
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Problematicity of Translating Some Selected Arabic Qur'anic Collocations into English: Linguistic, Stylistic, and Cultural Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Rendering the Arabic Qur'anic collocations into English has always been a burdensome and daunting job. It is ever more problematic than the rendition of any genre. The recent research is a caveat-lector attempt that seeks specifically to investigate the problematicity of translating some selected Qur'anic collocations into English that is from linguistic, stylistic, and cultural perspectives. The findings of the study show some of the selected translations flop to transfer the connotative meaning of Qur'anic collocations scrupulously, and hence they have weak connotations. On the other hand, some renderings succeed in conveying the implicative meaning of Arabic Qur'anic collocations, and consequently, they have strong connotations. The results also reveal that the most generally put to use translation method or strategy for translating the embedded meaning of Arabic Qur'anic collocations was that of verbatim translation or literal translation, and they also demonstrate that this resulted in a great loss of the intentional meaning, distorting the perfect translation of Qur'anic collocations that is from linguistic, stylistic, and cultural perspectives.

KEYWORDS

Collocations, English, Qur'anic, Perspectives, Problematicity, Translating

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1. Introduction

Research up to now has evidenced that collocations play a functional role in the effective utilization of languages whose use mirrors an idiomatic use of a language. Moreover, they have an adhesive purpose and create a particular meaning that is from the meaning of their constituent elements (Qassem, 2021; Izwaini, 2016). Understanding collocation is fundamental in translating from source language text to target language text because it allows the translators to transfer the stylistic characteristics of the original language text to the language receptor or target audience. Collocations are a gripping linguistic phenom in translation in general and the Quranic translation in particular. To attain native-like competence, translators have to improve collocational proficiency besides other aspects of linguistic competence. (Contreras, 2010; Henriksen, 2013). Cowie (1981) defined a collocation as "a composite unit which permits the substitutability of items for at least one of its constituent elements (the sense of other elements, or elements, remaining constant". Moreover, Chan & Liou, 2005) opine that the term collocation refers to "the natural co-occurrence of a string of words whose meaning is inferable from literal concepts". Larson (1984) states that 'collocation is concerned with how words go together, i.e. which words may occur in constructions with which other words'. In his turn. Larson (1984) also warns:

The translator must constantly be alert to the potential pitfall of collocational clashes in the translation. To avoid this, he will consider as suspect any word not used in its primary sense. If translated literally, it will probably cause a clash. (147)

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The Noble Qur'an is full of rich collocations. Some of these Qur'anic collocations are intensely and profoundly cultural. If the source language text culture and target language text culture is diverse, 'there will be instances when the source text will contain collocations which convey what to the target reader will be unfamiliar associations of ideas' (Baker, 2011). In that same vein, Farghal & Shannaq (1999) relate the predicament of rendering Qur'anic collocations to the certitude that they bear special linguistic and semantic characteristics that are culturally specific yet so extensive in meaning that equivalents in target text do not exist'.

One of the difficulties that we encounter with Quranic translators is how to render collocations. Many Quranic collocations are sometimes misrepresented to the intended audience or receptors because of a lack or inadequacy to perceive their linguistic, stylistic, and cultural facets. (Therefore, the importance of the translation of Quranic collocations in some verses is examined in this research paper.

2. The present study

The goal of the current research paper is twofold. The first is to throw light on how the Quranic translators cope with Quranic collocations when rendering them into English and whether the translated text has satisfied the cultural and stylistic features of the collocations or not.

3. Questions of the study

To achieve the above-mentioned twofold objectives, the study poses the following questions:-

RQ1.: What are the problems that impede the translation of the Qur'anic collocations into English from stylistic and cultural perspectives?

RQ2.: To what extent do the three selected Quranic translators of the Noble Qur'an adequately translate the style and culture of the Qur'anic collocations into English?

RQ3.What are the translation strategies utilized by the three selected Quranic translators in their renderings of the Qur'anic collocations into English?

