

## Exploring Some Morpho-Syntactic, Lexical and Semotactic Errors in three Western and Eastern Translations of the Meanings of Surat Al-Baqara into the English Language: A Comparative Study

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### ABSTRACT

The current study aims at exploring some morphosyntactic, lexical and semotactic errors in three Western and Eastern Translations of the meanings of Surat Al-Baqara into English; that is in translations of George Sale, and Arthur John Arberry and Khan and Mohammed Taj Al-Din Al-Hilai. Also, the study aims at investigating how the three translators deal with the morphosyntactic, lexical and semotactic difficulties in their translating of the meanings of Surat Al-Baqara into English. Four Ayahs of Surat Al-Baqara were purposefully selected to address the research questions and categorized into lexical errors, morphological errors, syntactic Errors and semantic errors. The study shows that there are some syntactic, morphological, lexical and semantic errors in the translation of the meaning of Surat Al-Baqara into English rendered by George Sale, and Arthur John Arberry. Moreover, the syntactic, morphological, lexical and semantic errors occurred due to many factors such as lack of equivalence and the translation strategies employed. The study also suggests some solutions for the identified morphosyntactic, lexical and semotactic difficulties and gives correct translations for the incorrect translation of the purposive Ayahs. The study also recommends that translators must employ footnotes (see example 1 and other translation strategies to avoid a probable loss of the intended meaning.

### Introduction

Syntactic, morphological, lexical and semantic features contribute considerably to the uniqueness of the Qur'anic discourse. These linguistic features are considered Qur'anic-specific and therefore, in some cases, they can be a problematic issue for translators of the meaning of the Holy Quran. On this context, we can quote Abdul-Raof (2003) who opines that:

The Qur'an as a genre in its own right is marked by prototypical features, as well as rhetorical features, that are hard to be found in any type of writing throughout its history (p.305)

The translators of the meaning of the Holy Quran must be aware of syntactic, morphological, lexical and semantic features of Qur'anic Verses (Āyahs) in order to understand the intended meaning and to find an accurate equivalent meaning in the target language (TL)(Naseef,2018, p.6)

The Holy Quran is syntactically, morphologically, lexically and semantically rich, hence its form and content are unique. Consequently, the translators of the Holy Quran will inescapably encounter consequential problems in rendering the efficacy of the original of the holy text together with an equivalent and analogous text. Arberry (1980) states that:

The rhetoric and rhythm of the Arabic of the Koran are so characteristic, so powerful, so highly emotive, that any version whatsoever is bound in the nature of things to be but a poor copy of the glittering splendor of the original (Naseef, 2018, p. 25)

Unquestionably, the syntactic, morphological, lexical and semantic features of the Holy Quran continue to challenge translators who struggle to convey the intended meaning of the Quranic Āyahs (verses) into English.

## Objectives of the Study

The current aims at:

- a) investigating the syntactic, morphological, lexical and semantic errors in the translation of the meaning of the Holy Quran rendered by George Sale, and Arthur John Arberry and Mohammed Khan and Hilali.
- b) Identifying the syntactic, morphological, lexical and semantic constraints that the translators encounter.
- c) Finding out the correct translation for the incorrect translations rendered by the three translators.

## Questions of the Study

To meet the objectives mentioned above, the study attempts to answer the following questions:

- a) What are the syntactic, morphological, lexical and semantic errors in the translation of George Sale, Arthur John Arberry Mohammed Khan and Hilali?
- b) What types of errors are common in the translations of the three translators ?
- c) What are the solutions and correct translations for these morphological, lexical and semantic errors?

## Literature Review

### *Concept of Errors*

Errors cannot always be easily identified. First of all, the notion of "error" presupposes a norm, and norm, in their turn, are dependent on, amongst other things, the medium (spoken or written language), the social context (formal or informal), and the relation between speaker and the hearer (symmetrical or asymmetrical). Furthermore, it is quite possible for something which seems an error in isolation to be perfectly acceptable in context, and vice versa.

### *Defining Errors*

Errors can be defined by Norrish (1987) as a systematic deviation, when learner has not learnt something and consistently gets it wrong. (p.7). On his turn, Cunningsworth (1987) defined an error as a deviation in language norm and systematically being understood (p.87). From the above-mentioned definitions of errors, we came to know that the keyword is "systematic deviation" which can be interpreted as the deviation that happens repeatedly in the process of translation.

