
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Connotations of Fewness and Muchness in Arabic: A Semantic and Translational Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to explore the reflection of the connotative meanings in the translation of the Arabic lexical items *qalil* (few or little) and *kathir* (much or many) and their derivations from Arabic into English and Spanish. In order to conduct the study, some Qur'anic verses containing the two items are chosen, and two translations of the verses, English and Spanish, are selected to evaluate the portrayal of the connotative meanings of the two items in the translation. The study shows that the verses containing *qalil* and its derivations hold positive and favorable connotations and overtones, while the verses containing *kathir* and its derivations hold negative ones. It shows that the translation challenge of the antonymous lexical items *qalil* and *kathir* does not lie in their denotative meaning, but rather in the connotative one. It further reveals that lexical items can be concurrently antonymous at the denotative and connotative levels, a semantic fact that should be given enough attention in translation. The study concludes that since literal translation does not convey the various implications of lexical items, exegetic translation is suggested as an appropriate translation strategy to transfer these implications.

KEYWORDS

English, Spanish, connotations, translation challenge, paraphrasing

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1. Introduction

Language inimitability of the Qur'an springs from various language perspectives that include lexicon, structure, cohesion, style, eloquence and rhetoric. To illustrate, some items may have different meanings that cannot be easily and instantly comprehended and grasped as in the case of puns, polysemy, antonyms and auto-antonyms, and invisibility (Al-Kharabsheh and Alazzam 2008); structurally, a verse may have different semantic and pragmatic interpretations, depending on where the reciter pauses (Al-Azzam 2009). In addition, the Qur'anic rhetoric and eloquence are two features of standard Arabic that are heavily employed in the Qur'an. As Abdul-Raof (2006, 1-23) states:

"rhetoric is the flesh and blood of the Arabic language. It is a linguistic discipline that aims to sharpen up and upgrade the linguistic competence of writing and speaking. It provides us, as language users, with the appropriate and effective stylistic mechanisms required for eloquently forceful discourse. Thus, Arabic rhetoric makes language meet the communicative needs of the language user (...) the eloquence enables us, as language users, to avoid unacceptability and stylistic oddity at the word level. Eloquence is also concerned with semantically ambiguous lexical items".

Inimitability of the Qur'an includes its style, where an ordinary human being cannot produce its alike. Haroun (1977, 10) confirms that "the uniqueness in style, as seen in the harmony of words and meanings (...) the rhetoric of the Qur'anic style in argument and evidence, suits all levels of perception and intellect" confirming that the style is one of the main causes of the Qur'an's

inimitability. The inimitability of the Qur'an also includes its narrative where a story about certain prophets and nations is provided in a divine and a non-imitable way (the people of the cave; the Israelites), among many others.

Lexical items are basically the main source of denotative or referential meaning; further implications of lexical items are gained from the contextual environment. It should be pointed out that the denotative meaning of a lexical item is affected by the linguistic environment of the text. Therefore, readers of the Qur'anic discourse should consider the contextual structure of the text.

In addition to the denotative meaning of lexical items, there are connotative meanings that cannot be measured semantically, pragmatically, socially and culturally. These meanings differ from one person to another and from one society to another and they change over time due to the change of life style and cultural exchange and communication. In other words, the denotative meanings are more stable and do not drastically change over spans of time, while connotative meanings tend to change because of historical, political, economic, ideological and social changes.

As far as translation is concerned, rendering lexical items between languages is not simple, denotatively and connotatively. Translation challenges may emerge or arise due to the causes and reasons mentioned earlier. Lexical items may be synonymous in the sense that they have similar meanings. Synonymy according to Shiyab (2007) "is a kind of semantic relation among words. Technically, it occurs when two or more linguistic forms are used to substitute one another in any context in which their common meaning is not affected denotatively or connotatively". They can also be antonyms in the sense that they hold opposite meanings. Antonyms can be defined as the lexical items that have a semantic relationship between words that have opposite meanings, equivalent to all types of opposition, including contradictories, contraries and gradable antonyms (Lehrer & Lehrer, 1982). In translation, it is not difficult to render the denotative meaning of the synonymous and antonymous lexical items. The translation challenge lies in producing similar connotative meanings of such lexical items in the receptive language.

