what extent the cultural background of translators, in terms of whether their religious background has influenced their translational works. This hypothesis is based on the view of Lefevere's (1992: 15) patronage patterns issue and his ideas on ideology. Of particular relevance to this study are the constraints of translators' cultural backgrounds and hence their ideologies, i.e., the translators' personal set of values and attitudes.

| KEYWORDS

Translation, The Quran, Culture, Ideology, Manipulation and influence.

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1. Introduction

Since ancient times, translation has acted as a link between civilizations, motivating different nations to draw on each other's knowledge and wisdom. Thus, it has operated as a vehicle through which the legacies of the cultural heritage of these civilizations were transmitted from one generation to another. As a consequent reflection of modern linguistic thinking, the current contemporary theoretical approach, therefore, employs the view that cultural elements are vital factors in influencing translation studies. This paper will, therefore, discuss the issue of the influence of translators' cultural backgrounds on their performance when translating the Holy Quran from Arabic into English. It will also test to what extent translators' cultural profiles influence the treatment of the rendition of its content.

The original Quran is meant to be directed at all mankind regardless of gender, age, or racial background. However, two possible types of readership are intended for English versions of the Quran. These are either non-Muslims who are curious about this religion or non-Arabic Muslims who want to worship their God in the Islamic way. If we take into account that the Quran is a book for worshipping in the first place, then the understanding of the message is also of great importance and should be given priority and hence should be accurately conveyed. Newmark (1991: 169) insists on accuracy, stating that 'if manifestations of prejudice appear in an authoritative text, ancient or modern, they should be reproduced (as accurately as possible) in the translation'.

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Therefore, if the main purpose of translating the Quran into languages other than Arabic is to give the non-Arabic speaker the opportunity to know and understand Islam, then it follows that clarity and accuracy are of primary importance in this process.

Chesterman (2000: 113) highlights that certain types of cultural pressure and the political climate of the time of the translation might exert an influence over a translator's choices. He concludes that the choice of implementation of a given strategy derives ultimately from the norms of translation and from the translators' own cultural background and personal ideology. He (ibid) goes on to state: "If they are members of the target culture, they themselves may not have wished to go against these norms." In this very sense, cultural ideologies might govern the translation process and motivate the translator's choice. For an extended discussion, this study also attempts to find justifications that would explain any evidence of translators' involvement in changing the text for cultural purposes. This leads to the notion of the translator's invisibility, and a further point will be raised in due course regarding whether fidelity should be to the ethics of the profession as a whole or to the translator's own beliefs. This study, therefore, aims to find out whether or not translated Quranic texts include any evidence that translators' ideological attitudes have influenced the quality of their final product.

1.1 The Hypothesis:

According to Lefevere (1992: 15), patronage can be exerted by individuals, groups, a religious body, a political party, a royal court, a social class, publishers, or the media, in fact, anyone who has the power to impact the text negatively or positively. It was Andrew Chesterman, however, who first called for applying and relating these patronage-constraints specifically to literary translation. In this sense, translators' cultural backgrounds might be considered as a sort of patronage that may serve as a constraint to influence their intention, their attitudes, and hence their performance.

The hypothesis predictably underlines the fact that translators with different cultural profiles will produce different translations. However, Lee (2013: 22) admits that his corpus study from an ideological perspective has led to invalid results and failed to produce convincing findings, and he calls and urges for thorough investigations and further studies. Therefore, an extra hypothetical parameter was adopted for testing the translation of the Quran, according to the cultural background of the translators themselves and to what extent this has influenced their performance and the quality of their work. The hypothesis aims to find out whether or not the translated Quranic texts include any evidence that the translators' ideological attitude has influence over the quality of their final product, including interpretations by those who wish to drive authoritative foundations to suit their ideologies, either deliberately according to their own beliefs or unintentionally due to misunderstanding a given passage. When a closer equivalent for a key sensitive religious term is available, but the translator opts for another less adequate option, this will, if deliberate, be considered an ideological manipulation. However, if undeliberate, this will lead, at least, to under-translation. Thus English renditions cannot do full justice to words that had intimate associations with their cultural context.

Every translation consists of rewriting the original text in some way. Yet, the Quran has been re-translated by different translators belonging to different cultural backgrounds, and the stated purpose behind these re-translations has most often been the correction of certain errors, either linguistically or those pertaining to meanings measured against Islamic beliefs. However, Such a re-translation process sometimes has an obvious traditional link with ideological manipulation as the intention of the translators for re-translating certain text is merely to modify it towards their own beliefs. Albachten O. and Gurcaglar S. (2019:208) state that '.....retranslations were not always meant to create value through the improvement of earlier translations, but sometimes played a specific role in the distribution process of ideas and ideology'. There is an extremely rich pool of empirical evidence in support of the manipulation/sway hypothesis that is beyond any doubt (Lee, 2013:21). Thus, the re-translation hypothesis is also used here empirically to show how rich the concept of translation is because the same source text can be re-translated in many different ways.

2. Literature Review

Due to space constraints, the literature review will be limited to the aspects that serve the purpose of this paper rather than a discussion on translation in general. More specifically, the focus will be mainly on literal vs. non-literal methods of translation. Of particular relevance to this study is to draw attention to the fact that the literal method of translation might be the most suitable method for rendering authoritative and highly sensitive texts such as the Quran. For the sake of convenience, some prevailing views will be discussed thematically rather than chronologically. Needless to say, there is a strong relation between text-type and the choice of translation method in order to preserve the predominant function of the text in translation. Religious texts such as the Quran and the Bible work on creative, informative, and expressive levels. According to Newmark (1988: 55), expressive texts, which, to him, include 'sacred' texts, are normally translated at the author's level. In such holy texts, due to their authoritative nature, form and content are equally important to the extent that the translator might be in danger of failing to faithfully reproduce the message of the original. Chesterman (2000: 22) states:

Yet, in holy texts, it was felt that even the form was holy. To meddle with the original form of the scriptures was to risk blasphemy or heresy; a translator might even risk his life (several centuries later, the translator Dolet was indeed burnt at stake for "mistranslating" Plato in such a way as to suggest something heretical about the posthumous existence of the soul).

