
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Cultural and Lexical Challenges Faced in Translating Some Selected Verses of Surat Maryam into English: A Thematic Comparative Review

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ABSTRACT

Translating the Arabic Qur'anic cultural and lexical expression into English has always been a strenuous and complicated task. It is ever more problematic than the translation of any genre. The recent study is a caveat-lector endeavor especially to scrutinize cultural and lexical challenges faced in translating some selected verses of Surat Maryam into English and their rendering losses. The foremost significance of this study is how the three selected Quranic translators attempted to achieve adequate cultural and lexical equivalence when rendering implicative meaning and profound meaning of the cultural and lexical expression in Surat Maryam. The study demonstrates that three targeted Quranic translators' renderings encountered cultural and lexical challenges while translating some selected verses of Surat Maryam into English. It is also discovered that proper linguistic and explicative analyses are priorities for accurate translation, which avert discrepancies in implicative meaning and rendering loss. The study concludes that the three notable Quranic translators employed literal translation, verbatim translation, Semantic translation, and communicative translation methods in rendering some selected ayahs[verses] of Surat Maryam into English comprising lexical and cultural challenges.

KEYWORDS

Challenges, Cultural, Review, Selected Verses, Surat Maryam, Translating

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1. Introduction

The Noble Qur'an is considered to be the most rhetorical Arabic text. Due to the excellence and perfection of its form, content and magnificence of its enunciation, the Noble Qur'an has come to be regarded as the standard of the Arabic language. (Meraj, 2016; Ahmad, 2020). It is regarded as the most renowned literary magnum opus by both Muslims and non-Muslim Arabs identically. The Noble Qur'an is considered to be the supreme authority and encyclopedia for Arabic rhetoric, grammar, and syntax, even by non-Muslim scholars (Ubaidat, 1990; Madni, 2018). The eminent scholar Ibn Athir has adequately summed up the greatness and the elegance of the language of the Noble Qur'an in the following lines: "If we begin to investigate into the wisdom and secrets of the eloquence of the noble Qur'an, we sail into a deep ocean that has no escape from it." (Micheau, 2014; Nassimi, 2008).

The translations of the Noble Qur'an have been considerable and played a constructive role in mankind. For several centuries, a large number of people from across the globe have been familiar with the message of the Noble Qur'an through its renditions. (Campanini, 2010; Smith, 1971; Abu-Milha, K. Y. (2003). The English renditions of the Noble Qur'an have been susceptible to the message of the Noble Qur'an to many people in English-speaking countries of the world since a few hundred years ago.

In the modern-day world English language is a powerful language, and large numbers of people of the world, Muslims and non-Muslims, learn and study the message of the Noble Qur'an using its English translations. Consequently, there is a pressing need

to investigate and evaluate the existing English translations and to determine the characteristics and quid pro quos of these translations, together with proposing concepts and reflections to contribute to the future translations of the Noble Qur'an with greater precision and attribute.

Translationally speaking, the Noble Quran is untranslatable, and its translation into any other language cannot really be the Noble Quran Qur'an. Abdul-Raof (2001). asserts, "a vulgate or Latin Qur'an cannot be a replacement of the original text: translation of the Qur'an is an aid to understanding the Qur'an and not a substitution". Moreover, Ali (1998 points out;

... although the production of Qur'anic translations is so important to the understanding of Islam, especially for non-Arabic speakers, we all have to bear in mind that the Qur'an is only the Qur'an when it is in its original Arabic wording and that no translation can substitute or become a replacement of that Holy Book. Bearing this in mind at all times solves the problems of the untranslatability of the Qur'an ... Translatability does not mean replacement

To sum up, a translation of the Noble Qur'an into any other language cannot indeed be the Qur'an, notwithstanding the preciseness and fidelity of the translation; for each language has its own features and properties and its own ethnic heritage and cultural asset, own style of transferring meaning, its own real structure to open channels of communication and setting up a connection with its own expressions.