### *Previous studies*

Very few studies have tackled the problems translators encounter in translating religious texts. Abdel-Haleem (1999) pointed out that none of the translations of Qur'ān is the 'Qur'ān' that is, "the direct word of God". Khalifa (2005) said:

Comparing any translation with the original Arabic is like comparing a thumbnail sketch with the natural view of a splendid landscape rich in colour, light and shade, and sonorous in melody. The Arabic vocabulary as used in the Qur'ān conveys a wealth of ideas with various subtle shades and colours impossible to express in full with a finite number of words in any other language (p.56).

Abdelwali (2007) studied the loss in translation of some existing English version of the Holy Quran. He showed that the translation aims particularly at the communication of the message without considering the idiosyncrasies and prototypical features of the Quranic discourse. The versatility of the Holy Quran lexemes and styles could not be captured in most of the English versions of the Quran. His aim, therefore, was to highlight the challenges that the

Holy Quran translators face at the lexical, syntactic, semantic level. He also suggested ways of enhancing the fields of the Holy Quran translation with a view to reproducing adequate translation both in form and content. (cited in Al-Haj, 2015, p. 124).

Islam (2018) examined the semantic Loss and its causes in two English translations of Surah Ya-Sin by two translators: Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Arthur John Arberry. The analysis of the data revealed frequent partial loss of meaning in Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation and complete loss of meaning in Arthur John Arberry's translation. Linguistic deviation from the source text was identified as one of the major causes of such losses.

Alhaj (2019) studied constrains of rendering some selected Qur'anic Verses (Āyahs) into English: A Sociohistorical Interpretation. The study revealed that there are some cultural and lexical constrains that face the translators when rendering Qur'anic verses (Āyahs) into English. That is due to their sacred status and cultural and linguistic barriers that exist between Arabic and English cultures. Also, the results of the study have showed that the three translators have adopted various strategies such as transliteration, transposing, cultural substitution, and footnotes.

## **Methodology**

This section describes the methodology that is used by the researcher in collecting data for the current study.

### ***The Study Design***

In this study, the researcher used the analytical descriptive qualitative method, due to the complex nature of the examined text (i.e. The Holy Quran). As suggested by Creswell (2007), qualitative research is conducted when the researcher seeks understanding of a complex issue, and when quantitative measurements and analyses do not seem appropriate for the research problem under investigation.

The study aims at investigating the syntactic, morphological, lexical and semantic errors in the translation of the meaning of the Holy Quran of George Sale's translation, Mohammed Khan and Hilali's translation and Arthur John Arberry's translation.

Furthermore, the researcher analyzed the Arabic Ayahs compared and assessing them to the three different translations of the Holy Qur'an of George Sale, Mohammed Khan and Hilali and Arthur John Arberry.

Finally, the researcher analyzed and compared different approaches to translating the meaning of Holy Qur'an into English.

### ***Sampling***

The current research aims at investigating the syntactic, morphological, lexical and semantic errors in the translation of the meaning of the Holy Quran rendered by Western translators George Sale, and Mohammed Khan and Hilali and Arthur John Arberry and the linguistic obstacles face the three translators of the meaning of the Holy Qura'n into English and challenging task as well as giving the correct translation for the incorrect translation rendered by the three translators.

Purposive sampling was adopted for this study, as it is believed appropriate for the analytical, descriptive and qualitative method, such as this study. Four examples were purposefully extracted from different verses of the Holy Quran in this regard, the researcher carefully selected the samples that show syntactic, morphological, lexical and semantic errors in the translation of some Qur'anic Ayahs. The translations selected are George Sale's translation and Mohammed Khan and Hilali's translation and Arthur John Arberry's translation. These three translations were selected because they are Western translations and belong to two different far-between periods of translation, which can explain clearly the differences among translations of the Holy Quran throughout a long period of time.

In addition, their translations do not reflect the prejudice of the earlier missionary religious biases. Many scholars regard George Sale's translation and Mohammed Khan and Hilali's translation and Arthur John Arberry's translation as the most widely circulated non-Muslim English translation of the Qur'an.

### Data Analysis

The Researcher analyses the data by using comparative analysis, as well as by reading the original texts of Qur'anic Ayaha Arabic and compares them to their English translation version. Then, looking up a reliable and specialized grammatical, semantic dictionary and books of Tafaseer and applying the researcher skills of translation to identify the lexical, morphological and semantic and syntactic errors.

The data of this research consists of some selected Ayahs(verses) of the Holy Qur'an in Arabic containing the lexical, morphological and semantic and syntactic errors.