As far as text-typology is concerned, texts within the slightly more specific notion of 'province' (e.g., religious or legal text), to keep Hatim and Munday's (2004) word, require extra attention. In the translation process, faithfulness is generally considered to be one of the most important requirements for achieving a very high level of correctness and accuracy, especially when translating serious texts. Traditionally, sacred manuscripts were looked at as holy texts with divine wording, and hence word-for-word translation was the most dominant option; therefore, a word-for-word strategy should be the first method to be applied by the translator, which means 'rendering, as closely as the associative and syntactical capacities of the target language allow the exact contextual meaning of the original' (See Newmark 1981: 11). For such powerful texts as the Quran, the holiness of the message requires literal translation. Chesterman (2000: 187-8), in analysing the translator's charter of FIT (the International Federation of Translators), quotes Clause 4 from the charter, which is relevant to our discussion. It reads:

Every translation shall be faithful and render exactly the idea and the form of the original - this fidelity constituting both a moral and legal obligation for the translator.

Regarding the translator's task in the reader's mind, Leppihalme (1997: 103) says that-translators are doing their work properly, i.e., if they do not make changes, omit or explain because, in their view, it is the ST author who is responsible for the words in 'the text,' and the translator is simply rendering them into the TL. From the reader's response point of view, Theo Hermans (1999: 63-4), based on Jelle Stegeman's model (1991), states that 'equivalence is obtained when no significant difference can be observed in the way source-language readers react to a source text and target-language readers react to the corresponding target text'. In fact, he (1991: 10) proposes that if 'equivalent-effect' can be secured, then 'the literal, word-for-word translation is not only the best, it is the only valid method of translation'. He also concedes that highly original, authoritative, or expressive texts would generally require a closer semantic translation.

In fact, Foundation Texts inevitably involve a number of shifts in the ideology of the source text, especially if the source text and the target text belong to two different cultures. Lefevere (1992: 51) sees ideologies as a decisive element that inspires any faithful translation by stating that 'far from being "objective" or "value-free," as their advocates would have us believe, "faithful translations" are often inspired by conservative ideology'. However, in treating either poetological or ideological terms, according to Lefevere (1992: 50), the translator is not quite conservative to the extent that he might be in danger. He says:

Needless to say, this way of translating is not without risks where foundation texts are involved: many a 'spirited' Bible translator, for instance, was burned at stake, and the faithful were not allowed to translate the Quran.

As far as the adoption of close or faithful translation is concerned, Newmark (1993: 36-7) also proposes that at every rank of the text, the more important the language of the text, the more closely it should be translated. Thus, 'in semantic translation, the translator's first loyalty is to his author; in literal translation, his loyalty is, on the whole, to the norms of the source language' (Newmark, 1981: 63). The formal equivalence according to Hatim and Munday (2004: 264) is appropriated, and the meaning may alter or extend according to the text. In the absence of such an aim and only when a literal translation proves unworkable should the translator then look for another functional equivalent that fits with the context; otherwise, one has to appreciate that, when there is no happy compromise, translators instinctively give literal-translation priority over non-literal translation. Yet, one of the happy compromises might be essential that an entire translated text is quite faithful to the literal method of translation. Venuti's work (2000: 60) also confirms that it is only when we force the reader from his own habits and oblige him to move within those of the author that there is actually a translation. This was the idea of a (maximally) literal translation. Nida (1964: 164) maintains that one of the basic requirements for any good translation is that it should achieve a similar response from its readership to that achieved by the original towards its first readership. He (1982: 163) also suggests that 'the task of the translator is to produce the closest natural equivalent, not to edit or to rewrite', especially with sacred texts where the translator has to be highly sensitive and, by default, is also neutral.

Besides their religious backgrounds of being either Muslims or Non-Muslims, there are two other factors that separate these two groups of translators, i.e., their intention behind translating the Quran as well as whether they view the Quran as the word of God or whether they deal with it as merely a literary text. Lefevere (1992: 49-50) links the perfection of translation to the intentions of translators. In line with the Skopos Theory, the intentions of the original text and, by extension, those of the translator are important factors. Nida (1964: 157) states: 'The purposes of the translator are the primary ones to be considered in studying the types of translation which result, the principal purposes that underlie the choice of one or another way to render a particular message are important'. This is supposed to be the case, especially when translating serious texts. Although they might vary slightly, it is

assumed that the translator generally has similar intentions or that they are at least compatible with those of the original author. Peter Newmark (2003: 12) states that 'the translator's intention is usually identical with that of the author of the SL text'.

The intention of translators of the Quran has a major influence on their works, which is evident from the great damage inflicted by mistranslation. Such mistranslation, if deliberate, will be taken as a patronage attitude (see Chesterman 2000: 170). Thus, the intention of translating the Quran is quite a decisive element with regard to the invisibility of the translator because their attitude may stand in the way of their neutrality, which is a crucial factor for any accurate rendering. Nevertheless, Sale, for example, states boldly in his introduction that he has translated the Quran just to refute it. The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation (2000: 142-43) also identifies such a bias by stating that:

The adversarial stance towards Islam continued through the 18th and 19th c: in 1734, Sale, in the preface to his translation, opines that 'how criminal soever Muhammad may have been in imposing a false religion on mankind, the praises due to his real virtues ought not to be denied him'; and as late as the mid-19th c., Rodwell's introduction echoes this patronizing tone.