2. The present study

The present study is a thematic comparative review that proposed exploring some lexical and cultural challenges faced in rendering Surat Maryam into English in three outstanding English translations of Mohammed A.S Abdel- Hakeem (2004) Mohammed M. Pickthall(19 (and Mohammed Khan and Mohammed Taj Al-Din Al-Hilai (1996). The objective is threefold:

- a. To identify some lexical and cultural losses in translating the meaning of Surat Maryam into English.
- b. To probe whether causes of the identified lexical and cultural challenges faced in rendering Surat Maryam into English.
- c. To scrutinize the translation strategies utilized by the three selected Quranic translators) in rendering some selected ayahs[verses] of Surat Maryam into English comprising lexical and cultural linguistic losses.

3. Questions of the Study

To meet the previously mentioned supposed objectives of the study, the following research questions were composed:

- 1) What are the lexical and cultural linguistic losses in translating the meaning of Surat Maryam into English by the three notable translators (Mohammed Abdel-Hakeem, Khan and Hilali, and Mohammed Pickthall)?
- 2) What are the reasons behind the identified lexical and cultural linguistic challenges faced in rendering Surat Maryam into English?
- 3) What are the translation strategies utilized by the three selected Quranic translators) in rendering some selected ayahs[verses] of Surat Maryam into English comprising lexical and cultural linguistic losses?

4. Related Literature

4.1 Issues with the Translation of the Noble Qur'an

4.1.1 The Extent Role of Cultural Issues in Impeding Translation of the Noble Qur'an into English: In Nutshell

There are some reasons behind not taking into account the cultural issue as a hindrance in the way of rendering the Noble Qur'an into English : Firstly: The Qur'anic message affirms to be global, secondly: a translation will always linger only a translation and never asserts to be a substitution of the novel, thirdly: the Noble Qur'an is not culture-bound in its totality, fourthly: actualizing that he/she is reading a rendition, the reader assumes to come upon issues that are culturally different from his/hers. However, good rendering should introduce the receptor to the original text culture.

4.1.2 The Translation of the Noble Qur'an is a Specific Case of Non-equivalence in Inter-textual Rendering

Bilingual people understand that verbatim translation is not effective in the conveyance of the grasping of a text because the grammar and syntax of every language are different, and each has its ad hoc arrangement and mode of speech. Moreover, we often find that there is a lack of precise equivalent between the words of one language and the words of another. This issue drives the translators to suppose that inequivalent in translation among the various languages is an anticipated linguistic oddity. The lack of equivalence among languages at lexical, cultural, syntactic, or semantic levels is a frequent fact and a challenge that is always faced by translators in general and Quranic translators in particular. Fittingly, the translation of the Noble Qur'an is a specific case of non-equivalence in inter-textual rendering. In fact, the key notion of equivalence in translation theory is merely unattainable in most key parts of the Qur' anic discourse. One has to ask if it is arduous to render the human tongue, then how one can possibly render the Divine Word without losing some of its original sense.

4.2 Sūrat Maryam (Mary)

Sūrat Maryam (Mary) is the ninetyeth Surah of the Noble Qur'an and is comprised of ninety eight verses). The name of this Surah speaks about Maryam, the mother of Prophet 'Isā (Jesus). The story can be carved into three main parts: In the first part, Allah the Almighty narrates the story of His prophet Zachariah who wished he had a son to be his successor in delivering God's message despite his old age and barrenness of his wife. Zachariah (peace be upon him) meant by Mawal his successive kith and kin or those to inherit him, whom he worried and afraid and that they would escort people to evil. Therefore, he prayed to Allāh to give him a son, whom he invoked to be a Prophet after him, who would lead them with his Prophethood and with that which would be revealed to him, the matter that Allāh approved. Indeed, he (peace be upon him) did not fear that his relatives would inherit his wealth, as a Prophet is so great in rank and too arrogant to become remorseful over his wealth to such a scope. Moreover, a Prophet would not distress for his wealth to be inherited by his relatives to the extent that he would invoke to be granted a son to grab his wealth alone. On the contrary, it was not stated that he was a rich man; for this reason, he was only a carpenter who earned his living through carpentry, the task that would not enable the one of such a task to accumulate wealth, chiefly Prophets; for the Prophets are the most indifferent in matters of this worldly life.