4. Related Literature

4.1 The Concept of Collocations:

The term collocation etymologically is stemmed from the Latin *col-locare*/: " to collocate "which means " to keep company " or to " put together ".(Larson 1984; Hamad, 2020;). Collocation is a global linguistic phenom. Collocations are typical, specific and characteristic word combinations. (Gibbs,1990). Benson and Ilson (1986:) define collocations as "loosely fixed combinations" of the type to commit murder, taking up a position between "idioms, on the one hand, and free combinations, on the other". Manning and Schütze (1999) define Collocations as a word combination whose semantic and/or syntactic properties cannot be fully predicted from those of its components and which therefore has to be listed in a lexicon

In the 1930s, J. R. Firth coined the term collocations for such regular feature word combinations (as he named them).In his turn, Firth (1957)defined collocations as" abstraction at the syntagmatic level [that] is not directly related to the conceptual approach of the meaning of words".Beyond the Neo-Firthian tradition, the term *collocation* has appertained to a broad spectrum of lexicalization phenomena to ensure the existence of a group of intensional definitions. Collocations are usually situated somewhere in the gray zone between fixed idioms and free combinations, often in a phraseological scheme.(Burger , et al.,1982; Evert, 2005; Krenn, & Evert, 2001,). Based on such definitions, collocations could be defined as conventional expressions that have a symmetrical pattern and do not change in a variety of contexts.

Linguists classify collocations according to their word order into different types. The most common types are:

- _ Adjective noun: great pride, heavy traffic, big mistake, etc.;
- _ Noun noun: account executive, action movie, Air gun, Antitrust case etc.,
- _ Verb noun: Have a drink, Break a record, Pay attention, Have sympathy. , etc.; and
- _ Adjective adjective: hale and hearty, alive and kicking, healthy and strong, etc

Hausmann 1989, as quoted in (Qassem, 2021), for example, divides collocations into six types:

- (1) adjective noun (clear understanding);
- (2) (subject-)noun verb cats purr, dogs bark);
- (3) noun noun (round of applause);
- (4) adverb adjective (fully aware);
- (5) verb adverb (speak loudly); and

(6) verb (object-)noun (give a speech)

4.2 The Role of Collocation in Translation

Translationally speaking, collocations play a prominent role in translation because they aim at conveying the import of the source language text to the effectiveness and efficiency of the receptor, having the same impact on the target language text audience as it does the source language text on the source language text people (Alhaj,2015; Ghazala, 2008; Chiaro, 2008; Abdelkarim, & Alhaj, 2023). Newmark (1988, as quoted in (Qassem,2021) states that the translator:

[. . .] will be 'caught' every time, not by his grammar, which is probably suspiciously 'better' than an educated native's, not by his vocabulary, which may well be wider, but by his unacceptable or improbable collocations.

Thus, sticking to the collocational formalities of the target language text implies attaining fidelity of the rendition, for instance, idiomatical expressions (i.e. and nativelikeness). (Protopopescu, 2015; Qassem,2021; Newmark,1988).

One of the dilemmas that translators encounter is how to render collocations. Many collocations are sometimes misrepresented to the intended audience because of a lack of identity in their linguistic, stylistic, and cultural aspects. Translators may strive to realize collocations when they emerge in the source language text or encounter difficulties in understanding their intentional meaning, especially as linguistic lexemes that inherently collocate in the source language text may not collocate similarly in the object-oriented language. As stated by Baker (2011) that, collocational examples often convey senses that are culturally specific, and she recommends translators to elude pursuing source language examples that are anomalous of the target language text except if there is a reasonable ground for accordingly. Baker (2011) also claims that 'translation of culture-specific collocations involves a partial increase in information'. According to Dweik and Shakra(2011)

The difficult task of translating Arabic collocations into English is further aggravated when the translation of collocations deals with a religious text. Most of the problems encountered are due to the specificity of certain lexical items, which are rooted in the structure of the language and are deeply immersed in Arabic culture. (10)

In conclusion, rendering collocations is also a mountain to climb and an arduous task in that it is inadequate to render the items of the collocation only but also the semantic and cultural features equally. Another concern that can be met when rendering collocations is when the translator is, as Barnwell (1980) named it, "carrying over" the collocation from the source language text to the target language text, which seems abnormal and obscure for the target audience.