Hatim and Munday (2004: 68) take intentionality as one of the main aspects of texture for any communicative text transaction. They state:

The entire communicative transaction is driven by the intentionality of a text producer, matched by acceptability on the part of a text receiver, which together ensures that the text is purposeful and that it functions in a particular way to serve the purposes for which it is intended.

Yet, the principle of achieving as similar an effect as possible on the target readership to that produced by the original is essential for texts such as the Quran when the message of the text is universal. Quranic text, however, is not accepted by the Western reader through translations in the same way that the original has been accepted in the Arabic environment. This is broadly mirrored by the fact that those who read the original are highly praised for the text, whereas the reader who only has access to the translated version can have a bad opinion of what is supposed to be the same text. One of the possible reasons for this is explained by Irving (2002: xvii), who says the original intention of some translations of the Quran is to mock or denigrate its message rather than to produce a sympathetic understanding of it, leading the West's readers to misjudge the Quran. Since the Quran was originally revealed in the Arabic language, its presentation in a different language may result in confusion and misguidance.

If this is the case, one then can only wonder how the same text in two different languages can replicate two extremely different responses, as has happened with the Quran. One of the possible justifications for this confusion is that although words may express specific concepts in other languages, they cannot express all the shades of meanings of their counterparts. The intention behind the interpretation of these words is what really matters. Another justification also might be that certain Quranic verses, due to their polysomic nature, can be interpreted in different ways. Because of the different meanings that words carry in different languages, a translation could never adequately express all the meanings carried by the original Quranic text in its Arabic form, but, even if these misrepresentations and distortions are not deliberate, some translations, due to cultural differences, still do not have the power of communication. (see Irving 2002: xvii). In fact, ideological manipulation leads to the question of whether translators consider the text readership as their own readers or as the authors. An associated question to this point is whether translators have the right to refuse to translate texts they feel are unethical. Regardless of the differing views regarding this point, at the end of the day, translators still have the right to refuse to translate a particular text that conflicts with their ideological beliefs rather than translate it with ideological manipulation.

With all the above literature aspects in mind, this work draws heavily upon the Memes of Andrew Chesterman (2000) and the views of Gideon Toury, particularly as expressed in his book *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (1995), as well as the works of Lawrence Venuti (2000) and André Lefevere (1992). Several other books and papers on the theory and practice of translation have been consulted throughout this work, most notably the works of Nida (1964), Newmark (1981 and 1988), Dickins J., Herve S. and Higgins I. (2017), Munday (2001), Hatim & Munday (2004), Lee(2013), Valero-Garces C. and Tipton (2017), and Albachten O. and Gurcaglar S. (2019). The research method and hypotheses of this study benefit considerably from Williams and Chesterman's work, *The Map* (2002).

2.1 The Data

Being re-translated by many translators who belong to different religious backgrounds, the translated versions of The Quran present very suitable and valuable data for this study in order to verify the above hypothetical claim. This makes them ideal data-text to refute or prove the influence of the translator's cultural profile reflected in their translational choices, as the hypothetical facet is to investigate whether the religious background of translators of the Quran (Muslim or non-Muslim) has an influence on their final product. The works of six translators from different religious backgrounds have been selected to provide the data through which the above hypothesis will be empirically tested. The major reason for the selection of these versions is that they have a firm

connection with the translators' cultural backgrounds on the grounds that they are Muslims: Yusuf, Pickthall, and Abdel Haleem, and Non-Muslims: Sale, Rodwell, and Dawood. Due to space limits, only some selective examples will be exposed for analysis. Therefore the examples chosen from the Quran in this case study are used merely as a means to an end in order to produce relatively adequate results because they seem relevant for a fruitful comparison.

3. The Model and Research Methodology

This study is based on a comparative model contrasting one original text with different translations in order, firstly, to discover the correlations between the two languages/cultures involved, and secondly, to find out the differences between translations produced by translators belonging to different cultures to attempt to answer the question: why did translators within that specific culture translate in that precise way? However, the conceptual argument about some translational views which will be discussed in this study relies, more or less, on the causal model (see Williams and Chesterman's *The Map* 2002: 55-6).

The methodology that will be applied to the examples given in the analytical parts of this study will have a broad focus, as every single example will be approached both inductively and deductively. That is, where possible, each example will have an introductory explanation based on exegetical work. This introductory explanation of the general meaning of the verse(s) under scrutiny will be followed by:

- The Source Language Text (the original Quran).
- The Target Language Texts (the selected Quran translations) at the *textual level* together with the relevant translator's footnotes at the *para-textual level* about the component verse(s). Here the word(s) under scrutiny at the *lexical level* will usually be highlighted. This will give the reader an excellent chance to see what differences in effect can be discerned when comparing the different translations with the original Arabic text and with each other.
- A commentary highlighting the strategies implemented by the different translators based on the translator's cultural-background.

Further comments regarding the translators' attitudes and their translational strategies and techniques will be inserted where appropriate during the course of the analytical process. All the way through, comments and statements regarding the translators' backgrounds and their English translations (where not explicitly otherwise cited) are based largely on the accounts of *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*, Qadhi (1999), Robinson (1996) and the translators' own introductions.

3.1 The Analysis:

Neutrality is strictly required for translating highly authoritative texts where translators have to be broadly neutral by applying mostly the literal method of translation. They, however, may not be able to refrain from their own beliefs when they deal with religious text, i.e., the Quran in this particular case study, and their religious ideologies can still be slightly reflected in their work. The Quran's translatability, and hence rendering Quranic text adequately, is always a debatable issue in terms of not only linguistic translatability but also in terms of other factors such as cultural differences. This situation reflects a vital need to shed more light on how translators act differently according to their attitudes and cultural beliefs.

