| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Qur'an's Characteristics: Review of Literature

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| ABSTRACT

This paper examines and surveys literature about the characteristics of the Holy Qur'an. This review summarizes both modern and previous researches and studies which aimed to specify and determine why and how the Qur'an is different and difficult to translate. The used sources deal with the issue from different perspectives what have all something to do with translation. The characteristics that the paper discusses lead, automatically, to what we call Qur'an untranslatability and inimitability. The paper does not take anything for granted and examines the sources to check all the characteristics and to analyze the given examples and evidence. The used literature is originally written in English and Arabic. The Arabic sources are translated to make the paper understandable and systemic.

1. Introduction

There are different types or genre like religious, literary, journalistic, educational, instructional, poetic, etc. Despite the differences between these types, they still share some of the features which achieve textuality. Is Quran any of these? What makes it a special Book?

After the Quran's revelation, Arabs called it 'poetry' and 'magic' on other occasions. They could not decide whether it was prose or poetry and could not recognize its type. After hundreds of years, scholars are still discussing whether this miraculous Book belongs to any genre or is a genre by itself. Taha Hussein tried to answer Jahili era questions by saying that the Quran is not poetry at all and cannot be prose. He claims that the Quran has its own structures and formulas that makes it *Quran* and nothing else. He also adds that although the Book uses some musical language and rhythmic style, it is not poetry. This point shall be clarified in the next section of this chapter. Hussein (Hussein, 2013) concludes that there is no book like It, and no book was before or to come of its greatness.

To support Hussien's view, another Arab scholar can be mentioned here. Ibrahim Al Fikki (2000) supports this idea by stating that the inimitability (i'jaz) of the Quran confused Arabs at that period. Arabs were confused as they had not seen any book like the Quran and they couldn't produce something similar to it, though challenged to do so. The same source insists that Arabs were astonished because of the unique and *eminent style of the Quran,* beautiful architecture, and the rules and knowledge of the unseen (Al Fikki 2000:125).

Another point that many books examined and worked on is the arrangement of all the surahs or chapters in one whole despite the differences and the times and occasions of revelation. Al Fikki called this النسق, Qutb used *tana:suq*, while Mohammed Khattabi mentioned *insija:m*. These scholars refer to the arrangement, we have talked about in the previous part, and cohesion.

In addition, almost all Muslims do not accept to consider the Quran a literary text, like any novel or story. It is said that Quran is the word of Allah and it cannot be, therefore, included within any framework or Genre whatever it might be. Robinson highlights this issue by saying that orthodox Muslims think that Quran is not a literary work and it cannot be translated since it is the Final Word of Allah (Robinson, 1996). Abdul Roaf shares the same opinion but in a slightly different way. He states that Quran cannot be translated due to its unique texture and genre. The same source lists a lot of features and characteristics which are as he called '*Quran genre-motivated*' and which can't be found in any other text but the Quran, and which makes the Quran a genre. Abdul Raof says:

Quran is a genre in the sense that it exclusively enjoys prototypical linguistic and rhetorical underlying recurrent features... the Quran has its own...... 'generic structure potential'. (Abdul-Raof, 2013: 108).

2. Muslim's Opinion about the Book
Another feature which makes the Quran a special book and genre is how Muslim experience the Quran. Muslims do not experience the Book as a written text. They believe that the Quran was revealed orally. We cannot say whether this happened since the Prophet PBUH was illiterate or due to some other factors that God alone knows. The Quran was then heard, memorized, and recited. Robinson (1996: 23) agrees with this view and ascribes it back to the use of the imperative *qul* 'say' three hundred times in the Quran. This, according to Robinson (ibid), is evidence on the oral nature of the Quran.

We can pick up an example from our society to show that people tend or prefer to recite, individually or in groups, the Quran instead of reading the text. On most occasions, social or religious, like weddings or circumcision parties, Quran is recited while other people listen.

This discussion, of written vs. oral, has moved recently to modern Arab scholars and intellectuals who engaged in debates about whether the Quran is a text or discourse. Since we shall discuss the Quranic discourse in the next part, there is no urgent need to go any further with this issue here.