Verses 16 to 34 narrate the story of Maryam (Mary). This means that the angel said to her in response to her exclamation, "Verily, Allāh has said that a boy will be born from you despite the fact that you have no husband nor have committed any depravity. Verily, He is the All-Able to do whatever He wills." This is why Allāh says through Gabriel (peace be upon him): And (We wish) to appoint him as a sign to mankind, i.e. an evidence and a sign for humankind of the might of their Maker and Creator, Who brought them into being through diversified ways. He created their father, 'Adam, without a male (father) or a female (mother). Then, He created Hawwa (Eve) from a male (Adam) without a female. Then, He created the rest of their offspring from male and female, with the exception of Jesus (the Christ), whom Allāh created from a female (mother) without a male (father). Hence, Allāh set the four types of creation (of human beings) to perfection; the matter that testifies to the perfectness of His might and the magnificence of His authority. Verily, there is no deity worthy of worship except Him, nor is there Lord other than Him. and a mercy from Us (Allāh), i.e. Allāh "We will make this boy a mercy from Us (Allāh); as he will be saying: a Prophet from among the Prophets, calling people to Monotheism (i.e., worship of Allāh, the Almighty)." and it is a matter (already) decreed, (by Allāh).' It may be that this was a statement of Gabriel who gave birth to 'Isa (Jesus) through a miracle despite being unmarried and chaste. The verses depict the way an angel came to announce her pregnancy with a holy child, the pain of delivery that she experienced and the way God oriented her to eat the dates dangling from the palm tree as a way to facilitate the process of giving birth. Another miracle in this sura is depicted in verses 30-33, which show that 'Isa, son of Mary, could talk despite being newly born. Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) is mentioned in verses 41-65 of this sura, urging his father to refrain from worshipping statues and to turn to Allah the One God. The succeeding verses are references to other prophets like Moses, Ismail, and Idris (PBUH). Then, the remaining verses evoke resurrection and the Day of Judgment.

4.3 Related Previous Studies

Despite the fact that there is an enormous plethora of literature reviews on the renderings of the Noble Quran into the English language, very few research studies probed cultural and lexical challenges faced in translating Surat Maryam into English, that is, from thematic comparative review, for example, Toorawa, (2011) studied the English translation Sūrat Maryam from the lexicon, lexical echoes. The findings revealed that the research is great participation in the study of the lexicon of this sura, with a particular focus on three characteristics: rhyming end words, hapaxes, and repeating words and roots, some of which occur in Sūrat Maryam alone. Iraqi (2018) conducted a study which intended to analyze the English translation of Surat Maryam rendered by Yusuf Ali and compare it with the one rendered by Khan and Hilali. The findings showed that the two selected Quranic translators encountered some lexical, semantic, syntactic and stylistic problems. Also, lexically and terminologically, Al- Hilali and Khan's translations seem to be more faithful and precise, while Yusuf Ali's translation seems to be better stylistically. Considering as they signify topics and meanings and indicate the intent of the whole sura.

Abdulhassan (2022) studied (In Arabic) the effect of context in determining the significance of the present tense verb in (Surat Maryam. The findings of the study revealed that the connotations of the present tense are three: it is an indication of the present, the future, and the past, and there are some implicative meanings that the Qur'anic text gives according to the Qur'anic context. Al-Hitty(2020)explored(In Arabic) the aspects of Quranic readings in Surat Maryam that are from morphological and grammatical views. The study showed the views of the interpreters and grammatical aspects of this difference in pronunciation. This is due to the possibility of pronouncing multiple meanings, as this multiplicity of readings gives more breadth of meaning than is stated in one word. Mathkal (2020) investigated (In Arabic) the breadth of the meaning of the prepositions " from Surah Maryam as a model. The results indicated that prepositions(from) have a key function in Surat Maryam, which is to associate parts of a sentence, called letters, and they have originality and expansion in Sura.

5. Research Methodology

This part of the study aims to highlight the research method employed by the two researchers in collecting data for the current research paper.

5.1 Research paradigm

A qualitative research methodology was adopted to probe cultural and lexical challenges faced in translating Surat Maryam into English. The research methodology is based on extrapolation of the literature review supported by a survey for qualitative research of the previous research that explored cultural and lexical challenges faced in translating Surat Maryam into English. The research methodology is used to explain and prove many issues in this research; the first issue, there are many cultural and lexical challenges faced in translating Surat Maryam into English. The second issue is very important to highlight and focus on how to tackle these problems lexically and culturally.