4.3. Related Previous Studies

Even though there is a colossal and huge amount of literature reviews on the renderings of the Noble Quran into the English language, very scanty studies on the translation of the Qur'anic collocations were carried out; for example, Ali (2019) explored the problems of rendering the Quranic Arabic collocational phrases into English. The research shows that literal translation and the verbatim translation may sometimes distort the meaning of the collocations discovered in the source language text, while free translation is able to communicate a greater sense of their implicative meaning. Qassem (2021) probes style and meaning in translations of the Qur'anic verb-noun collocations into English. The study exposes that linguistic and exegetical analyses are merits for appropriate rendering, which avoid divergence in meaning and rendering loss. It is also discovered that Qur'anic collocations employ special rhetorical devices and tropes, which impede and hamper their natural and appropriate translation into English. Bahumaid (2006) investigates collocation in English-Arabic translation. Findings revealed that collocations show a major challenge to translate from English into Arabic and contrariwise even for skilled and expert translators. The difficulty arises from, among other things, the significant differences in the collocability of lexical items in both Arabic and English.

Al Sughair (2011) conducts a study which ventures to throw light on how translators cope with collocations when conveying their implicit meaning to the target language text and whether the target text implements the linguistic and stylistic features of the collocations or not. The study demonstrates that calque translation seems to be the most common strategy in rendering collocation in literary texts. Al-Sofi, Maros, & Baker (2014) examine the problems that translators encounter when rendering Qur'anic collocations into English. Findings show that the paramount problems of rendering cultural collocations are retaining source language text, literal sense, realising collocations and culturally specific senses. Findings also show that it is difficult to tackle such problems; however, it is necessary that translators grasp the meaning of the source language text to its linguistic and cultural extent. Hamad (2020) studies collocations in the Noble Qur'ān and their renderings in English. The study concentrates on the rhetorical utilization of these collocations and underscores the difficulties. Quranic translators face in translating them. Findings

show that the Quranic translators sometimes founder to mirror the rhetorical sense of Qur'anic collocations and their rhetorical impact in the target language (English).

5. Research Methodology

This section of the present investigation purports to emphasize the methods of research used by the two researchers in data gathering for the ongoing research.

5.1 Research paradigm

A qualitative research approach was espoused to examine the problematicity of translating some selected Qur'anic collocations into English; The research approach is predicated on extrapolating the review of literature through a study for qualitative research studies of the previous investigation that explored the same problematicity. The present research approach is employed to elucidate and evidence many concerns in; this investigation, the first one, there is the problematicity encountered in rendering Qur'anic collocations into English. The second one is particularly important to spotlight and knuckle down to how to address this problematicity that is from linguistic, stylistic, and cultural perspectives.

5.2 Sampling of the Study

The current investigation purports to study from linguistic, stylistic, and cultural perspectives the problematicity of translating some selected Qur'anic collocations into English in three selected Quranic translations of Abdel-Haleem, Mohammed M.Pickhall, Muhammed M.Khan, and Mohammed Hilali. The twofold goal of the current investigation is to shed new light on how these Quranic translators cope with Quranic collocations while rendering them into English and whether the translated text has satisfied the cultural and stylistic features of the collocations or not. The study also intends to identify the translation strategies utilized by the three selected Quranic translators in their renderings of the Qur'anic collocations into English. In this context, the two researchers conscientiously and prudently chose some samples that comprise Quranic collocations by AbdelHaleem, Mohammed M.Pickhall, Muhammed M.Khan and Mohammed Hilali.

5.3 Data Collection

To fulfill the twofold objectives of the investigation, the analytical-qualitative research method is used by the two researchers. Moreover, this method is consistent with the recent study because the translation of the Noble Quran is a daunting and challenging task and cannot be exceedingly and greatly investigated employing any other possible methods. De facto, some Quranic collocations are collected and analyzed by the two researchers that are in the three outstanding translations of the meanings of the Noble of Mohammed, A, S, Abdel Hakeem, Mohammed M.Khan and Mohammed Taj Al-Din Al-Hilali and Pickthall.

