

Research Article

Exploring and Analyzing Recurrent Errors in the Interpretation of the Holy Quran: Error Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at discovering the difficulties that face Non-Arab Muslim translators of QURAN, mainly problems occurred at the level of semantic issues. The researcher attempted to analyze these difficulties and compare them to the correct translations based on the Arabic knowledge. Many examples had been shown with such verses from the holy Quran that were concerned with such words translated wrongly due to the misunderstanding of these words, especially with Non-Arab translators. The researcher adopted an experimental descriptive and comparative method in the study. As a result of this study, the non-Arab Muslims translators are lack of Arabic knowledge and some grammatical rules, so they have to be familiar with the Arabic language before translating any Islamic texts.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background Review

The Holy Quran is regarded as a miracle of Allah in which it contains many stylistic, linguistic and rhetorical features that came in a wonderful and sublime way. Many Muslims scholars go in for translation of Qur'an because they think the translation of Quran is one of the most important factors in calling people to Allah and reporting Islam for people.

The translation of the Holy Quran is defined as transferring the contextual meaning of the exact origin. Muslims scholars state that the word in the holy Quran comes consistent with the pronunciation and even its rhythm fits with its object. So, literal translation will inevitably fail to convey the contextual meaning of the exact origin. As well, the word has two characters; an independent character that the translator can find it in the dictionaries, and a character that gives the word its deep meaning. In fact, it is defective in speech system to put the word within an inappropriately meaning. In addition, the foreign language has so many words that do not match the Arabic words and also in any two different languages, no two words are similar even if their meanings are close. Thus, the translator resorts front of large number of synonyms that leads him not to match the correct words to bring the exact meaning ,and he sometimes explains the concept by using phrases, so this in itself will affect the miracle of linguistic and rhetorical context of the Holy Quran and perhaps one word will change the entire meaning.

Translators face many semantic problems when they translate the Holy Quran to English. Here, some of the semantic features that pose semantic difficulty in translating the Quran will be reviewed. In the present study, we will mention some of the most important translations of the Holy Quran and its interpretation in English and state the weaknesses and strengths in some translated verses that were done by non-Arabic Muslims. There is no doubt that the special historical circumstances which paved the way for translating Quran in English have left impact on the attempts of the translation of the Quran by Muslims and non-Muslims. For this reason, the results and the achievements came incomplete and less than what are required to be.

1.2 Importance of Quranic Translation

The Quranic translation is one of the most difficult translations. It requires a great deal of knowledge SL/ TL. It has classical style and has a sensitivity language. As a huge challenge for the translators, it contains polysemous and metaphorical meanings, so this challenge originates in the peculiar linguistic and stylistic features of the 'Qur'anic language' which requires contextual and extra-contextual considerations. Also, the translation of the Holy Quran requires religious backgrounds as well as Arabic language backgrounds.

2. Literature Review

In this section, the researcher shed light on some definitions of the terms which are related to the present study as defined by the previous scholars; thus, the researcher presented definitions of the main concepts contained in the research such as polysemy, synonymy and metaphor. Secondly, previous studies were mentioned in the research.

2.1 Definitions

The Holy Quran

The first term is the Holy Quran; Muslims consider the Quran, the holy book of Islam, as the word of God and a miracle. Scholars define the Qur'an as this: The Arabic speech of Allah that was revealed to the Prophet both in word and in meaning. It is collected between the two covers of the Mushaaf, was narrated in mutawaatir chains, and is a challenge to humankind.

Denffer (1989, 17) identifies the Quran as "The Word of God (Allah), sent down upon the last prophet Mohammed, through the Angel Gabriel, in its precise meaning and precise wording, transmitted to us by numerous persons, both verbally and in writing. It is inimitable and unique, protected by Allah from any corruption" (quoted in Al-Sahli 1996: 43). Hasanuddin (1996) identifies the Quran as "A collection of messages received by Prophet Muhammad (S) direct from 16 Allah; which he delivered under divine direction, to those around him and through them to the entire humanity. The Book is guidance from Allah for the mankind. It contains revelations received by Prophet Muhammad (S) from Allah during a period of about 23 years".

Polysemy

Ullman (1967, p 159) defines polysemy as a "situation" in which the same word has two or more different meanings. He adds that polysemy is a fundamental feature of human speech which can arise in a multiplicity of ways.