5.2 Sampling of the Study

The current research aims at probing cultural and lexical challenges faced in translating Surat Maryam into English: encountered by three translators, namely: Abdel-Haleem, Mohammed M.Pickhall, Muhammed M.Khan, and Mohammed Hilali, in translating the longest Qur'ānic words into English. The study also aims at exploring how the three Quranic translators deal with these cultural and lexical challenges in their renderings. The study also intends to identify the translation strategies adopted by the three translators in rendering some selected ayahs[verses] of Surat Maryam into English comprising lexical and cultural linguistic losses by the two researchers for this study, as it is deemed appropriate for the analytical descriptive qualitative method such as this study. For example, verses of Surat Maryam in English comprise lexical and cultural linguistic losses). In that regard, the two researchers carefully selected the samples that show cultural and lexical challenges faced in translating Surat Maryam into English: by AbdelHaleem, Mohammed M.Pickhall, Muhammed M.Khan and Mohammed Hilali.

5.3 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. In practice, some ayahs (verses) of the phenomena under study, namely, cultural and lexical constraints and challenges encountered in translating Surat Maryam into English fittingly, three notable 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.

6. Results and Discussion

In this part of the study, some collected examples of cultural and lexical constraints and challenges encountered in translating Surat Maryam into English are analyzed by the researchers to identify cultural and lexical 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, verses of Surat Maryam into English comprising lexical and cultural challenges.

Example 1

The name of the Surah: Chapter (19) sūrat Surat Maryam (Mary) مريم , verse 4,

ST (4 : مريم) قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّي وَاسْتَعَلَ الرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا

Target Text:

- (1) **Abdelhaleem:** (Abdel Haleem, 'Lord, my bones have weakened, and my hair is ashen grey. (2004, p.306.)
- (2) **Khan and Al-Hilali:** Saying: "My Lord! Indeed, my bones have grown feeble, and grey hair has spread on my head (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1996, p.402).
- (3) **Pickthall:** Saying: My Lord! Lo! the bones of me wax feeble, and my head is shining with grey hair (Pickthall, 2001/1930, p.221).

6.1 The Meaning of Verse (4) of Surat Maryam in English

Saying: "My Lord! Indeed, my bones have grown feeble..." i.e., with weakness, I am stricken that nothing of strength I almost have, " i.e., gray hair has almost covered my head". In fact, this is indicative of his feebleness and his being too aged, all the while hinting at the involved external and internal outcomes. and **"I have never been unblessed in my invocation to You, O my Lord!"** i.e. 'Never did You but that You responded to my invocation, and never did You let me disappointed in that for which I have invoked You.

6.2 Cultural and Lexical Challenges Faced in Translating Verses of Surat Maryam into English Verse 4,

Probing the intended translation showed that Abdelhaleem, Khan and Al-Hilali, and Pickthall used the communicative translations method, which attempts to produce its receptors an effect as faithfully as possible to that realized by the readers of the source text to get the receptors to understand the fascinating meaning of the Quranic expression *washta 'alar ra'su shaibanw* وَاشْتَعَلَ الرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا ; It was noticed that the three translators rendered the expression into ' my hair is ashen grey ', ' grey hair has spread on my head ', and ' my head is shining with grey hair ' respectively. Pickthall's rendering is marked with considerable Archaisms are frequently misinterpreted by the receptor, leading to changes in usage.

To approach the meaning of the Arabic Quranic expression *washta 'alar ra'su shaibanw* وَاشْتَعَلَ الرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا ' in the Surat Maryam (Mary) *مريم*, verse 4, all three translators used the communicative method which hits a high degree of translational coincidences with the interpretation.