Over decades, western scholars have tried to uncover and understand how the different Quranic discourses and parts are arranged and how all the discourse modes work together, one next to the other to form a single text: 'Quran'. In this regard, Adam Flowers (2018) says that scholars attempt to understand how these modes operate alongside one another to form one corpus which is the Quran. Flowers goes further and states that there are different Quranic genres. He relied on Theodor Nöldeke's Geschichte des Qorāns (Theodor Noldeke, 1860) to differentiate between Meccan and Medinan Suras genre usages. This idea is clarified by Al Fikki as he says that although each Meccan Sura or chapter is unique in style and domain, all Meccan Surahs have the same *goal* and subject matter (Al Fikki: 2000). By *goal*, it seems that he means having the same perlocutionary forces or effect.

That perlocutionary force, achieved by Quran, and the way It addresses its receivers also makes it a text type on its own. Abdul Raof (2013) used '*subject matter*' to address this issue. He says that الوعظ *admonition*, which is expressed through moral and prophets' stories, is the subject matter of the Quran. He adds that the Book also includes Islamic legal rulings '*ahkam*'. For this, Quran must only be considered a genre by itself.

Despite the many studies undertaken in different languages, there is still a need for further studies to discuss the topic. The Quran, as mentioned earlier, is not a literary and can't be considered a historical book, nor is it poetry. Quran is different from any other text and should be called Quran. This book, which displays itself to its addresses in a unique style and way, contains, or uses, various discourse characteristics that make it special.

3. Qur'an Characteristics
3.1 i'jaz (inimitability)
Quran, due to its style, nature and discourse features, is not like any other book. As for the Quranic discourse features, there are various classifications, especially in English language literature. To make things easier, we shall follow Hussein Abdul Raof's classification that he opted for in *Quran Translation (2013)* book. He highlighted these features: syntactic, phonetic, rhetorical, structural, and ethical features. Other characteristics that shall be covered in this part include argumentation and persuasion structures and style. Other scholars, especially in classical Islamic literature, included almost all these features in one heading which is *linguistic inimitability'*. Since there is a section where we shall discuss I'jaz and rhetoric in the coming sections, rhetoric and i'jaz (inimitability), cohesion, and rhetoric will not be discussed in detail in this section.

Since the Quran is a miraculous book that challenged the eloquence of Quraish and made them confused, since a great deal of studies, over centuries, have been undertaken and thousands of books have been written to understand and uncover the mystery of that Book and its architecture, since it is agreed upon that Quran is a genre by itself and no book shall be comparable to it, and since many Arab and Islamic writers use خصائص القرآن and إعجاز القرآن اللغوي almost interchangeably, it is not an easy task to list

and organize the most important features of this Book in one section and to pick up appropriate material from books written in different periods and in different languages.

The most important feature that Abdul Roaf, Al Jurjani, Al Khattabi, Al Fikki, Qutb, and many rhetoricians focused on is *AnNazm* or word order. This is considered as a prototypical feature of the Quranic genre. *Word order* is mainly about the use of different orders of the sentence constituents to play various roles and communicative functions. Word order or *Nazm* was used for the first time, in Arabic literature, to refer to the unique and special arrangements of Quranic sentences. Thus, it was Quran-bound feature. Abdul Raof thinks that word order is a major feature that marks the Quranic discourse (Abdul-Raof, 2019). He even believes that it is a feature of I'jaz. He says:

Inimitability is also concerned with rhetorical elegance in terms of the word order (al-naẓm) of Qur'anic discourse (Abdul Raof 2019:329)

One of the main problems that Quraish people faced when challenged to produce a text like the Quran was the Quran's *Nazm*. Al Jurjani (1992) says that the most prominent feature that confused the Arabs at the beginning of Islam was *AnNazm*. He even states that Quran's inimitability is attributed to the order system it follows. Al Jurjani explains his words by saying that changing words positions is a unique characteristic of the Quran (1992, الجرجاني). Another rhetorician who highlighted this feature was Azzarkachi (2006(2006, بدر الدين، الزركشي)). This famous exegete claims that Arabs were confused because they were unfamiliar and uninformed of that word order. He adds that word order (النظم) is (معجز) inimitable in the Quran thanks to the mastery and perfect composition architecture (Azzarkachi 2006). Abu Bakr Al Bekhit (2015) says, in the same regard, that Allah sent down the Quran in Arabic and left Quraish undecided. Knowing their linguistic abilities, Allah, according to Bekhit left recognizing the amazing and unique order of the Quran to the Arabs and challenged them to make something alike. In the same regard, Fahd Al Roumi (2005) says that following disbelievers claims that Al Quran is invented and includes lies, Allah challenged them to make up ten Surahs like it. Al Roumi adds that the challenge here is centered around the word order and not the information or content (Al Roumi 2005:304).