Synonymy

Palmer (1986) defines synonymy as 'symmetric hyponymy'. He, however, admits "that there are no real synonyms (and) that no two words have exactly the same meaning" (p, 89).

Metaphor

Metaphor is as 'a word or phrase used to describe something else, in a way that is different from its normal use, in order to show that the two things have the same qualities and to make the description more powerful', (Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary, 2010, p. 965).

2.2 Previous studies

Sheikh Muhammad Shakir (1925) wrote a book entitled "'Al-Qawl al-Fasl fi Tarjamat al-Qur'an al-Karim 'ila al-LughatalA'jamiyya". In this book, he was against the translation of the Quran and any attempt to translate the Quran because he considered the translation from one language to another as replacing one expression for another in the same language, which means a balance of meaning must be preserved between the original and the translation, and between one phrase and another. He provides that the translation of Quran is impossible, and any translation will fail to transfer the sense of the original. Shakir believes that no one can change or replace any word in the Quran even in Arabic.

Sheikh Hasanayn Makhluf (1925), former Mufti of Egypt, published an article entitled "Risala fi HukmTarjamat al-Qur'an al-Karimwa-Q ra'atihiwa Kitabatihi bi-ghayral Lughati al-'Arabiyya".In this article, he differentiates between three types of translation; equal literal translation, unequal literal translation, and interpretative translation. He mentions that the first type which is word for word translation is impossible to be equal to the original in its composition, style and rhetoric according to scholars' opinions. He also states that interpretative translation is not a translation of the words of the original but of their interpretation, in other words, it is an interpretation of the Quran in another language. Sheikh Makhluf tells that this translation of Quran is allowable, but it must follow the right Prophetic traditions, knowledge of the sciences of Arabic, and of other Quranic sciences which are required for the interpretation of the Quran.

Al- Jabari's (2008) established a study entitled "Reasons for The Possible Incomprehensibility of Some Verses of Three Translations of the Meaning of the Holy Quran into English". He defines some terms related to the study and gives examples of some verses which translated literally. This study is a survey and review of the present translations of the Quran into English. It looks at all translations of the Quran into English and comments briefly on the honesty of some of these translations. It also sheds light on the efforts of some non-orthodox translators to represent their own beliefs in their translations.

Al-Rshood published a research entitled "Translation the Meaning of the Holy Qur'an" in 2010. The problem of the research is "How the polysemy serves as problem in translation the meaning of the Holy Qur'an". The researcher attempts to shed light on polysemy as a problematic semantic issue in translating the meanings of the Qur'an. The result of this research is that the student can evaluate the six translations of each polysemous word which are compared and analyzed in reference to the major reliable Qur'anic interpretations.

3. Research Methodology

In this section, data sampling was shown with an extremely analysis. In addition, the researcher had shown the methodology adopted in the research that was assumed to measure the problems occurred with the interpretation of the Holy Quran.

3.1 Data Sample

The sample of the research study was selected randomly from different verses that carried a semantic concept. As well, all the English interpretations of the verses done by non-Arab Muslims were analyzed and compared with a professional English translation. Errors were identified and classified in terms of semantic errors.

3.2 Method of the study

The researcher used a comparative design of research by comparing the weak translations with a professional translation in order to observe the difficulties and problems that some non-Arab translators fell in. Thus, the researcher classified the translation problems of semantic concepts as linguistic problems which are concerned with grammatical differences, lexical ambiguity and meaning ambiguity. As well, it can be characterized as conceptual and semantic difficulties that arise in conveying the meaning of statement in a foreign language. The present study followed a quantitative research approach where the data was collected from different translation related to non-Arab translators. The study aimed to find out the translators' performances of their translation of some semantic concepts. Thus, the study attempted to explain and determine the problems that the translators made in translating some verses in the Holy Quran. Moreover, the study provided a professional translation of the Quran as it was conducted a comparative study to compare the way the translators convey the semantic concepts in the Quran with the weak translations.

4. Findings and Discussion

In this section, the researcher established some semantics errors occurred in translating some verses from Quran and analyzed the mistranslated done by non-Arab translators.