The main objective of this study is to investigate the translation of the connotative meanings of the Arabic lexical items *qalil* (few) and *kathir* (much and many) from Arabic into English and Spanish. To conduct this study, two translations (English and Spanish) of some verses containing the two lexical items are selected, and they are evaluated connotatively with regard to *qalil* and *kathir*. Based on the evaluation of preserving the connotative meaning of *qalil* and *kathir*, certain translation strategies such as footnoting and explanation are recommended.

2. Denotative Meaning, Connotative Meaning, and Translation

Denotative meaning represents or stands for the link between a lexical item and an object that it signifies. Lyons (1977, 207) defines the denotation of a lexeme as "the relationship that holds between that lexeme and persons, things, places, properties, processes and activities external to the language-system." Denotative meaning is also termed denotational meaning, denotation, propositional meaning and cognitive meaning (Cruse 1986). It is, therefore, the direct meaning that combines between a lexeme and the entity that it describes or denotes in the real world. As feelings and ideas about a lexeme differ from one person to another, these feelings and ideas are not included in the denotative meaning.

The semantic weight of a lexical item is represented in its denotative, referential, or conventional dimension. Dickens et al (2002, 52) define the denotative meaning as "that type of meaning which is fully supported by ordinary conventions such as the convention that 'window' refers to a particular kind of aperture in a wall of a roof." They (ibid, 235) add that "the *overall meaning* of an expression in context is compounded of the denotative meaning of that expression plus any connotative meanings and contextual nuances that the expression has."

The denotative meaning depends heavily on its semantics since such a meaning is referential and direct. This viewpoint is supported by Cole (1981), who shows the role of semantics in the formation of the literal meaning of words when quoted as saying: "Semantics is involved in the determination of conventional (or literal) meaning". Denotative meaning of words, phrases, and even sentences is linguistically based and has nothing to do with what people think or how they feel about the linguistic component of that meaning, and this is what is meant by semantics. According to Cox et al. (2021), "The study of linguistic meaning of morphemes, words, phrases, and sentences is called semantics".

Unlike the denotative meaning that is direct, referential and not subject to personal interpretations, connotative meaning is personal and is subject to various interpretations. Leech (1974) differentiates between the denotative meaning and connotative meaning. He maintains that the denotative meaning is the dictionary meaning, while connotative meaning is the meaning that is suggested by mind and it can be social, affective, reflected, collocative, and thematic, and all such connotative meanings are based on their context.

Dickins et al. (2002) define the connotative meaning as the implicit overtones that a linguistic expression carries over and above its denotative meaning. They add that the overall meaning of an expression is a compound of its literal meaning plus these

overtones and its contextual nuances. Therefore, the connotative meaning stems from a word or a phrase or even a sentence, based on certain associations of these linguistic elements.

Denotative meaning and the connotative meaning are connected in one way or another. While the denotative meaning is clear and gains social consensus, the connotative meaning is negotiable and is subject to different interpretations due to many factors like the emotional one, and this affects the evaluation of such a meaning Leech (1981), Larson (1984), Newmark (1981) and Bell (1991).

Connotative meaning represents the communicative power that lexical items are embodied in or empowered within their reference (Leech,1974). Connotations of lexical items differ between synonyms in the same language, let alone when the lexical items are antonymous like the Arabic lexical items *qalil* (little, few) and *kathir* (many, much) in the current study. Mismatch at the connotative level between languages results in translation loss. Savory (1957) maintains that lack of mismatch between lexemes results in translation loss, especially in literary translation, as such a translation is an imitation or a recreation of a source language text.

3. Discussion

This part of the study is concerned with the discussion and analysis of the examples that are selected to conduct this study. The Arabic examples are provided first; they are then followed by the two translations, English and Spanish. After that, a discussion and evaluation of the translations of the examples concerning the connotative meanings of *qalil* and *kathir* are provided. For consistency and organization, Ali's English translation is represented by the Roman numeral (I), and Garcia's Spanish translation by the Roman numeral (II).