In addition, El Omari included foregrounding, backgrounding, ellipsis, repetition, reiteration, and conjunction and disjunction (الوصل والفصل), etc. in the list of features that mark Quranic inimitable word order. In addition to these elements, *shift* is an important feature of Quranic discourse (El Omari 1999). There are different types of '*shift*' among which is 'word order shift' that we shall discuss first.

According to Azzarkachi (2006), shift or *al iltifat* refers to the process of moving from a certain style to another in order to avoid boredom and to remotivate the hearer (Azzarkachi 2006:820). There are different types of *shift* 'الالتفات' in Quran. Indeed, wherever you open the Holy Book, you will certainly find a type of shift. *Shift* occurs throughout the Quran at sentence level and at text level. Abdul Raof (2013) and (2019) gives this example to explain word order shift:

يريد الله ليبين لكم... والله يريد أن يتوب عليكم.... يريد الله أن يخفف عليكم.

In this example there is *a word order shift* from the verb يريد+Noun to Noun (subject)+ يريد. It started with V+S, moved to S+V, and returned to the order used in the first structure.

In addition to word order shift, Abdul Raof added these types of *shift*: sentence-final verb shift, context-sensitive style shift, number and person shift, particle shift, and passive/active voice shift. Azzarkachi (2006) highlights affirmation and shift as the main features of Quranic discourse. He lists different types of *iltifat* in his book '*Al Burhan Fi Ulum Al Qur'an*'. Abdul Raof (Abdul-Raof, 2019) also says that shift is not only a prototypical feature of the Quran, but also a feature of inimitability. Abul Raof says:

Shift is a major feature of inimitability. It refers to stylistic and grammatical change at different levels of language and occurs at different places of the Qur'anic text for different purposes (Abdul Raof 2019:330).

The first type he lists is *shift* from using the first-person pronoun (I) to the second plural pronoun (you). He gives an example from يس (22): 'ومالي لا أعبد الذي فطرني وإليه تُرجعون'. Abdul Raof gives other example to clarify this type of shift, but there is no need to add any examples. The second type Azzarkachi explains is similar to the first. He named it الالتفات من التكلم إلى الغيبة. It involves moving from the speaker or addresser mode to the use of the third pronouns. The next two types are the other ways around i.e. going from the third person to the first (Azzarkachi 2006:823/826). In addition to these types, Abdul Roaf (2018) also adds *tense, definite/indefinite, feminine/masculine, and voice shifts* (Abdul-Raof, 2018).

3.2 Informing about the unseen
The next feature that is prototypical to the Quranic discourse is centered around the information It gives. The Quran's ability and knowledge of the unseen (علم الغيب) makes It an extraordinary book. Assiyouti (Assiyouti, 2005) highlights this idea by saying that

the miracle of the Quran continues. He attributes this inimitability to the Quran's ability to inform people of what comes. He adds that scientific facts and general information that Quran had given are proven and discovered each time.