### Procedure

The most vital and crucial research instrument is reading, analyzing and comparing the translated text of selected Ayhas (verses by the three different translators. This study is an eclectic, three translations of the meaning of the Holy Qur'an have been analyzed and identified as the different kinds of translation, i.e. semantic translation, communicative translation etc. When analyzing the three translations, the researcher followed the following procedures:

- a) The researchers obtained the three translations of the meaning of Holy Quran, of George Sale, and Mohammed Khan and Hilali and Arthur John Arberry studying each ayah(verse) in terms of the above-mentioned linguistic problems.
- b) Analyzing George Sale, and Mohammed Khan and Hilali and Arthur John Arberry 's translations and identifying their accuracy, effectiveness, and then giving comments and correction on the three translations.

### Research Instrument

Research instrument is very important to obtain the result of a study, it is a set of methods which are used to collect the data. The researchers act the instrument of the study. Cresswell (1994, p.145) states that the qualitative research is the primary instrument for the data collection and data analysis. Besides that, the researcher spends a great deal of time in reading, reciting, exploring and comparing the dictions and meanings of the intended Ayhas in order to identifying the lexical, morphological and semantic and syntactic errors. Then the data will be analyzed by the researcher in accordance with the problem of the study.

### Results and Discussions

Examples of Errors Analysis (the lexical, morphological and semantic and syntactic errors.) in Some Selected Ayahs (Verses).

#### Lexical Errors

##### Example 1

Ayah( verse)	Arthur John Arberry's Renderings	Khan and Hilali's Renderings
<p>يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ (البقرة:151)</p>	<p><u>To recite our signs</u> to you and to purify you, and to teach you the Book and the Wisdom, and to teach you that you knew not. (Surah Al-Baqarah The Cow:151)</p>	<p><u>Reciting to you Our verses and purifying you and teaching you the Book and wisdom and teaching you that which you did not know</u> (SurahAl-Baqarah the Cow:151)</p>

## Discussion

Almighty Allah reminds His believing slaves of what He has bestowed upon them, as He sent Messenger(P.B.U.H) to them to recite to them Allah clear Ayhas "Verses"( the Quran ) and to purify them from their immoralities , vices, and their evil deeds of their pre-Islamic period( Jahiliwah), and to get them out of the darkness to the light of Islam, and to teach them the Book(i.e. the Quran) and Alhikmah (i.e Sunnah, Islamic laws and Sharai) and teach them what they used not to know.

Arbbery's rendering for يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا into To recite our signs is a confusing one and a confused communication definitely results in a confused comprehension , the receptor of language may miscomprehend the meaning of the lexeme( sings) and understand as يتلوعليكم علاماتا yataluealikum ealamatuna because the lexeme" sings) is an ambiguous one and polysemic morpheme, hence his translation is incorrect, inaccurate, inappropriate , and out of context.

Khan and Hilali's renderings for يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا into **Reciting to you Our verses** is full of wisdom( Alhikmah (i.e Sunnah, Islamic laws ) is so easy for comprehension, and it fully regards the expectation of the Target Language ( TL/English )"English receptor, hence his translation for the Arabic lexeme آيَاتِنَا into **Our verses** is correct, accurate and appropriate , hence it convey the real meaning of the Ayah( Verse) and leaves no chance of lexical ambiguity.

<b>The tentative correct translation by Khan and Hilali</b>
<u>يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ (البقرة:151)</u>
Reciting to you Our verses and purifying you and teaching you the Book and wisdom and teaching you that which you did not know. (Surah Al-Baqarah the Cow:151)

## Morphological Errors

### Example 2

Ayah ( verse)	Arthur John Arbbery's Renderings	Khan and Hilali's Renderings
<u>اهْبِطُوا مِصْرًا فَإِنَّ لَكُمْ مَّا سَأَلْتُمْ(البقرة: 61)</u>	<u>Go you down to Egypt;</u> you shall have there that you demand. (SurahAl-Baqarah The Cow:61)	<u>Go you down to any town;</u> you shall find what you want. (SurahAl-Baqarah The Cow:61)

## Discussion

Rebuking them; Moses (P.B.U.H) wondered saying: " would you exchange that which is better for that which is lower? Yet, when they insisted on what they thought were most persistent, he (P.B.U.H) evoked Allah, the Exalted , Who said:" **Go you down to any town; you shall find what you want.** (SurahAl-Baqarah :61). For, there you will find what you seek of food.

The translation of اهْبِطُوا مِصْرًا ahbituu misran into Go you down to Egypt by Arthur John Arbbery seems awkward and is confusing with reference to lexical content and morphological form acceptable to the TL receptor. The Arabic lexical morphemic constructions فَإِنَّ لَكُمْ were rendered improperly into "you shall have their" which may result in misinterpretation of the Message. hence his translation is incorrect, inaccurate and inappropriate and out of context. And quite different in semotactic contexts.