3.1. Belief versus Disbelief

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّورُ قُلْنَا احْمِلْ فِيهَا مِن كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا مَن سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ وَمَنْ آمَنَ ۗ وَمَا آمَنَ مَعَهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ (٤٠ هود)

I. At length, behold! there came Our command, and the fountains of the earth(1533) gushed forth! We said: "Embark therein, of each kind two, male and female,(1534) and your family - except those against whom the word has already gone forth,-(1535) and the Believers." but only a **few** believed with him.(p. 137)

II. Cuando llegó el momento de cumplirse Mi orden [del diluvio], el agua comenzó a fluir y correr impetuosamente por el suelo, [entonces] le dije [a Noé]: "Embarca una pareja de cada especie [de la fauna doméstica de la zona], así como a tu familia, excepto aquél sobre quien pese la sentencia, y [por supuesto] a los creyentes". No obstante, los que habían creído en él eran **muy pocos**. (p. 218)

This verse is taken from chapter 11, *Hud*; it narrates the story of the prophet Noah and his people, when invited to embark on the ark. It shows that Noah and his people were passing through very critical and difficult moments. The prophet was very worried about his people, but they were unfortunately reckless. The verse shows that many of Noah's people refused to embark on the ark to escape the deluge and only very few of them followed his instructions and advice.

The Qur'an can lexically, denotatively and connotatively be described as very precise and this precision can be noticed in the consistent employment of its lexical items throughout its whole chapters. In the verse under discussion, the lexical item *qalil* (few) is associated with positive values or implications as in all positions in the Qur'anic discourse. The two translations have respectively translated قليلاً as (a few) and (very few). The translations have successfully relayed the denotative meaning of the Arabic lexical item *qalil* but have not highlighted its pertinent and permanent positive associations such as belief and faith in God as indicated in the current verse.

Religious texts such as the Qur'an require that the translator be equipped enough with their inimitable style. In such divine texts, meanings and implications of lexical items have precise employment that is reflected and portrayed in all their various contexts without discrepancies. This consistency gives the verses certain peculiarities and idiosyncrasies that can pass unnoticed if the reader is not linguistically and semantically gifted and sentient.

In the example under discussion, the Arabic lexical item *qalil* is associated with highly appreciated and esteemed values from the religious point of view, the most important of which is faith in God. This positive meaning cannot be easily made plain in English or Spanish in the literal translation that contains the lexical item's denotative meaning. To resolve such a semantic connotative problem in translation, exegetic translation is recommended, as this translation explains and elaborates the source text and shades observations provided by the source text. Not using such a type of translation makes the target text opaque to its readers. The exegetic translation makes explicit what the ST leaves implicit. This specialized type of translation of holy texts explains obscurities and adds commentary details to them (Armstrong 2005).

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ ۗ وَلَوْ آمَنَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ ۚ مِنْهُمْ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ
الْقَاسِقُونَ (110 آل عمران)

I. Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah. If only the People of the Book had faith, it were best for them: among them are some who have faith, but **most** of them are perverted transgressors. (p.44)

II. [¡Musulmanes!] Son la mejor nación que haya surgido de la humanidad porque ordenan el bien, prohíben el mal y creen en Dios. Si la Gente del Libro creyera, sería mejor para ellos; algunos de ellos son creyentes, pero **la mayoría** son desviados. (p.81)

Unlike the Arabic lexical item *qalil* (few), in the previous example, which is associated with auspicious connotations, *akthar* (most) or its other form *kathir* (many) in the present example shows and displays negative connotations. This is manifestly observed when a comparison is made between the believers, who follow what is right and abstain to follow what is wrong, and the disbelievers who do not have faith and reject the instructions of God. The verse explicitly states that what is best for the People of the Book is their belief in God, and those people are so few if compared with those who do not believe in God and reject His message (Ibn Kathair, 2000).

In the present example, rendering the associations of the Arabic lexical item *kathir* (much or many) and its other forms *akthar* (most) cannot be comprehended or seized by target language readers unless enough exegesis is provided. The lexical item *kathir* and its derivations in the Qur'an are typically associated with negative connotations. Therefore, rendering them into English denotatively does enable the target language reader to grasp or capture their associated connotative meanings that are typically negative.

The case being so, the translator should support the target text with the semantic implications and allusions that are connected with *akthar* in the verse. Gist translation, for example, is recommended to portray the semantic context and shades of the ST. The ST should be prioritized over the TT because the meaning is originated in it. Translators normally tend to transmit the surface meaning of the ST, as in the case of the Qur'an translation. This results in translation loss of the semantic components of the ST, and as such gist translation is suggested. Abdul-Raof (2013, 29) justifies such a behavior for the fact that "The provision of literal translation can at times be attributed to negligence on the part of the Qur'an translators who do not refer to Muslim exegetes to check what the accurate underlying Qur'anic meaning is".