There are many ayahs in the Quran which talks about things polytheists and hypocrites (المشركين والمنافقين) will or will not do in the future. The Almighty God informed his Messenger many times and in different chapters about what disbelievers keep saying secretly and to themselves. Abu Bakr Al Bekhit (2015) gives different examples from the Quran to highlight this. He mentioned the story of Abu Lahab and (*Al Masad*), Abu Jahl and the hypocrites who expressed their fear as they didn't want Allah to send down or reveal a *Surah* about them proclaiming what they keep in their hearts. Allah says:

"يحذر المنافقون من أن تُنزّلَ عليهم سورة تنبئهم بما في قلوبهم. قل استهزءوا إن الله مخرج ما تحذرون." التوبة 64

64. The hypocrites fear lest a surah should be revealed concerning them, proclaiming what is in their hearts. Say: Scoff (your fill)! Lo! Allah is disclosing what ye fear. (Quran 9: 64) (Pickthall 1969:58)

The same example is given by Al Roumi (2005). The Holy Book informed us of unseen stories and events which took place hundreds of years before the revelation time. Allah explained how He had created people or the universe for example. He also used ancient people and messengers' stories for admonition. Quran is rich of such stories. Abraham, Noah, A'ad, Tamud, Issa (Mesiah), Musa (Moses), Al Khidr, Saleh, Chouaib, etc. are all instances of Quranic stories or parables. Al Roumi (2005) states that mentioning ancient civilizations and people that neither was Mohammed PBUH nor his people aware of is an important characteristic of the Quran. Mohammed PBUH was illiterate and so were Quraish. This proved that knowledge of the unseen, which is a feature of the Quran, is attributed to Allah's ability.

In addition to stories from the past, Quran informed the Prophet PBUH of some present events and information that he did not witness. This made the disbelievers say to each other: *lower you voices so that Mohammed's Go don't hear you (*Al Roumi 2005:302). The abovementioned example about hypocrites' fears of Quran clarifies this point. The third type of this kind of informing is the knowledge of the future or things that will happen in the future. Many ayahs can be used to explain this, but just two examples will be enough. The first example, which is used by Al Roumi (2005), is taken from Surah Al Israa (ayah 88). In this ayah, Allah challenges people and Jinn to come with something like the Quran and affirmed that they will not even if they cooperate.

Say: if the mankind and the jinns were together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they helped one of another. (Quran 17: 88) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1996)The second example is the famous Ayah about the Romans. Allah says:

Alif. Lam. Mim.	1 آلم
The Romans have been defeated	2 غُلِبت الروم
In the nearer land	3 في أدني الأرض
and they, after their defeat will be victorious	وهم من بعد غلبهم سيَغلبون في بضع سنين

(الروم الآيات 1-4)

Quran (30: 1-4) (Pickthall, 1969:128)

These verses were revealed years after the Romans or Byzantines were defeated to the Persians. A few years later, what the Quran talked about took place when the two empires faced each other again in a battle in the lowest point on earth where the Romans were victorious. Some exegetes say that the battle retook place again in the area of the Red Sea seven years after the Ar Rum chapter was revealed.

There are various other examples which prove that the Quran is characterized by, among many other features, knowing and informing on unseen past, present and future events. Some of these pieces of information are considered scientific facts.

3.3 The aesthetic function of the Qur'an
The next feature I would like to discuss has something to do with the aesthetic function of the Quran. It is mainly about imagery which, according to many rhetoricians and exegetes, is a prominent feature of Quranic style. There is a huge number of studies and books which discuss this issue. I will limit myself to two writers. The first is Qutb Sayyid, who named his book after Quran's imagery (التصوير الفني في القرآن), and the second is Abdul Raof.

Through imagery, Allah describes different situations and portrays a lot of scenes. Qutb Sayyid (Qutb, 2013) believes that imagery gives life to the pictures and scenes portrayed and described by the Quran. He adds that this feature makes stories and parables vivid and movable. Imagery can be achieved through different figures of speech that will be discussed later. In his book, Saiid Qutb compares interlocuters of the Quran to theatre audience. *'As soon as the show starts, hearers become viewers'* thanks to the use of

images (Qutb 2013: 36). Abdul Raof (2019) also highlights the importance and uniqueness of this Quranic feature. He compares imagery to the '*attractive painting by a skillful portraitist*' (Abdul Raof 2019:342). Both sources conclude that imagery is among the most important features which make the Quran inimitable. Almost all Quranic chapters are rich of imagery. Qutb insist that imagery is used throughout the whole Quranic text from the first chapter to the last. Three examples will be given here. The first one is mentioned by both writers:

1)   The image of a camel trying to enter into the eye of a needle.
… *for them the gates of Heaven will not be opened nor will they enter the Garden until the camel goeth through the needle's eye.* *(Quran 7:40) (Pickthall 1969:46)*

"إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا لَا تُفَتَّحُ لَهُمْ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّىٰ يَلِجَ الْجَمَلُ فِي سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ ۚ وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُجْرِمِينَ "
(الأعراف الآية 40)(40)

Here the image used is a kind of affirmation that the disbelievers will not enter Heaven. Entering Heaven and entering the needle's eye are compared in terms of their impossibility.