Translational speaking, Lefevere (1992: 51) also states that 'translated texts as such can teach us much about the interaction of cultures and the manipulation of texts'. Qadhi (1999: 364-5) explains that despite there being a lot of translations available, many of them are not very accurate. It is sad to note that most English translations that are in existence today suffer from very serious flaws and shortcomings. This is because most of the translators were not qualified enough to undertake the monumental task of translating the Quran. Qadhi (ibid) believes that translation of the Quran can only be carried out if certain conditions are observed. A person who wishes to translate the Quran must fulfil these conditions and have particular qualities before he may translate the Quran for people speaking different languages and from different cultures. For him, it is also impermissible for any person to give verdicts concerning the Holy Book of Allah unless he is knowledgeable about specific aspects.

In order to avoid any ideological manipulation and to guarantee that the religious message of the Quran is faithfully and fully conveyed without any discrediting of its ideological aspects, Qadhi (1999: 350) stresses that the first condition, among many others, for translators of the Quran is to be Muslim. He insists: 'The translator must be a Muslim with correct Islamic beliefs. This is because a person who does not believe in the Divine Authorship of the Quran will never be able to do justice to its translation.' This requirement is very understandable since the Quran is the sacred book for Muslims. However, this condition calls for further consideration as, according to their religions, translators of the Quran differ from each other in respect of some other essential points, which might be seen as intellectual barriers and hence aspects of cultural patronage. Chesterman (2000: 170) holds Lefevere's view, stating that 'we also find discussions of the translator's role in initiating translations, selecting source texts, acting as "patrons" themselves and thus exercising power, as well as being subject to the power of others, to all kinds of external constraints'. These patronage constraints can take the form of some translators' patronizing attitudes towards the Quran. Such translators, therefore, treat the Quranic text differently according to their religious profiles. A quick look at the introductions of

each translation will confirm the intended purpose for each translator in taking on this task, and it varies from one translator to another. Predictably, one of the big differences between Muslim and non-Muslim translators is their intentions behind translating the Quran and whether they take the Quran as the word of God or not. In fact, their intentions appear to be contradictory in line with the diametrically opposed views they hold. By investigating the six versions under scrutiny from an ideological perspective, one may notice that they have produced some supplementary distinctions where the 'attitudinal component exhibits a range of ideational, interpersonal and contextual values' (Hatim and Munday, 2004: 90). Translators can be classified under different hypothetical categories according to their cultural backgrounds. The classification of the translations in the following analytical section will fall into two main religious categories: translations performed by Muslim or non-Muslim translators.

On the one hand, Muslims with true genuine faith believe that the Quran is the final expression of God's will and purpose for man. To them, the holiness of the Quran is taken for granted by the companions of the prophet as well as the commentators since without relying on the proper methodology of interpretation (tafsir), it is possible to interpret the Quran in any way one desires. Therefore, the same approach should be taken by translators since exegeses are a type of divine interpretation (translation). Dickens J., Hervey S., and Higgins I. (2017: 05) link these two types of interpretations under the title of an exegetic translation, which they explain can be found to various degrees in different English interpretations of the Quran. If this is the case, then it holds that translators of the Quran should have certain credentials, characteristics, and qualifications similar to that of the mufassir [commentator] (see Qadhi, 1999: 324-50). On the other hand, some Muslim translators of various traditional religious sectarianisms within Islam, be it Sunni, Shi'i, Sufi, Mu'tazli ...etc., have their own part in ideological manipulation as well, particularly with regard to esoteric meanings of the Quran's metaphorical language or when translating the anthropomorphic images of God. To date, there have been more than 30 translations of the Quran into English carried out by Muslim translators, the first appearing in the 1860s. Perhaps the most enduring and popular of these is by Abdullah Yusuf Ali

At the other end of the scale, according to The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation (2000: 142-43), the main purpose of the early translators of the Quran (all non-Muslim) was to refute Islamic religious arguments. The subtitle of Ross's translation, 'newly Englished, for all that desire to look into the Turkish vanities', gives an impression of this attitude, which went hand in hand with the translation of Christian religious texts into Arabic for missionary purposes. In his introduction, the spirit with which Ross translates the Quran speaks for itself. Reverend Zwemer said of him: 'He was utterly unacquainted with Arabic and not a thorough French scholar; therefore, his translation is faulty in the extreme.' Similar assessments were made by Savary and Sale (See Qadhi, 1999: 375).

This missionary nature of the early versions may lead to an ideological involvement on the part of the translator(s), as M. Botha puts it in the conclusion of his book *Power and Ideology* (2021:222). He states: 'The translational function of religious conversion, encountered in the context of missionary translation, is somewhat unusual due to its outward directionality.' It is, therefore, not at all surprising that Father Ludovic Marracci prefaces his translation with one volume introduction entitled a 'refutation of the Quran' and tries in his footnotes to give the worst possible impression of Islam to Europe. Other translators who have made their intentions to try to defame Islam clear in the introductions of their versions are cited in Qadhi (1999: 358).

On a smaller scale, Chesterman (2000 20-22) states that equivalence was presupposed; it was accepted that the divine truth contained in Holy Scripture was absolute and would therefore be preserved across languages. In terms of word-level treatment, Newmark (1988: 66) proposes that 'the more expressive or 'sacred' the text, the more attention you will give to the precise contextual meaning of each word'. He (ibid) also introduces the concept of text authority, considering that 'the more authoritative the text, the smaller, the unit of translation.' As with word-meanings, Lefevere (1992: 51) wonders whether a certain word has been 'properly' translated or not. Influenced by their religious backgrounds, some early non-Muslim translators seem to insert certain points deliberately in order to authenticate their view that the Quran is not the word of God but rather is the production of Muhammad. Consider the following points to illustrate this tendency:

1. The inclusion of the name of the Prophet Mohammad by some of them in the title of their works indicates that the Quran is his own creation.
2. On a word level, there is a degree of ambiguity about the choice of apostle/prophet/messenger, particularly the preference of the polysemic 'apostle' to 'prophet/messenger'. Collins dictionary defines 'apostle' as:
 - One of the 12 disciples chosen by Christ to preach his gospel;
 - Any prominent Christian missionary, especially one who first converts a nation or people.
 - A church reformer.
 - An ardent early supporter of a cause or reformer movement.
 - [Greek] *Apostolos* a messenger.