3.2. Thankfulness versus Denial

Allah has created human beings and has bestowed them with many bounties such as hearing, seeing, and understanding. However, very few people are thankful to Allah Who is cognizant of their nature. The Qur'anic text is rhetorical and eloquent in the sense that the meanings of its words are precisely, consistently, and harmoniously employed. Only readers or reciters enjoying enough semantic and linguistic competence and capability of such a text can realize or seize the exact meaning of Qur'anic lexical items and all their implications, a quality that translators of the Qur'an should have when translating the Qur'an.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَ لَكُمْ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ ۗ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ (78 المؤمنون)

I. It is He Who has created for you (the sense of) hearing (ears), eyes (sight), and hearts (understanding). **Little** thanks you give. (p.112)

II. Él es Quien los agració con el oído, la vista y el intelecto, pero **poco** se lo agradecen. (p. 232)

The Arabic lexical item *qalil* (few) in the present verse is associated with thankfulness of the believers for Allah's bounties. Literal translation of this lexical item does not reflect *qalil's* associated meanings in the English and Spanish versions. Thus, capturing the semantic implications and connotations of the Arabic lexical item *qalil* in the target languages is not without difficulties. The translator should be aware of the semantic and pragmatic features that are alluded with the Arabic lexical item *qalil*. Thankfulness, as a positive feature linked with *qalil* in the current verse, cannot be felt or comprehended by readers of the receptive languages. The peculiar and distinct meanings or interpretations that that *qalil* entails cannot be grasped when this lexical item is translated into other languages such as English and Spanish. To ensure the full comprehension of source language lexical items, the implicit meanings and connotations should be explicitly made in the receptive language.

Based on this discussion, semantic and pragmatic translation problems may typically arise when the implicit meanings of the source language are not explicit in the target language. These meanings can be expounded when the target text is provided with sufficient explanatory details. According to Nicholas (1988,78), "the source text (...) has an implicit meaning that may need to be made explicit if its translation is to be understandable in the receptor language".

ثُمَّ لَاتَيْبَتُهُمْ مِّنْ بَنِينَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ ۗ وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ (IV الأعراف)

I. Then will I assault them from before them and behind them, from their right and their left: Nor wilt thou find, in **most** of them, gratitude (for thy mercies). (p. 91)

II. Los abordaré por delante, por detrás, por la derecha y por la izquierda⁶; encontrarás que **la mayoría** de ellos no serán agradecidos. (p. 152)

Contrary to *qalil* in the previous verse, the lexical item *akthar* (most) in the current example carries unfavorable undertones. Ingratitude to Allah despite His bounties to man cannot be easily observed in the source text where most people, according to the verse, are unthankful and follow their mundane and worldly wishes and desires after being deceived by the devil. This negative association of *akthar* is not easily captured by the source text readers, let alone when rendered into different languages such as English and Spanish. The semantic implicitness of the lexical item *akthar* which is (denial or lack of thankfulness) requires footnoting, explanatory information, or paraphrasing. Such procedures are useful in the translation of connotative meanings as such meanings cannot be always captured. Alhaj (2018) maintains that the connotative meaning of lexical items is normally more powerful than the denotative one and has an emotional association in SL, especially in the Qur'an where the lexical item renders a personal meaning to the reader or a command.

3.3. Knowledge versus Ignorance

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (85 الإسراء)

I. They ask thee concerning the Spirit (of inspiration). Say: "The Spirit (cometh) by command of my Lord: of knowledge it is only a **little** that is communicated to you, (O men!)" (p. 188)

II. Te preguntan acerca del espíritu. Diles: "El espíritu es una de las creaciones de Dios, de las que solo Él tiene conocimiento. No se les ha permitido acceder sino a **una pequeña parte** del inmenso conocimiento de Dios. (p. 279)

In this verse, the Jews ask the prophet about the spirit through which bodies survive. The spirit is considered one of the occults or the unknown issues (Al-Qurtubi, 2006). Naturally, people do not have any knowledge about the spirit, its shape, its nature and the way it functions to keep living species alive. Allah has kept this knowledge hidden from humans and discussion or negotiation about this issue is not permissible. Therefore, it has become a debatable issue between messengers of Allah and the disbelieving people who are invited to faith. Knowledge in different fields is something positive as it enlightens one's life and makes him/her different from animals.