2)   The image of a good people who spend their wealth to win Allah's satisfaction and approval
265. *And the likeness of those who spend their wealth seeking Allah's Pleasure while they in their ownselves are sure and certain that Allah will reward them (for their spending in His Cause), is the likeness of a garden on a height; heavy rain falls on it and it doubles its yield of harvest. And if it does not receive heavy rain, light rain suffices it. And Allah is All-Seer of (knows well) what you do. (Quran 2:265) (Pickthall 1969:13)*

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَتَثْبِيتًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ كَمَثَلِ جَنَّةٍ بِرَبْوَةٍ أَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ فَآتَتْ أُكُلَهَا ضِعْفَيْنِ فَإِن لَّمْ يُصِبْهَا وَابِلٌ فَطَلٌّ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ265) (البقرة الآية 265)

Here Allah shows, through these images, that charitable people will be awarded by doubling their yield even if it does not rain heavily. These images are created through the use of many rhetorical features and figures of speech like metaphors and similes. Such figures of speech and embellishment are also characteristic of the Quranic discourse. These rhetorical features enable the Quran to enjoy a high level of linguistic congruity and musicality that makes it unique.

Repetition and synonymy are among these rhetorical features. According to Al Bekhit (2015), repetition in Quran leads to eloquence and makes the Quran beautiful. He claims that through repetition, Quranic meanings and messages are conveyed in a clearer way (Al Bekhit 2015: 338-339). The same source adds that synonymy in the Quran attracted scholars and exegetes' attention. Al Bekhit (ibid) adds that some scholars reject the idea as it is impossible for a Quranic lexical item to replace another. They say that each item is slightly different in meaning (ibid:345). Each synonymous lexical item is used in a certain context to have a special function.

The Quranic discourse contain a lot of figures of speech and embellishments. Alliteration, assonance, metaphors, similes, euphemism, parallelism, chiasmus, asyndeton and polysyndeton (conjunction and disjunction), metonymy, synecdoche, zeugma, etc. These figures, along with other features, are discussed by Abdul Raof in details. Some of them are examined by Muntasir Mir (2008) who says that the Quran's figures of speech are used in a way that differs from the Jahili or pre-Islamic literature and poetry. He adds that the Quran uses figures of speech to effectively present '*religious and moral themes and ideas*' (Mir, 2008:45-46). This is another proof that Quranic choice of features, lexical items, and expressions is motivated by the functions it plays and by the illocutionary and perlocutionary forces it has.

The Quranic discourse is also famous for using verbosity and succinctness (iijaz and itnab). Al Bekhit (2015) thinks that *iijaz* and *itnab* are two Quranic discourse features that portray beauty and richness of meanings. He adds that each of these features is used in certain positions and contexts to play some roles (Al Bekhit 2015:356). Quran employs succinctness (*iijaz*) in a beautiful-magical way. Al Bekhit (ibid) says that Quran conveys meanings although some important expressions and items are ellipted. In other discourses and with other texts this is impossible as the meaning cannot be conveyed without the omitted expressions (Al Bekhit 2015:358). Verbosity (*itnab*) is the opposite. It involves using more words than it is needed. Abdul Raof (Abdul-Raof, 2006) defines verbosity by saying: "*Verbosity is a rhetorical technique that aims to provide informativity to the addressee using more lexical items than is actually required.*" (Abdul Raof 2006:190) Al Bekhit (2015) thinks that Quran uses verbosity to give detailed information (ibid:362). He adds that Quran can sometimes combine both features. Sometimes a meaning is conveyed in brief in a certain context or surah and in details in another position or vice versa (ibid:366).