6. Results and Discussion

In the present section of this study, some collected examples of the problematicity of translating some selected Qur'anic collocations encountered by the Quranic translators are analyzed by the two researchers to determine linguistic, stylistic, and cultural perspectives as well as translation loss. Also, the subsequent section of the study pursues to pinpoint the translation strategies and procedures adopted by the three Qur'anic translators, notably Mohammed, A, S, Abdel Hakeem, Mohammed M.Khan, and Al-Hilali.

Example 1 (Al-bayti al-'atīq' اَلْبَيْتُ الْعَتِيقُ (Noun+ Adjective collocations)

The Name of the Surah: Chapter (22) sūrat الحج Al-Hajj,) The pilgrimage verse 29,

ST (الحج : 29) ثُمَّ لِيَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ وَلِيُوفُوا نُدْوَرَهُمْ وَلِيَبْطِئُوا بِأَلْبَتِّ الْعَتِيقِ (الحج : 29)

Target Text:

1. **Abdelhaleem:** so let the pilgrims perform their acts of cleansing, fulfil their vows, and circle around the Ancient House (Abdel Haleem, 2004, p.211)
2. **Khan and Al-Hilali:** Then let them complete the prescribed duties (Manasik of Hajj) for them, perform their vows, and circumambulate the Ancient House (the Ka'bah at Makkah). (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1996, p.371).
3. **Pickthall:** Then let them make an end of their unemptness and pay their vows and go around the ancient House. (Pickthall, 2001/1930, p.244).

6.1 The meaning of verse (29) of Chapter (22) sūrat الحج Al-Hajj,) The pilgrimage

Then let them complete the prescribed duties (Manâsik of Hajj) for them, meaning ending Ihram by shaving one's head, putting on one's ordinary clothes, trimming one's nails and so on. and performing their vows, i.e., sacrificing the camel(s) that the one has vowed and circumambulate the Ancient House (the Ka'bah at Makkah). In reference, it is to the obligatory circumambulation (Tawaf) on the day of Sacrifice. (Ibn Kathir, Vol.3)

To conclude, Ibn Kathir (1999) and Al- Qurtubi(2006) state that 'al-bayti al-'atiq' refers to the Ka'bah in Mecca which was built by the prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) and his son Ismail centuries before the rising of Islam.

Problematicity of translating Qur'anic collocations *Al-bayti al-'atiq'* التَّيْتُ الْعَتِيقُ in Chapter (22) sūrat الحج Al-Hajj.) The pilgrimage verse 29,

Probing the intending translation of Qur'anic collocations, *Al-bayti al-'atiq'* التَّيْتُ الْعَتِيقُ showed that Abdelhaleem and Pickthall adopted the literal translations method, whereas Khan and Al-Hilali used literal translation and addition translation procedures. Hence their renderings come respectively as " the Ancient House ", " the Ancient House(the Ka'bah at Makkah) ." and " the Ancient House ". The three renderings could be bewildering and unclear to the target audience. The language receptor may not grasp the Ka'bah because it is not a part of his /her reverent culture (Christian culture/ biblical culture etc.). Al-Hilali and Khan also use a calque (a literal translation) and use addition procedures ('the Ka'ba at Makkah') to boost the target reader's understanding and to convey the connotative meaning of the Qur'anic collocation *Al-bayti al-'atiq'* التَّيْتُ الْعَتِيقُ. Hence, Al-Hilali and Khan's rendering ranks the best and has strong connotations. Abdelhaleem and Pickthall could not take into account the connotative meaning of the Qur'anic collocation *Al-bayti al-'atiq'* التَّيْتُ الْعَتِيقُ because adopting a calque (literal translation) procedure in their renderings caused a lack of the specific cultural connotative implications. Hence, their renderings have weak connotations.