Obtaining knowledge is of great value and not many people are equipped with this positive merit. As a quality, knowledge is highly appreciated by Allah and the knowledgeable people and scholars are rewarded high decrees. Human beings are given knowledge; still, all the knowledge they gain remains very little; this littleness of knowledge is so positive and is expressed in *qalil* in the verse.

Denotatively, the English and the Spanish translations have successfully relayed the meaning of *qalil*, respectively as *a little* and *pequeña parte* (little part). However, the two translations have not uncovered the positive connotations and the favorable allusions of the Arabic lexical item *qalil* which designate knowledge and awareness that a human being may have. Delving deep into the connotative semantics of such a lexical item and providing the translations with explanatory details in this regard can help in the full comprehension of *qalil* (few) in the two receptive languages. In such cases, the exegetic translation can be a good solution to resort to by the translator. According to Ilyas (2013, 262)

"When connotation is in focus, and it is not possible to find a connotative equivalent in the TL, translators can resort to exegetic translation, or use an explanatory footnote to draw the attention of readers to the connotative differences between the SL and the TL, and highlight the relevant S.L cultural implications".

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسَاهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي لَا يُجَلِّيهَا لِوَقْتِهَا إِلَّا هُوَ ثَقُلَتْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا تَأْتِيكُمْ إِلَّا بَغْتَةً ۗ يَسْأَلُونَكَ كَاتِبٌ خَفِيٍّ عَنْهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (187 الأعراف)

I. They ask thee about the (final) Hour - when will be its appointed time? Say: "The knowledge thereof is with my Lord (alone): None but He can reveal as to when it will occur. Heavy were its burden through the heavens and the earth. Only, all of a sudden will it come to you." They ask thee as if thou wert eager in search thereof: Say: "The knowledge thereof is with Allah (alone), but **most** men know not. (p. 107)

II. Te preguntan cuándo llegará la Hora [del Día de la Resurrección]. Diles: "Solo mi Señor lo sabe, y nadie salvo Él hará que comience en el momento decretado³⁶. Los cielos y la Tierra temen su llegada. Cuando llegue los sorprenderá". Te preguntan como si supieras [cuándo ocurrirá]. Diles: "Su conocimiento solo Le pertenece a Dios, pero **la mayoría** de la gente no lo sabe". (p. 171)

Allah has made the hour or the Day of Judgement as one of the occults or the unseen topics. People used to ask the prophet Mohammed about the hour, which he himself had no knowledge or idea about. In the verse, the prophet has explicitly stated that Allah alone knows about the exact moment of the hour's sudden occurrence.

Contrary to *qalil* (few) and its derivations, the antonym *kathir* (much or many) holds many negative associations or implications. Knowledge or awareness is a good quality that some human beings are attributed with. In the whole Qur'anic discourse, *kathir* is associated with negative nuances. To illustrate, *akthar* (most) in the present example, which is a derivation of *kathir*, holds a negative connotation implicitly observed in the most people's lack of knowledge or ignorance. The English and the Spanish translations have succeeded in rendering the denotative meaning of the Arabic lexical item *akthar*, respectively as *most* and *mayoría* (majority). However, the two translations have not referred to the negative implications of ignorance with which *akthar* is linked, neither in explanation nor in footnoting.

Reflection of connotative meanings not explicitly expressed in the target languages can be seized or gained by providing the target language text with supporting details that can help to uncover the negative implications of lexical items *akthar*. In such cases, paraphrasing and footnoting can be very helpful for target language readers. Such techniques can provide them with supplementary information without affecting the loyalty to the original text that is presented in the TT (Ababneh et al. 2023).

3.4. Obedience versus Disobedience

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَيَالِ الْوَالِدِينَ إِخْتَاتًا وَذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ (٨٣ البقرة)

I. And remember We took a covenant from the Children of Israel (to this effect): Worship none but Allah. treat with kindness your parents and kindred, and orphans and those in need; speak fair to the people; be steadfast in prayer; and practise regular charity. Then did ye turn back, except a **few** among you, and ye backslide (even now). (p. 14)

II. Y [recuerden] cuando celebré el pacto con el Pueblo de Israel: "Adoren solo a Dios, hagan el bien a sus padres y parientes, a los huérfanos y los pobres, hablen a la gente de buenas maneras, cumplan la oración y paguen el zakat"; pero luego volvieron su espalda en rechazo, salvo **unos pocos**. (p.39)

Real believers are dedicated to worshipping Allah, following His commandments and abstaining from doing what He has made unlawful or illegal. Worshipping Allah alone, being kind to parents, relatives, orphans, needy people, observing prayers, and paying alms are among the good deeds that Allah has ordered His believers to do. The verse above talks about the covenant that Allah has taken from the people of Israel to be obedient to him, in doing the good deeds mentioned in the verse. The majority of the people did not follow the commandments of Allah and they disobeyed Him.