3.4 Argumentation and persuasion ability
The next feature is the ability of convincing and persuading that this book possesses. In other words, this feature is mainly about the Quran's argumentation techniques. Argumentation refers to, according to Abdul Raof (2019), reaching acceptable conclusions.

Since the Quran was the last book sent down to mankind to convince them that Islam is the true and the only path, a lot of argumentation techniques were used to debate disbelievers, hypocrites, or other addressees. The language, formulas or structures used in the Quran are highly convincing. There are different methods that Allah used for argumentation. Different argumentation techniques and structures are found in the Holy Book. Not only do these techniques make the Quran convincing, but they are also prototypical and Quran-bound.

Al Bekhit (2015) claims that what makes the Quranic discourse effective is the argumentation and persuasion ability, especially when debating arrogant or stubborn disbelievers who doubt everything about it. He adds: Quran came with evidence and arguments that will convince anyone of its strength and reason (Al Bekhit 2015:461). Abdul Raof (2019) lists three receivers of Quran:

'open-minded (impartial), sceptical (undecided, a floater), and denier (opponent)'. (Abdul Raof 2019: 59)

Following this classification, Allah the Almighty uses different argumentation techniques to address any of these receivers. Abdul Raof uses the 67th ayah from Surah of Mariam (Mary) in which Allah says:

'أولا يذكر الإنسان إنا خلقناه من قبل ولم يكن شيئا' سورة مريم الآية 67

67. Doth not man remember that We created him before, when he was naught? (Q19:67) (Pickthall 1969: 95)

This ayah includes an argument which uses an interrogative sentence (rhetorical question) and *lam* الجازمة. It also uses two indicator words which are 'قبل' (before) and 'أولا' (do not). Abdul Raof (ibid) adds more indicator words that helps the interlocuter reach conclusions from the arguments given. He gave many examples including كذلك وإذن وأليس وسبحان etc. He also discusses the verse number 259 from Surah of Al Bakara where Allah used *falamma tabayana lahu* (when the point was clear to him) as an indicator and إن الله على كل شيء قدير as a conclusion from the story of bringing that man to life again after one hundred years.

"How shall Allah give this township life after its death? And Allah made him die a hundred years, then brought him back to life. He said: How long hast thou tarried? (The man) said: I have tarried a day or part of a day. (He) said: Nay, but thou hast tarried for a hundred years. Just look at thy food and drink which have not rotted! Look at thine ass! And, that We may make thee a token unto mankind, look at the bones, how We adjust them and then cover them with flesh! And when (the matter) became clear unto him, he said: I know now that Allah is Able to do all things." (Q2: 259) (Pickthall 1969: 13)

One feature of inimitability of the Quran is concerned with argumentation as Allah challenges the disbelievers to rebut and show similar evidence. In this regard, Al Roumi (2005) gives this ayah as an example:

أَمَّن يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ وَمَن يَرْزُقُكُم مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ أَإِلَٰهٌ مَّعَ اللَّهِ ۚ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (64) النمل الآية 64

Is not He (better than your so-called gods) Who originates creation, and shall thereafter repeat it, and Who provides for you from heaven and earth? Is there any ilah (god) with Allah? Say, "Bring forth your proofs, if you are truthful." (Q27:64) (Al Hilali & Khan 1996)

Al Roumi (ibid) states that Quran gives evidence and arguments and asks opponents to rebut. In addition, in this ayah, Allah asks a rhetorical question which is an effective argumentation technique. There are many other cases in which the Quran uses such technique to convince disbelievers or other opponents. ألم, أوليس, and أم are examples, among others, of question words that we find in the Quranic discourse. Al Roumi (ibid) mentions many examples in this regard. This argumentation technique is one of various which Al Roumi listed in his book.

According to Al Roumi, Allah uses another technique which involves taking the opponents claims for granted before rebutting and proving them to be wrong. This technique is widely used in the Quranic discourse. Al Roumi cited the third Ayah of Al Mu:minu:n as an example.

Allah says:

''ما اتخذَ اللَّه من ولد وما كان معه من إله إذاً لذهبَ كل إلهٍ بما خلق ولعلا بعضهم على بعض سبحانه عما يصفون.'' سورة المؤمنون،

الآية 3.