It gives the following definitions to the word 'prophet':

- A person supposedly chosen by God to pass on His message.
- A person who predicts the future.
- The principal designation of Mohammad as the founder of Islam.
- A person who speaks by divine inspiration.

It is quite evident that the latter definition of the word *prophet* is the most applicable to Muhammad's situation as a Prophet. Needless to say, the Arabic word رسول (messenger) implies by convention the sense of نبي (prophet) but not vice versa. That means every رسول is a نبي but not the other way round since a رسول has to convey his message to people whereas a نبي does not. Consider the following Quranic verse:

Example 01 (Q 03: 144):

وما محمد إلا رسول

...

- Muhammad is no more than an apostle; ... (Sale)
- Muhammad is no more than an apostle; ... (Rodwell)
- Muhammad is no more than an apostle; ... (Dawood)
- Muhammad is no more than an Apostle; ... (Ali Yusuf)
- Muhammad is but a messenger, ... (Pickthall)
- Muhammad is only a messenger ... (Abdel Haleem)

In the above Quranic verse, while the non-Muslim translators plump for the word 'apostle' as an equivalent for the Arabic رسول, the Muslim translators, apart from Yusuf Ali, opt for the 'messenger' option to render the Arabic word رسول. However, the latest versions of Yusuf Ali's translation (2003/2004) also adopt this option (these amendments are possibly the work of Saudi scholars). Thus the recently amended versions of his translation read:

Muhammad is no more than a messenger: ...

Theoretically speaking, priority has to be given to the literal method, and it should be adopted as long as it works. However, a translator may depart from this literalism where literal translation may fall short in achieving accuracy or if there is a justified reason(s). Hatim and Munday (2004:150) clarify some of those reasons when literal translation proves unacceptable. These are where it

- Gives another meaning.
- Has no meaning, or
- Is structurally impossible, or
- Does not have a corresponding expression within the metalinguistic experience of the TL, or
- Has a corresponding expression, but not within the same register.

Looking at the example under scrutiny, none of the above-mentioned reasons seems valid to justify the non-Muslim translator's translational choice apart from their ideological influence. Chesterman (2000: 22) also decisively confirms that not only the words themselves should be closely conveyed but also even the very word-order in sacred scriptures is a mystery. In this sense, Quranic translators would be required to exert an extra effort to convey not only the core of the message but also the deliberate ambiguity of ST. This should be kept in the TT, as the Code of Practice in English-speaking countries arguably prevents interpreters from clarifying elements in the original discourse that are deliberately ambiguous (see Valero-Garces C. and Tipton 2017:04).

Where a closer equivalent for a key sensitive religious expression is available, but the translator opts for another, less adequate option, this will, if deliberate, be considered an ideological manipulation. However, if undeliberate, this will lead at least to under-translation. Thus the English renditions cannot do full justice to these religious expressions, which had intimate associations with their cultural context. The translators' choice of an English equivalent term serves as the fine line that separates and categorises them according to their religious groups since it might give the impression that their choices have intentionally been made according to their cultural or religious backgrounds. If this was the case, it would then go without saying that the non-Muslim translators might deliberately choose a particular term to ambiguously give the wrong impression that Muhammad was just a missionary or reformer rather than a prophet and hence his book will be his product rather than being the word of God.

3. Another indication has to do with the universality of the Quran. The religious background of the translators reflects their view of whether they take the Quran as the universal word of God or not. The Quran, on more than one occasion, states clearly that it is addressed to all mankind. Consider the following Quranic verse:

Example 02 (Q 02: 21):

يا ايها الناس اعبدوا ربكم الذي خلقكم والذين من قبلكم لعلكم تتقون

O men of Makkah, serve your LORD who hath created you, created you and those who have been before you: peradventure ye will fear him; ... (Sale)

O men of Mecca, adore your Lord, who hath created you, created you and those who were before you: haply ye will fear him. (Rodwell)

Men, serve your Lord, who has created you and those who have gone before you, so that you may guard yourself against evil; ... (Dawood)

O ye people! Adore your Guardian-Lord, who created you And those who came before you that ye may have the chance to learn righteousness; ... (Yusuf Ali)

O mankind! Worship your Lord, who hath created you and those before you, so that ye may ward off (evil). (Pickthall)

People, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, so that you may be mindful [of him]. (Abdel Haleem)

However, some translated versions decide on the locality of where the Quran appears as if it was peculiar to a particular group of people only - 'men of Makkah/Mecca', for example. Consider also the following Quranic verse, where, this time, the general sense of an Islamic nation has been limited by some translators to refer to Arabs only:

Example 03 (02: 143):

وكذلك جعلناكم أمة وسطا لتكونوا شهداء على الناس ويكون الرسول عليكم شهيدا

Thus have we placed you, O Arabians, an intermediate nation, that ye may be a witness against the rest of mankind and that the apostle may be a witness against you. (Sale)

Thus have we made you a central people, that ye may be witnesses in regard to mankind, and that the apostle may be a witness in regard to you. (Rodwell)

We have made you a just nation so that you may testify against mankind and that your own apostle may testify against you. (Dawood)

Thus have We made of you An Ummat justly balanced, That ye might be witnesses Over the nations, and the Apostle a witness over yourselves; ... (Yusuf Ali)

Thus We have appointed you a middle nation, that ye may be witnesses against mankind and that the messenger may be a witness against you. ...(Pickthall)

We have made you [believers] into a just community so that you may bear witness [to the truth] before others and so that the messenger may bear witness [to it] before you. (Abdel Haleem)

Footnote:

- a just community. Literally 'a middle nation'.