Translating the lexical item *qalil* in the above verse into English and Spanish respectively as *few* and *pocos* (few) is not difficult at the denotative level. Problems usually emanate from the connotative and the associated meanings. In the Qur'anic discourse, the lexical item *qalil* is associated with positive connotations from a religious point of view. The deeds mentioned earlier are marks of the good believer and they are highly appreciated by Allah, Who has plainly stated that very few people have followed His instructions. In order to highlight the associations and positive connotations of the Arabic lexical item *qalil* and ensure the reflections of its favorable connotations in the receptive languages, enough explanatory details are required. The connotative meaning of lexical items in the Qur'an¹ is one of the main problems of translation. Mahasneh (2018, 310) is quoted as saying,

"one of the major problems in translating the Holy Qur'an is the religious cultural bound terms which consist of layers of meaning lexicalized in one linguistic term. Another problem is the distortion of the emotive and connotative overtones and expressive effects that the original terms trigger to the source language readers due to large cultural and structural difference".

وَمَا وَجَدْنَا لِأَكْثَرِهِمْ مِّنْ عَهْدٍ وَإِن وَجَدْنَا أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَفَاسِقِينَ (102 الأعراف)

I. **Most** of them We found not men (true) to their covenant: but most of them We found rebellious and disobedient. (p. 100)

II. **La mayoría** de ellos no cumplían sus compromisos y eran perversos. (p. 162)

Unlike *qalil* in the above example, which reflects positive connotations of the believers, *akthar* (most) in the current example shows that disbelievers and transgressors who are designated by *most* do not comply with the commandments of Allah. They, instead, break covenants they have taken and have consequently disobeyed Allah.

¹ Mahasneh, Anjad. 2018. The Translation of the Denotative and Connotative Meaning of (Sakinah) in the Holy Qur'an: An Empirical Study. Dirasat, Human and Social Sciences, 45(2). 301-312.

As far as the denotative meaning is concerned, the English and the Spanish translations have accurately rendered *akthar* as *few* and *pocos* (few). Translating the referential or denotative meaning is, in most cases, less difficult than translating the connotative one. As such, problems of translating lexical items usually arise when they are concerned with the connotative implications or allusions. Transgression and breaking treaties and covenants are negative associations of *akthar* in the present example. These negative overtones cannot be transmitted in the two receptive languages of this study unless the translators provide explanatory and illuminating details to highlight this semantic dimension. The translator should be careful when translating the connotative meaning of certain lexical items. Translators should not only understand the dictionary meaning, but should also understand the connotative one, which is defined by Talko et al. (2022, 129)

“Connotation is additional semantic, emotional, pragmatic, or stylistic nuances of usual or occasional character, which are included in the semantics of the word, expressing the emotional and evaluative attitude to reality.(...) Connotation is used as an additional component of the meaning of the linguistic unit of phonetic, morphological, lexical, and syntactic level, which implicitly laid the emotional, expressive, and evaluative attitude of the subject to the described object of real or unreal reality, and its stylistic color”.

3.5. Honesty versus Dishonesty

فَيَمَا نَقُضِهِمْ مِيثَاقَهُمْ لَعَنَّاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَاسِيَةً يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَن مَّوَاضِعِهِ^ل وَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا دُكِّرُوا بِهِ^و وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى خَائِنَةٍ مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا^م
مِّنْهُمْ (13 المائدة)

I. But because of their breach of their covenant, We cursed them, and made their hearts grow hard; they change the words from their (right) places and forget a good part of the message that was sent them, nor wilt thou cease to find them - barring **a few** - ever bent on (new) deceits. (pp. 68-69)

II. Pero por haber violado el pacto los maldije y sus corazones se volvieron insensibles y duros. [Por eso] tergiversan el sentido de las palabras [de la Tora] sacándolas de contexto, y dejan de lado parte de lo que les fue mencionado [en ella]. Descubrirás que la mayoría de ellos, salvo **unos pocos**. (p. 117)

Honesty is another positive association of the Arabic lexical item *qalil* in the Qur'an. Allah has plainly shown in the verse above that many people have played with the religious scriptures and have changed verses from the original positions. In addition, they have ignored a great portion of what Allah has prescribed on them. Of those so many people, only *qalil*, few have not committed these sins and crimes, and for that reason should be forgiven. Implicitly, many people practice deeds that are not acceptable from a religious perspective.