Allah hath not chosen any son, nor is there any God along with Him; else would each God have assuredly championed that which he created, and some of them would assuredly have overcome others. Glorified be Allah above all that they allege. (Quran 23:91) (Pickthall 1969:109)

At the beginning, the Almighty God denied having any son or God along with him. After that he accepted that claim and rebutted it. There are many other examples that we can discuss here, but since the three audience categories that Abdul Raof listed will be seen again in the rhetoric part what have been said is enough.

As for Quranic argumentation methods and ways are concerned, Al Roumi (ibid) thinks that the Quran does not follow the Greek philosophical methodology as it is revealed to guide all mankind. Unlike the philosophers' methods, which focuses on using ambiguous and hard terminology, Al Roumi states that Quranic argumentation follows simple ways which are accepted reasonably and emotionally and uses simple words that everybody understands (Al Roumi 2005:585). In addition, Quran addresses both reason and heart. There is a combination between reasonable logical and emotional discourse. According to Al Bekhit (2015), Quran addresses both minds and hearts. He says that Quran used reason to target minds, which differentiate right from wrong, and emotional discourse to address hearts, which are prone to loved things (Abu Bakr Al Bekhit 2015:478).

3.5 Quranic coherence
Coherence of the Quranic text is also a major feature that marks the Holy Book. Coherence, which is among the textuality standards, refers, according to Abdul Raof (2019), to meaning relations and continuity of senses between the text parts. Although Quran is divided into different chapters which discuss various topics, there is a continuity of meanings in that text. Abdul Raof (ibid) elaborates this feature by mentioning the *tenets of faith* أركان الإيمان which appear in the Quran in a coherent way. Abdul Raof states that some Surahs may include different tenets of *Iman 'faith'* while other shorter Surahs may present only one (Abdul Raof 2019: 48-49). *Arkan Al Iman* are *Attawhid* (monotheism)*, Al Nubbowa* (prophethood)*, Al Ba't (eschatology), and Atawab wa Al I'qab* (reward and punishment) Abdul Raof 2019:48). There are many other topics that occur in different Quranic chapters in a coherent way like admonition.

In addition to the occurrence of such themes, many scholars, rhetoricians, and writers mentioned another face of coherence in the Quran. Many Arab scholars called this feature التناسب (accordance) in themes between Quranic Surahs and within the same Surah. Abdul Raof (2019) gave the example of Surah Hud سورة هود in which he found that the beginning and end, of this chapter, are about the same theme (monotheism). He also adds that in many instances, there is a kind of accordance and logical sequence between the end of a given Surah and the beginning of the following one. In addition, another face of Quranic text coherence involves discussing the same issue or having the same theses in two Surahs that the one follows the other (Abdul Raof 2019:50).

In the same regard, Al Roumi (2005) insists that Quran does not follow the famous order and classification of chapters and sections each of which discusses one subject matter or issue. Instead, it is divided into surahs, and each surah contains ayahs. These surahs and ayahs are linked together in a special way. According to Al Roumi (2005), Quran starts a story and moves to discussing something else before getting back to the first story to finish (Al Roumi 2005:445). There is therefore *tanasub* between surahs and ayahs though they occur in different positions in the Quran. Azzarkachi (2006) supports this view as he states that there is *tanasub* between ayahs and surahs. He adds that each surah's beginning is related to the previous surah end (Azzarkachi 2006:38-39). The same source gives many examples where a surah starts with something compatible or similar to the end of the previous surah. Azzarkachi (ibid) also illustrates *munasaba* or *tanasub* between ayahs and how they are related. He says that ayahs are related to each other either because they discuss the same issue or when the second objects, explains, or confirms what was mentioned in the first (ibid:39).

Mohamed Khattabi (1991) talks about accordance between the beginning and the end of the same surah (Khattabi 1991:195). Khattabi also mentions other kinds of accordance. This includes accordance between the surah and its name like *Al Bakara* (البقرة) (ibid: 197). Assiyouti and Azzarkachi add accordance between *muqatta'at* (disconnected mysterious letters) and the surah. They say that there is *tanasub* between the letters like الم or ق and the words of that surah. In the surah which starts by ق there is a huge use of the letter ق or any other initial letter (Assiyouti 2005:1857). Although there are many other cases of *munasaba* in the Quran, we shall stop here.