4. Wajeeh Abdel Rahman (1421 Islamic calendar; corresponding to 2006: 26-27) has gone even further than that by stating that some non-Muslim translators (without mentioning specifically whom) opt for the use of the term 'inspiration' rather than 'revelation'. Although from an etymological perspective, both inspiration and revelation have previously shared an overlapping meaning of that 'extraordinary or supernatural divine influence vouchsafed to those who wrote the Holy Scriptures, rendering their writings infallible'¹. The modern sense of inspiration as 'merely the arousal of the mind or feelings of a human being

¹ Online *Easton's 1897 Bible Dictionary*

towards special creativity' may give the impression that the Quran is a human production rather than, as has been asserted that it is God's disclosure of his own nature and his purpose for mankind through the words of human intermediaries; i.e., God's revelation in the form of human utterance.

As stated earlier, ideological manipulation is not the monopoly of Non-Muslim translators only. Based heavily on Zamakshari's tafsir, Asad, therefore, has been influenced by his ideological beliefs (that of the Mu'tazili group). Thus his work can be considered to be an English translation with a Mu'tazili perspective. Additionally, because of his European origin, Asad's version also adopts a liberal approach. See, for example, his lengthy footnote on Q 24: 31, where he asserts that the concept of the Hijab varies with time and place. In this regard, Robinson (1996: 291) states that Asad's version needs to be read with caution as he occasionally makes references to women, prescribed punishments, and other ethical issues in accordance with modern European values. Relevant to this study, Asad also strongly believes that many of the statements of the Quran are allegorical.

Being unfamiliar with Islamic Sciences, both Yusuf Ali and Pickthall have been heavily influenced by the translation of Muhammad Ali, who belongs to the Qadyani (Ahmediyya) group. Thus some of this group's doctrines have been absorbed into their translations, especially in Yusuf Ali's work. Pickthall's work has very few explanatory notes, which has helped minimize the effect of Mohammad Ali's influence to some extent. Some of these misbeliefs are stated by Qadhi (1999: 370) and include:

Heaven and Hell are states of the mind and do not really exist; *jinn*s are not a separate creation of Allah but rather an innate force in man; *hooris* of Heaven are only for companionship and not for pleasure. In addition, Ali has an extremely liberal approach to *fiqh*, for he states that insurance and interest are allowed, and polygamy is discouraged in Islam; note some examples.

Due to his Sufi doctrine, Yusuf Ali continually intersperses his translation with his Sufic thought and philosophy whenever he gets an opportunity to do so. His translation also includes some notes that are indicative of his Sufic leanings and smack of apologetics and pseudo-rationalism. Ali has clearly been influenced by the modernist school of thought, which sought to explain away everything that they felt 'modern' science could not explain or rationalize. As a consequence, the Islamic World League released a guide booklet detailing the errors in his footnotes (Qadhi, 1999, 370-71).

By the same token, Helmiski reflects her feminist agenda by the use of the combination of He/She in her translation when referring to God. This attitudinal translation strategy is not motivated by her gender only but, according to Sedeeg (2015), also is strongly associated with Sufi beliefs. For incisive discussion regarding this issue, see Abdunaser Sideeg's article published in the International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature vol 4 No.5 (Sept. 2015). It is not the aim here to go into details; rather, to show that good intentions and correct beliefs are essential prerequisites for translators of the Quran. Due to the word limit, it will suffice to cite the following example to give the reader some understanding of the complexity and sophistication of views that arise from translating the Quran and to demonstrate that even Muslim pseudo-beliefs may lead to mistranslation. However, the following example is not meant to be exhaustive but to illustrate where the possibility of a freer approach to translation might drive the text towards the somewhat extremist ideologies of a particular group. It is arbitrating on a Quranic verse illustrated through the story of Abraham and presents a metaphoric parable that has to do with how Allah gives life back to the dead. This code of belief is against the ideologies of the Ahmediyya group. Thus translators who are influenced by such ideologies are trying as far as possible to drive the text towards their own tenets through their footnotes. The translators whose versions will be used for this example are: Sale, Rodwell, Dawood, Yusuf, Pickthall, Asad, and Abdel Haleem.

Example no. 4 (Q 02: 260):

واذ قال ابراهيم رب ارنى كيف تحيي الموتى قال اولم تؤمن قال بلى ولكن ليطمئن قلبي قال فخذ اربعة من الطير فصرهن اليك ثم اجعل على كل جبل منهن جزءا ثم ادعهن ياتينك سعيا واعلم ان الله عزيز حكيم

When Abraham said, O LORD, show me how thou wilt raise the dead: GOD said, Dost thou not yet believe? He answered, Yea, but I ask *this* that my heart may rest at ease. GOD said, Take therefore four birds and divide them; then lay a part of them on every mountain; then call them and they shall come swiftly unto thee: and know that GOD is mighty and wise. (Sale)

When Abraham said, 'O Lord, show me how thou wilt give life to the dead!' He said, 'Hast thou not believed?' He said, 'Yes, but I have asked thee that my heart may be well assured.' He said, 'Take, then, four birds, and draw them towards thee, and cut them in pieces; then place a part of them on every mountain; then call them, and they shall come swiftly to thee: and know thou that God is Mighty, Wise!' (Rodwell)

When Abraham said: 'Show me, Lord, how You raise the dead,' He replied: 'Have you no faith?' 'Yes,' said Abraham, 'but I wish to reassure my heart.' 'Take four birds,' said He, 'draw them to you, and cut their bodies to pieces. Scatter them over the mountain-tops, then call them. They will come swiftly to you. Know that Allah is mighty and wise.' (Dawood)