Table 1: **The three levels of connotative implications of Qur'anic collocations *Al-bayti al-'atiq'* التَّيْتُ الْعَتِيقُ in Chapter (22) sūrat الحج Al-Hajj.) The pilgrimage verse 29,**

| Target Text | Strong connotation | Mild connotation | Weak connotation |
|--|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Tran. (1) <u>The Ancient House</u> | | | + |
| Tran. (2) <u>The Ancient House (the Ka'bah at Makkah)</u> | + | | |
| Tran. (3) <u>The Ancient House</u> | | | + |

To approach the meaning of the Qur'anic collocations *Al-bayti al-'atiq'* التَّيْتُ الْعَتِيقُ in Chapter (22) sūrat الحج Al-Hajj.). In the pilgrimage verse 29, Abdelhaleem and Pickthall adopted the literal translation method, which hits a low degree of translational coincidences with the interpretation. Whereas Al-Hilali and Khan employed \ a calque (a literal translation) and additional procedures which hit a high degree of translational coincidences with the interpretation.

Table 2. **Degree of Translational Coincidences with the Interpretation of of Qur'anic collocations *Al-bayti al-'atiq'* التَّيْتُ الْعَتِيقُ in Chapter (22) sūrat الحج Al-Hajj.) The pilgrimage .verse 29.**

| Type | Semantic translation | | | Literal translation | | | Couplet translation | | | Free translation | | |
|---|----------------------|---------|-----|---------------------|---------|-----|---------------------|---------|-----|------------------|---------|-----|
| | High | Average | Low | High | Average | Low | High | Average | Low | High | Average | Low |
| Translation NO | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Trans.1 The Ancient House | | | | | | + | | | | | | |
| Trans.2 The Ancient House (the Ka'bah at Makkah) | | | | | | | + | | | | | |
| Trans.2 The Ancient House | | | | | | + | | | | | | |

In conclusion, Larson(1984) advises against employing literal translation for rendering the meaning from the source language into the target language:

A literal translation is useful if one is studying the structure of the source text as in an interlinear translation, but a literal translation does not communicate the meaning of the source text. It is generally no more than a string of words intended to help someone read a text in its original language. It is unnatural and hard to understand and may even be quite meaningless or give a wrong meaning in the receptor language. (14)

This indicates that the translation of the Quranic text in general and Qur'anic collocations occasionally demands the use of translation strategies and producers other than that of literal translation to render their connotative and implicative meaning appropriately and accurately.

Example 2 *Ahl al-kitāb'* (Noun+ Noun collocations)

The Name of the Surah: Chapter (3) عمران آل Aal-i-Imraan, The Family of Aal-i-Imraan verse 64,

ST قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ (آل عمران) 64:

Target Text:

- (1) **Abdelhaleem:** Say, 'People of the Book, let us arrive at a statement that is common to us all (Abdel Haleem, 2004, p.39)
- (2) **Khan and Al-Hilali:** Say (O Muhammad SAW): "O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians): Come to a word that is just between us and you, (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1996, p.77).
- (3) **Pickthall:** Say: O People of the Scripture! Come to an agreement between us and you: (Pickthall, 2001/1930, p.67).

The meaning of the verse (64) Chapter (3) عمران آل Aal-i-Imraan, The Family of Aal-i-Imraan

This an address to the people of Scripture (Jews and Christians) and those of similar path" **come to a word"** (word) is used here, as usual, to refer to the sentence of full meaning ." **That is just between us and you"** meaning, just and that which equates between us and you. Then He explains it ." That we worship none but Allah, and that we associate no partners with Him," meaning we fulfill what all Messengers have call for, i.e., to worship Allah only with no partners either from Taghut(false deities) or idols or fire, or anything else that mankind may worship, and this is Message of Messengers. (Ibn Kaither, vol.1)

Problematicity of translating Qur'anic collocations of *Ahl al-kitāb'* أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ in Chapter (3) sūrat عمران | Aal-i-Imraan, The Family of Aal-i-Imraan, verse 64,