Translating the lexical item *qalil* into the receptive languages, English and Spanish, results in many translation challenges at the connotative level. The translations of the current example do not make explicit or plain that *qalil* is always associated with positive and favorable associations. In this sense, the translators should support their target language texts with supporting details that uncover the good implications of the Arabic lexical item *qalil* in the Qur'anic Arabic discourse. Rendering the connotative meaning of certain lexical items is a real challenge, especially when there is a cultural gap between the ST and the TT. Abdelaal (2018, 85) maintains that a connotative problem in translation is due to two main causes:

“Problems in preserving the connotative meaning of the ST word or playing it down are due to two main causes: the first cause is the lack of equivalence problem, while the second cause is a translator's failure to pick the most appropriate equivalent. Non-equivalence problems were mainly represented in lack of lexicalization, semantic complexity, culturally-bound terms, difference inexpressive meaning, and difference in distinction in meaning between the SL and TL”.

Abdelaal (ibid) suggests some strategies to translate the connotative meaning when saying: “paraphrasing in a footnote, transliteration, periphrastic translation, and being more accurate in selecting the proper equivalent”.

كَيْفَ وَإِنْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ لَا يَرْقُبُوا فِيكُمْ إِلَّا وَلَا ذِمَّةً^ع يُرْضَوْنَكُم بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ^و وَتَأْبَىٰ قُلُوبُهُمْ^و وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ (8 التوبة)

I. How (can there be such a league), seeing that if they get an advantage over you, they respect not in you the ties either of kinship or of covenant? With (fair words from) their mouths they entice you, but their hearts are averse from you; and **most** of them are rebellious and wicked. (p. 115)

II. ¿Cómo [podría tenerse un pacto con ellos siendo que] si obtuvieran una victoria sobre ustedes no tendrían compasión ni respetarían lazo familiar? Quieren agradaarlos con sus palabras, pero sus corazones los rechazan. **La mayoría** de ellos son perversos. (p. 183)

Completely different from the Arabic lexical item *qalil* in the above example, which reflects positive connotations of the believers, its antonym *akthar* (most) here displays that doubters and wrongdoers are too many and as such, they are labeled or connoted by *most*. They, according to the verse, break covenants they have taken and have disobeyed Allah.

Denotatively, the English and the Spanish translations have accurately rendered *akthar* as *most* and *mayoría* (most). Translating *akthar* denotatively into the two languages as *most* is simple since this part of the total meaning is direct and is not subject to many interpretations. The problems of translating lexical items usually arise in dealing with the connotative implications or allusions. Disbelief and transgression are negative associations of *akthar* in the present example. These negative nuances and overtones cannot be clearly displayed in the two receptive languages unless the translators support the target text with helping details that can uncover the connotations of the lexical under discussion.

4. Conclusion

This study has investigated the translation of the connotative meanings of the Arabic lexical items *qalil* few and *kathir* much or many from the Qur'anic Arabic into English and Spanish. The study has shown that the connotative meanings of the lexical item *qalil* and its derivations are too often positive and favorable, while the connotative meanings of the lexical item *kathir* and its derivations are negative and undesirable. The paper has highlighted that the two translations have succeeded in rendering the denotative meaning of the antonymous pair, but they have not managed to explicitly convey their connotative meanings in English and Spanish. In other words, the study has shown that the two translations have not illuminated the strong and the established connection between *qalil* and its various positive connotations and *kathir* and its negative connotations. In nutshell, the paper has concluded that exegetic translation, which uncovers the connotations of *qalil* and *kathir*, can be a suitable translation strategy.

4.1 Study Limitations and Future Research

Although the study has covered an essential semantic issue in translation at the connotative level, it lacks studies that reflect the antonymous connotative meanings of lexical items that carry opposite meanings. Thus, it may in the future pave the way for researchers to conduct studies that handle the translation of connotative meanings of antonyms, to prove that antonymous lexical items may have opposite meanings at both levels, denotatively and connotatively.

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