Table 1. Degree of Translational Coincidences with the Interpretation of the Arabic Quranic expression *washta 'alar ra'su shaibanw* وَاشْتَعَلَ الرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا ' in the Surat Maryam (Mary) *مريم*, verse 4

Type	Semantic translation			Communicative translation		
	High	Average	Low	High	Average	Low
Trans.1 my hair is ashen <u>grey</u>				+		
Trans.2 and <u>grey hair</u> has spread on my head				+		
Trans.3 my head is shining with <u>grey hair</u>				+		

Example 2

The name of the Surah: Chapter (19) *sūrat Surat Maryam (Mary) مريم*, verse 2,

ST (2 : مريم) دُكِّرَ رَحْمَتِ رَبِّكَ عَبْدَهُ زَكَرِيَّا

Target Text:

(1) **Abdelhaleem:** This is an account of your Lord's grace towards His servant, Zachariah, (Abdel Haleem (2004, p.306.)

(2) **Khan and Al-Hilali:** (This is) a mention of the mercy of your Lord to His slave Zakariya (Zachariah), (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1996, p.402).

(3) **Pickthall:** A mention of the mercy of thy Lord unto His servant Zachariah. (Pickthall, 2001/1930, p.221).

6.3 The Meaning of the Verse (2) of Surat Maryam in English

"(This is) a mention of the mercy of your Lord", i.e. this is a mentioning of the Mercy of Allâh upon His servant Zakariya (Zachariah), who was a great Prophet from the Prophets sent to the Children of Israel. It is recorded in the Sahih of Al-Bukhari that the Messenger of Allâh (PBUH) said that Zakariya (Zachariah) was a carpenter who used to earn his living from carpentry

6.4 Cultural and lexical Challenges faced in Translating verses of Surat Maryam into English Verse 2,

Abdul-Haleem and Pickthall's renderings of *عبده* (His servant) suffer from the effects of literal translation, which is often also culturally foreignizing and also, their renderings are not implicatively equivalent because the element (His Servant) results in a vague meaning. Consequently, a reader who has no previous knowledge of the Quran or Islam is likely to fail to understand (His servant). The Term (servant) in The Holy Quran refer to the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). This reference is very clear to Muslims because they are aware of the story and because This expression occurs on several occasions in the Quran. By contrast, a non-Muslim reader will not be able to understand to whom the term servant refers. To clarify this implicative meaning, Khan and Hilali add information and point to Mohammed (PBUH) in their rendering to clarify the vague meaning, and this is why their renderings take (semantic translation) and Abdul- Haleem and Packthall's renderings take (literal translation).

To approach the meaning of the Arabic Quranic expression, *دُكِّرَ رَحْمَتِ رَبِّكَ عَبْدَهُ زَكَرِيَّا* in the Surat Maryam (Mary) *مريم*, verse 2, Abdul-Haleem and Pickthall's used the communicative method which hits a low degree of translational coincidences with the

interpretation while Khan and Hilali used semantic translation which hits a high degree of translational coincidences with the interpretation.

Table 2. Degree of Translational Coincidences with the Interpretation of the Arabic Quranic expression ST ذِكْرُ رَحْمَتِ رَبِّكَ ' in the Surat Maryam (Mary) مريم , verse 2.

Type	Semantic translation			Communicative translation		
	High	Average	Low	High	Average	Low
Trans.1 <u>His servant</u>						+
Trans.2 <u>His slave</u>	+					
Trans.3 <u>His servant</u>						+

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the current investigation intends to examine especially three notable translations of cultural and lexical challenges faced in translating some selected verses of Surat Maryam into English and their rendering losses. (Abdel Haleem, 2004; Khan and AL-Hilali, 1996; Pickthall, 2001/1930). The study follows corpus-based research in the sense that the paper is conducted on three translation of the Noble Qur'an that has been collected from the Qur'anic Arabic Corpus and soft copy and hard copy books of Quranic translation of the above-named Quranic translators gathered by the two researchers. Based on the analytical-qualitative research method, the two researchers studied cultural and lexical challenges faced in translating some selected verses of Surat Maryam into English comprising cultural and lexical expressions. Findings showed that cultural and lexical challenges faced in translating Qur'anic Arabic- cultural and lexical expressions into English were caused by the cultural diversities and lexical differences between Arabic and English). The study emphasizes the importance of grasping the implicative meaning of Qur'anic Arabic- cultural and lexical expressions at linguistic levels when wielding caveat-lector efforts to translate them into English.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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