And when Abraham said (unto his Lord): My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead; he said: Dost thou not believe? Abraham said: Yea, but (I ask) in order that my heart may be at ease. His Lord said: Take four of the birds said and cause them to incline unto thee, then place a part of them on each hill, then call them, they will come to thee at haste. And know that Allah is Mighty, Wise.' (Pickthall)

Behold!' Abraham said: 'My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead.' He said: 'Dost thou not then believe? He said: 'Yea; but to satisfy my own understanding.' He said: 'Take four birds; tame them to return to thee; put *a portion of them* on every hill, and call to them: They will come to thee (flying) with speed. Then know that Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise. (Yusuf Ali)

Footnote:

- *A portion of them:* جزءا The received Commentators understand this to mean that the birds were to be cut up and pieces of them were to be put on the hills. The cutting up or killing is not mentioned, but they say that it is implied by an ellipsis, as the question is how God gives life to the dead. Of the modern Muslim Commentators, M.P. is non-committal, but H.G. S. and M.M.A. understand that the birds were not killed, but that a 'portion' here means a unit, single birds were placed on hills, and they flew to the one who tamed them. This last view commends itself to me, as the cutting up of the birds to pieces is nowhere mentioned unless we understand the word 'taming' in an unusual and almost impossible sense.

And, lo, Abraham said: 'O my Sustainer! Show me how Thou givest life unto the dead!' Said He: 'Hast thou, then, no faith? [Abraham] answered: 'Yea, but [let me see it] so that my heart may be set fully at rest.' Said He: 'Take, then, four birds and *teach them to obey thee*, then place them separately on every hill [around thee]; then summon them: they will come flying to thee. And know that God is almighty, wise'. (Asad)

Footnote:

- *Teach them to obey thee:* Lit., 'make them incline towards thee' (Zamakhshari; see also Lane IV, 1744). My rendering of the above parable is based on the primary meaning of the imperative صرهن اليك ('make them incline towards thee', i.e., 'teach them to obey thee'). The moral of this story has been pointed out convincingly by the famous commentator Abu Muslim (as quoted by Razi): If a man is able - as he undoubtedly is - to train birds in such a way as to make them obey his call, then it is obvious that God, whose will all things obey, can call life into being by simply decreeing, 'Be!'.

And When Abraham said, 'My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead,' He said, 'Do you not believe, then?' 'Yes,' said Abraham, 'but just to put my heart at rest.' So God said, 'Take four birds and train them to come back to you. Then place them on separate hilltops, call them back, and they will come flying to you: know that God is all-powerful and wise.' (Abdel Haleem)

This is a good example of how translators may take advantage of the metaphorical language of the Quran to move the text towards an interpretation that better serves their own ideologies by taking one particular part of the Quranic passage out of its whole context. Most of the classical commentators take the view that Abraham must have cut up the birds first if they were really to rise from the dead. However, some, like Razi, who quotes Abu Muslim, thought the important part of the metaphorical image was that it was as easy for four souls to come back to the body as for the birds to come back to Abraham. Although both interpretations are possible, as this is the nature of the Quranic text for being *حوال أوجه* (to be open to different interpretations), the first view is still far more convincing for the following reasons:

- In this context, the passage where this verse belongs, including the previous verses, is arguing how life might be given back to the dead; a fact that has been stressed repeatedly on different occasions in the Quran.
- Logically, how can birds stay still on separate hills till the Prophet Abraham calls them back unless they are dead, which is the clear understanding of the verse and the view of classical commentators? But translators who are influenced by the Ahmediyya group have difficulty believing that the birds were actually killed by Abraham and

therefore have rendered this phrase as 'then place them separately on hilltops', which is a clear understanding of the verse, and the view of classical commentators.

4. The Findings and results

In ancient times the translator's role was regarded as a passive one. However, this is no longer the case as some translational strategies, by convention, require a certain degree of involvement on the part of the translator. Although it is appreciated that 'all translation implies a degree of manipulation of the ST for a certain purpose' (Lee, 2013:20), this justified involvement on the part of the translator is fairly accepted. Nevertheless, this should not prevent translators from being neutral, as these translational shifts on their part translators can be viewed in terms of ideologically motivated manipulations (see Lee 2013:20). Lee (ibid) also appreciates that ideological selections made by translators transform their translations to unfaithful copies of the ST. Since translators are no longer invisible, they are expected to be at least ideologically neutral, particularly when dealing with highly sensitive authoritative texts such as the Quran. However, before moving on any further, it should also be stated that it is neither the intention nor the purpose of this study to assess these versions of English translations of the Holy Quran. The purpose of this study is neither to judge nor to find every single fault that has occurred, and the comments and remarks made here on the examples of a somewhat judgmental nature are not meant to belittle the efforts or qualities of these translations; all of which have made a useful contribution. Simply, because the Quran can be interpreted in different ways and the polysemic nature of its terms allows many varying interpretations, all these translations may still stand true. Rather, the main reason for analyzing the English versions is to highlight the influence of cultural background on translational choices. These comments are merely meant to illustrate how ideological manipulation is utilized differently in these translations by translators belonging to different cultural backgrounds.