Polysemy

Quranic texts are involved with many semantic issues and one of these issues is the different meanings of one word as in the term polysemy. In fact, Ullman (1967, 159) defines polysemy as a "situation" in which the same word has two or more different meanings. He adds that polysemy is a fundamental feature of human speech which can arise in a multiplicity of ways. Nida (1969, 63), on the other hand, does not consider polysemy to be a crucial problem for the translator, since the different meanings of a single word are rarely in competition, for they not only have relatively well defined markers which help to differentiate the meanings, but so often they are so diverse as not to compete with one another for the same semantic domain.

Polysemous words refer to a few concepts in a context-free environment. In fact, the Holy Quran is rich for its overuse of strings of polysemy words for the purpose of conveying different meanings and senses. The Holy Quran features many polysemic words in its structure. . For instance, the word *ummah* is one of these words.

Table 1: exploring errors in the translation of the word "Ummah"

Verse	Translation 1	Translation 2
إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِلَّهِ خَنِيفًا (النحل :) وَلَمْ يَكُ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (120)	(Surely, Abraham was a <u>nation</u> obedient unto God, a man of pure faith and no idolater) by Arberry. (16:120).	(Abraham was indeed a <u>model</u> , devoutly obedient to Allah, (and) true in Faith, and he joined not gods with Allah). By Yusuf Ali (16:120).
قال تعالى : (بل قالوا أنا وجدنا	(Nay, but they say, 'We found our	(no, but they say: we found our fathers

أبَاءَنَا عَلَى أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ (مَهْتَدُونَ) سُورَةُ الزُّكْرُوفِ (22)	fathers upon a <u>community</u> , and we are guided upon their traces). By Arberry (Az-Zūkhūrūf, 43:22).	following a <u>creed</u> , and by following in their footsteps we are guided) by Khan & Al-Hilali (Az-Zūkhūrūf, 43:22).
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The first verse has been translated as (Surely, Abraham was a nation) (Arberry, 1982). However, Arberry's translation is completely out of context and meaning. As the word (*ūmmah*-) refers to a man educated in the Islamic rules and who teaches these rules to the people, it does not refer to (nation). Thus, this verse will be translated as (Abraham was indeed a model) (Yusuf Ali's, 2000) (Surah Al-Nahl 16:120). In other polysemic meanings, the word (*ūmmah*) refers to a religion that some people follow, as in the second verse has been translated as ('We found our fathers upon a community) (Arberry, 1982). Arberry used literal translation to render the meaning of this verse. However, his translation is not communicative. It does not express the polysemic meaning of word (*ūmmah*), which means (religion or beliefs), not (a community) as he conveyed. In this respect, the translator must be aware and understand the phenomenon of polysemy in the Quran to translate better the intended meaning of the verses to the target audience.

Synonym

In this respect, the translators resort front of large number of synonyms that lead them not to match the correct words to bring the exact meaning, so this shows the miracle of linguistic and rhetorical context of the Holy Quran and perhaps one word will change the entire meaning. In Quran, the word *Dharab* (beat) has many synonyms in English depending on the context.

Table 2: exploring errors in the translation of the word "Beat"

Verse	Translation 1	Translation 2
(وَالَّذِينَ تَخَافُونَ يُشَوْرُهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَأَهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ) سُورَةُ النِّسَاءِ آيَةُ 34	As for those from whom ye fear rebellion, admonish them and banish them to beds apart, and <u>scourge</u> them. By Pikthal (34: 4)	As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (Next), refuse to share their beds, (And last) <u>beat</u> them (<u>lightly</u>). By Yusuf Ali (34: 4)

In English, the synonyms of the word (Darab) are beat, scourge and chastise. However, Pikthal has translated this word as (scourge) which means beat violently. In fact, this verse orders us that the way of beating should be lightly as a way of punishment, so the correct choice of this word is (beat) as what Yusuf Ali did as well as he succeeds in rendering this word by adding bracketed explanation to render the entire meaning.

here are also verses in the translation of the holy Quran were translated literally which may lead to misconception in belief, this happens due to the lack of knowledge of the sciences of Arabic, the right Prophetic traditions, and other Quranic sciences.

Table 3: exploring errors in the translation of the word "Seal"

Verse	Translation 1	Translation 2
قَالَ تَعَالَى: "مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ" سُورَةُ الْأَحْزَابِ	(Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the messenger of Allah and the seal of the prophet).	"He is the Messenger of Allah and the last one of all the prophets" Quran (33: 40).