Azzarkachi (2006) addressed this issue decades before. He gave the example of البقرة وآل عمران والنساء والمائدة and said that these Surahs complete each other or cover the same theme or issue (Azzarkachi 2006:184). According to him, these four Suras are coherent and there is a continuity of themes or senses in the four. Therefore, they are put in consecutive order. In the same regard, Mohamed Khattabi talks about *Munasaba* between the end of a Surah and the beginning of the following one. He cites Surahs of النساء and المائدة, which, in a way or another, complete each other, as an example (Khattabi 1991:195).

3.6 Parables and Similitude

Another feature and technique that marks the Quranic discourse is ضرب الأمثال which has many English equivalents. Pickthall, and Al Hilali & Khan used *similitude,* while Asad preferred *(propounding) parables.* Al Roumi (2005) comments on the use of these similitudes or parables by assuring that the Holy Book addresses people in a way that is familiar to them. According to him, ضرب الأمثال takes place almost in every simple conversation. Let us see one example from Al Munafikun Surah or chapter:

''مثلهم كمثل الذي استوقد نارا فلما أضاءت ما حوله ذهب الله بنورهم وتركهم في ظلمات لا يبصرون 17'' (البقرة)

Their likeness is as the likeness of one who kindleth fire, and when it sheddeth its light around him Allah taketh away their light and leaveth them in darkness, where they cannot see. (Q1: 17) (Pickthall 1969:1)

The Quranic discourse is characterized by the use of such structures and similitudes. Al Roumi (ibid) adds that Quran uses these techniques for different functions among which we have Attarghib (motivation), Attarhib (intimidation), and admonition. Many of these functions and illocutionary forces will be seen in chapter 3.

Rhetoric and eloquence (البلاغة والفصاحة) are also prototypical features of Quranic discourse that need to be discussed. These elements are indeed features of Quran's inimitability. In addition to these two, ellipsis, foregrounding, repetition and reiteration, Mutashabihat, phonetic congruity, etc. are also characteristics of the Quranic discourse.

4. Conclusion

Quran is a miraculous book that has special features which makes it unique. Many of these features are Quran-bound and inimitable. Although Quran seems simple and understood, we can never penetrate its formulas, textures and architecture without consulting some *Tafasir* and exegesis books. Do these Quranic features make the Qur'an untranslatable? That is the question that the review aimed to answer.

This uniqueness is believed to hinder or, at least, make translation attempts useless. The characteristics that we have mentioned are believed to be behind what scholars call '*Qur'an untranslatability'.* This review showed how it is really difficult to deal with such characteristics and to come up with translations that are meaningful and translation-losses free.

The most problematic characteristic and feature which make translators' job difficult include the i'jaz or inimitability feature. Many other features are related to this one as Qur'an inimitability is attributed to them. The aesthetic function that repetition and word play has is among these untranslatable features. The same thing can be said about imagery and eloquence which make the Book inimatble. Persuasion techniques also affect the translation, especially the double or triple affirmation strategy that is used to convince the audience. These affirmation tools are usually translation victims. In brief, The review is centred around the key elements that make this Book unique and miraculous.

Literature in the field of Quranic untranslatability and inimitability is weak. For this, I tried to gather the needed information and examine the available sources to come up with a summarized list of Quranic features and characteristics which perhaps lead to Quranic untranslatability or contribute to it. Translation was needed in all the stages as most of the sources are written in Arabic. The only exception is Abdul Raof whose books are in English.

The language issue (i.e., gathering all these Arabic sources and translating the summaries into English) is not the only problem we faced. Shortage and lack of literature in the field made the work harder than expected. The study highlights the importance of undertaking further research and studies to examine these claims and to make sure that these features are untranslatable.

This proves that there is still a shortage in literature and an urgent need to carry on more researches and studies on the topic. There is a need to examine certain surahs and their translations to check how the characteristics that the surah or chapter includes affect these translation attempts. The studies must focus on the features that are said to be the most problematic.

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