Examining the target translation of Qur'anic collocations of *Ahl al-kitāb'* أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ manifested that Abdelhaleem adopted literal translations method, so he rendered into "People of the Book", hence he founded to communicate the connotative meaning of the Qur'anic collocation of *Ahl al-kitāb'* أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ : which it could seem unknown to the intended audience, especially those who lack knowledge of Islamic terms. Most mother tongue speakers of Arabic would apprehend the meaning of this phrase because it is part of their cultural and religious milieu, but this would not be the case for the aimed audience. Therefore, his rendering has a weak connotation. Comparatively, Pickthall adopted a semantic translation method to render Qur'anic collocation of *Ahl al-kitāb'* أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ, so he rendered it into" People of the Scripture" which it could seem more proper and more enlightening due of his mentioning both Christians and Jews in his rendering; hence his translation has a strong connotation. Al-Hilali and Khan employed a free translation, so they rendered Qur'anic collocation of *Ahl al-kitāb'* أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ into 'people of the Scripture', adding en passant 'Jews and Christians'. Applying this couplet translation strategy, they stipulate more detailed information and help the target audience to completely understand the intentional meaning; hence their renderings have a strong connotation.

Table 3: The three levels of connotative implications of Qur'anic collocations of *Ahl al-kitāb'* أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ in Chapter (3) sūrat عمران | Aal-i-Imraan, The Family of Aal-i-Imraan, verse 64,

| Target Text | Strong connotation | Mild connotation | Weak connotation |
|--|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Tran. (1) People of the Book | | | + |
| Tran. (2) O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) | + | | |
| Tran. (3) People of the Scripture | + | | |

To approach the meaning of the Qur'anic collocations *Ahl al-kitāb'* أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ in Chapter (3) sūrat عمران | Aal-i-Imraan, The Family of Aal-i-Imraan, verse 64, Abdelhaleem, and adopted literal translation method which hits a low degree of translational coincidences with the interpretation. Whereas Pickthall adopted a semantic translation method employed, which hits a high degree

of translational coincidences with the interpretation. Finally, Al-Hilali and Khan employed a free translation which hits a high degree of translational coincidences with the interpretation.

Table 4. Degree of Translational Coincidences with the Interpretation of Qur'anic Collocations of Ahl al-kitāb "أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ" in Chapter (3) sūrat عمران | Aal-i-Imraan, The Family of Aal-i-Imraan, verse 64,

| Type | Semantic translation | | | Literal translation | | | Couplet translation | | | Free translation | | |
|--|----------------------|---------|-----|---------------------|---------|-----|---------------------|---------|-----|------------------|---------|-----|
| | High | Average | Low | High | Average | Low | High | Average | Low | High | Average | Low |
| Translation NO | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Trans.1 People of the Book | | | | | | + | | | | | | |
| Trans.2 O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) | | | | | | | | | | + | | |
| Trans.3 People of the Scripture | + | | | | | | | | | | | |

To conclude, Quranic translators should not be restricted by the construction of the source language text; instead, they require to employ various strategies to convey the meaning of the source text(Arabic) into the target text(English).

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, in exploring the problematicity of translating some selected Qur'anic collocations into English that is from linguistic, stylistic, and cultural perspectives, it was found that the three Qur'anic translators, Mohammed, A, S, Abdel Hakeem, Mohammed M.Khan, and Al-Hilali and Pickthall did not a follow particular translation method or strategy when rendering Qur'anic collocations into English. In the aggregate, their renderings were achieved by adopting addition translation, literal translation, free translation, and semantic translation (see Tables 2 and 4). Some of the selected translations flop to transfer the connotative meaning of Qur'anic collocations scrupulously, and hence they have weak connotations. On the contrary, some renderings succeeded in conveying the implicative meaning of Qur'anic collocations, and hence they have strong connotations. (See Tables 1 and 2). The findings of the study show that the most commonly utilized translation method or strategy to translating the embedded meaning of Qur'anic collocations was that of verbatim translation or literal translation, and they also indicate that this resulted in a great loss of the intentional meaning, deform the perfect translation of Qur'anic collocations that is from linguistic, stylistic, and cultural perspectives.

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