This verse in surah al-Ahzab (40) was translated by Zafarullah Khan as (Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the messenger of Allah and the seal of the prophet). He used the word (seal) which means stamping or a piece of wax, lead, or other material with an individual design stamped into it, attached to a document to show that it has come from the person who claims to have issued it, while the verse means: "He is the Messenger of Allah and the last one of all the prophets" Quran (33: 40).

Metaphor

The use of metaphor in the Quran, along with other rhetorical usages, is a feature of the Quranic text. Therefore, translators should not ignore its use when attempting to translate the Quranic text (Al-Misned, 2001, p. 145).

Table 4: exploring errors in the translation of the word "Face"

Verse	Translation 1	Translation 2
قال تعالى: (يخلو لكم وجه أبيكم) سورة يوسف, آيه 9	(Kill you Joseph, or cast him forth into some land, that <u>your father's face</u> may be free for you, and there after you may be a righteous people. By Arberry (12:9).	{Kill Yusuf (Joseph) or cast him out to some [other] land, so that <u>the favour of your father may be given to you alone</u> } By Khan & Al-Hilali (12: 9).

This verse has been translated as (your father's face may be free for you) (Arberry, 1982). Here, Arberry's literal translation of the metaphorical expression is completely out of context. Therefore, the recipient may not comprehend the literal translation (your father's face). The metaphorical expression in this verse means that the attention and care of the Prophet Jacob will be passed on to his sons after killing Joseph, who received more care from his father. Thus, the correct translation could be by explanation and paraphrasing the entire meaning behind this metaphor as what has been done by Khan who renders successfully this verse as (the favor of your father).

Table 5: exploring errors in the translation of the word "Stirred and swell"

Verse	Translation 1	Translation 2
(وَتَرَى الْاَرْضَ هَامِدَةً فَإِذَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ وَأَنْبَتَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ أَوْجٍ بَهِيجٍ) (5)	(Thou sees the earth barren and lifeless , but when we pour down rain on it, it is stirred (to life) , it swells and it puts forth every kind of beautiful growth in pairs). (Yusuf Ali's translation, 2000) (22: 5).	(and you see the earth dry; but no sooner do we send down rain upon it than it begins to quiver and swell and it puts forth every kind of beautiful growth in pairs) Quran (22: 5).

This verse was translated as (Thou sees the earth **barren and lifeless**, but when we pour down rain on it, it is **stirred (to life)**, it **swells** and it puts forth every kind of beautiful growth in pairs). (Yusuf Ali's translation, 2000) (Surah al-Hajj: 5). The trembling of the earth after a long quiescence is compared to an animal that calms down after moving. Here, the Almighty God borrows some features from an animal to describe what happens to the earth after it rains. In this case, the literal translation cannot convey the exact meaning of the verse to the audience. To show how the earth (**stirred and swells**) these features for animals, we need to use communicative translation or paraphrasing to convey the intended meaning, the features, and the context of the verse. Thus, the correct translation is like (and you see the earth dry; but no sooner do we send down rain upon it than it begins to quiver and swell and it puts forth every kind of beautiful growth in pairs) Quran (22: 5).

5. Conclusion

Allah Says: 'If the whole of mankind and Jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support.'" (Chapter 17:88). There are many verses of challenge in the Quran; Allah challenges mankind to find one mistake in it or to produce like the holy Quran. Quran is a miracle in its verses and words in which it contains many different meanings, and because of the multiplicity of meanings of the Holy Quran, some scientists forbid the translation of the Quran. Thus, they say the translation of the Holy Quran must be carried out by a Muslim who is completely informed with the Arabic language because the ignorance in Arabic language will distort the meaning of verses. Scientists have unanimously agreed on the inadmissibility of the translation of the Holy Quran as a literal translation, and they allowed of the explanatory translation which is defined as a translation of the original text with some expansion to clarify its ambiguities. It is not a translation of the same verse, but the interpretation of the verse as well as the explanation of the verse is permitted by the Muslims scholars.

As a result, a possible explanation for adopting literal translation might be to imitate the style and form of the original text. Furthermore, it noticed that not all the translators covered all the word senses in their translations of the verses. This study observed that the translators did not depend on the sound knowledge in the science of the Holy Quran and numerous

interpretations to grasp the intended meanings of the verses precisely. Additionally, they seem unaware of many words in the Holy Quran could be interpreted in different way according to the given context. Thus, translators encounter many semantic problems when they translate the Holy Quran to English.

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