As stated above, translators are supposed to be ideologically neutral. However, depending on their cultural beliefs and backgrounds, they do have varying attitudes toward the Quran, and this can lead to the text being rendered in very different ways. Looking at the translators' own introductions, one can draw a severance line that separates Muslims from non-Muslims regarding this point. It is quite evident that the former strongly believe that the Quran is the word of God, whereas the latter do not doubt that the Quran was the product of Muhammad's own imagination and hence, view it as a human work, albeit a religious one. Whether viewing the Quran as the word of God or not, the original intention of the translator in translating the Quran plays a vital role in the final product and may greatly influence the rendered version. The assumption is also entertained that these ideological discursive formations play an important role in the decision-making processes adopted by translators and in the choices made when dealing with text-worlds in transition (Hatim, 2001: 124). According to their religions or group-ideologies, it might be thought that early attempts at translating the Quran have suffered from very serious flaws and shortcomings. This is not only because those translators were not viewing the Quran as the word of God but also because most of them were not qualified enough to undertake the monumental task. Motivated by their religious backgrounds and religious profiles, translators treat Quranic text differently and, accordingly, their choice of certain terms serves as the fine line that separates and categorises them into two main different religious groups, i.e., Muslim and non-Muslim.

5. Conclusion

Generally speaking, the openness and comprehensiveness of the Quranic wording give translators the chance to interpret the same Quranic passage differently and hence to manoeuvre the text in a way that suits their beliefs, which is against neutrality and invisibility. As a result, some early non-Muslim translators seem to insert certain points or deliberately choose terms to ambiguously give the wrong impression that the Quran is not the word of God or in order to authenticate their view it is the production of Muhammad, believing, for example, that Muhammad was just a missionary or reformer rather than a prophet, and hence his book will be his product rather than being the word of God.

There are exceptions to this contentious scenario. Some non-Muslims have translated the Quran impartially. The progress of time and increasing contact with the Arab world has helped non-Muslim translators to view the Quran more fairly. For example, Arberry states in his introduction that he has tried to improve on the performance of his predecessors and to produce something which might be accepted as echoing, however faintly, the sublime rhetoric of the original Arabic Quran. Arberry's respect and good intentions make his translation one of the best by a non-Muslim translator. By realizing the importance of the Quran's spiritual inspiration, Arberry provides a wonderful work. His translation has a different and unique style, which attempts to preserve most aspects of the Quran. His good work is based on believing that the Quran is the word of God, as he states in his introduction. There is also the work of the Cambridge Arabist Palmer, a less religious partisan, who applies an academic approach to Quranic translation through which, according to *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*, a more academically rigorous approach develops. Abdel Haleem, in his introduction (xxvii), comments on Palmer's work by stating that: 'His translation appeared in 1980. He was the first to reflect, in his footnotes, some real respect for the text and the Prophet of Islam'. C. Turner, as well, holds the Quran to a large extent in great respect, which leads him to believe that it might be easier to let people learn Arabic and be able to read the original Quran for themselves rather than translate it into other languages.

In contrast, being the word of God, for Muslims, the translation of the Quran should therefore be considered as only an attempt to present the meaning of the Quran and to offer some glimmers of its charm to a wider audience who do not speak Arabic. When they read 'translation,' they should recognize that these are the words of a human translator and not the words of God. In the introduction of Saheeh's translation (1997: v), it is stated that 'the Arabic Quran, being the word of God the Exalted, far outshines and goes beyond any human endeavour in linguistic merit and is indeed the standard of superiority for all Arabic expression'. However, ideological manipulation is not peculiar to non-Muslims only. Some Islamic groups have also taken advantage of the Quran's openness. Every single deviant sect that has sprung forth in the history of Islam has misinterpreted verses of the Quran in order to support its particular beliefs. Thus some ideological shifts are reflected to a large extent in Asad's and Yusuf Ali's treatment of the Quran, particularly since both versions use extensive commentary footnotes. Asad, in particular, has to a large extent, tried to retain the Quranic metaphor more than other translators, as shown earlier in the above example. He believes that the ultimate meaning of certain passages cannot be adequately conveyed in any way other than through allegorical interpretation.

By way of conclusion, it is the hope and ambition of this study to make a modest beginning toward providing the uninitiated reader with the opportunity to the kind of influences that may have an impact on his work, particularly his/her cultural background when dealing with highly sensitive texts such the Quran. This modest effort is made in the humble spirit of developing a better understanding of this complex issue. This work has been rather broad in its coverage as it works on a number of different levels and hence focuses on several main points, namely translation, language, culture, the Quran, ideology, manipulation, and influence. As there are many aspects involved in work, has given it a certain comprehensiveness, some of which may not have received a similar weight of attention or have been, due to conciseness and the word limit, even overlooked in this study. This sort of comprehensiveness makes the need quite urgent for similar studies to be narrowed down in their scope to more specific and deeper research issues. Thus, any of these areas on its own can serve as a good topic for specific research. Despite possible imperfections, the researcher is optimistic that his effort will contribute in some small way towards a better understanding and act as a stepping-stone for gaining proper insights into Arabic/English translation in general and in translating Quranic text in particular. It is, therefore, the researcher's sincerest hope that this modest attempt may constitute a small step towards more research into translation from Arabic into English and vis versa. The following areas may also constitute important directions for future research:

5.1 Directions for future research:

1. A better understanding of texts as communication, which, no matter how different they are on the surface, share underlying similarities, will most probably lead to a better appreciation of the translator's role as an intercultural mediator not only between two languages but also between two cultures. Future research will do well to concentrate on the translating process from a translator's perspective, paying more attention to the role of the translator than has hitherto been the case. Such research may lead and contribute to a better understanding of translation practice as a most complex and intriguing intellectual process.
2. Qura'nic discourse is very delicate in nature due to its specific divine quality. Thus the discourse analysis of such a sensitive text may produce some other sub-implications of semantic, morphological, synonymical, and, more importantly, contextual aspects of this religious text. A cursory look from the standpoint of rendering the miraculous aspects of Quranic text, particularly those of linguistic and scientific context, will display such a delicate nature. Discussing all this by investigating whether or not these miraculous aspects have been properly conveyed to the targeted reader both on the linguistic and scientific levels can help towards an interesting analytical discussion, and the conclusions can also hold generalizations about translation studies in general.

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