Khan and Hilali's renderings for اهْبِطُوا مِصْرًا into Go you down to any town. Indeed, there is a unique situational contextuality of rendering مِصْرًا into any town because in Arab context it means أي مدينة any town. In addition, the

etymology of the morpheme مَصْرًا is from Arabic morphemes امصار aimsar which means towns. The rendering of اهْبِطُوا مَصْرًا into Go you down to any town is also a dynamic communicative dimension with connotative appropriateness. Hence, Khan and Hilali's renderings are more appropriate as compared to Arthur John Arberry's Renderings. All in all, these unique Quranic morphemes need to be explained in footnotes and other similar lexemes for better comprehension.

<b>The tentative correct translation by Khan and Hilali</b>
اهْبِطُوا مَصْرًا فَإِنَّ لَكُمْ مَا سَأَلْتُمْ (البقرة: 61)
Go you down to any town; you shall find what you want. (SurahAl-Baqarah The Cow:61)

### Syntactic Errors

#### Example 3

Ayah ( verse)	G. Sale's Renderings	Khan and Hilali's Renderings
إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (البقرة:143)	Or God is gracious and merciful unto man (Surah Al-Baqarah The Cow:143)	Truly, Allah is full of kindness and the most Merciful towards mankind (SurahAl-Baqarah The Cow:143)

### Discussion

(Truly, Allah is full of kindness) shown to the believers. (and the most Merciful towards mankind) regarding He is not turning what they have offered of prayers towards (Baytul-Maqdis) in vain. Allah shows His ever mercy to the believers by stating that He is full of kindness before His stating that, He is the most Merciful; as the first Attribute shows more mercy than the second stated attribute.

The rendering of the word 'Rahim', that is, 'the most Merciful' (Khan and Hilali) is appropriate as it shows intensity in the Message that Allah is limitlessly Merciful. G. Sale's translation of the same attribute of Allah is quite incorrect, that is 'merciful' should be in superlative degree which was dropped by G.Sale in his renderings but the superlative degree of the intensifier MOST has been used by Khan and Hilali.

Khan and Hilali used the word "Allah" instead of "God". This may result in better comprehension if the receptor is familiar with the word "Allah", which has more divinity. The use of Allah instead of the traditional word "God" which may be appreciated by some and criticized by others in the English community. However, it is quite appropriate contextually.

G. Sale rendered the Arabic particle (ان)- accusative case and an emphasis - in the beginning of Ayah (إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (البقرة:143)) into conjunction ( or) which is a conjunction that connects two or more possibilities or alternatives. It connects words, phrases and clauses which are the same grammatical type: ( Retrieved on 1-Feb-2020 from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/or> . G.Sale's renderings of (إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (البقرة:143)) is (Or God is gracious and merciful unto man). Hence, his renderings seem inappropriate and is never appreciated by TL receptor of the language. In addition, The conjunction ( Or) is semantically inappropriate.

<b>The tentative correct translation by Khan and Hilali</b>
إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (البقرة:143)
Truly, Allah is full of kindness and the most Merciful towards mankind

## Semantic Errors

### Example 4

Ayah( verse)	Arthur John Arberry's Renderings	Khan and Hilali's Renderings
(29: <u>ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ الْبَقَرَةِ</u> )	<u>Then He lifted Himself</u> to heaven (SurahAl-Baqarah The Cow:29)	<u>Then He Istawa (rose over)</u> towards the heavens (SurahAl-Baqarah The Cow:29)

### Discussion

Rising over (Istawa) implies the state of rising over and towards the heaven and made them. After the creation the earth He (Allah ) rose over. Allah is All-knowing of each and everything collectively and separately. How come you do not take admonition by the fact that Allah Who has innovated all and each thing from nothing; the One He is Who far Greater than you are; the All-Able to create you a new ( on the Day Resurrection). The meaning of اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى in Arthur John Arberry's renderings means. He (Allah) raised himself to the sky. This translation seems strange for an English reader when he/she comes across its use in the expansion about the creation of seven heavens, hence confusing for the TI, English receptor. The meaning of اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى of level in this ayah is intended and willful but the meaning of اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى 'established Himself above) on ' in the Surat (الأعراف) Al-A'raaf means, He (Allah) **then established Himself above the Throne**. Meaning, really in a manner that suits is Majesty. In surat **طه Taa-Haa** , **الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى** **the Most Beneficent (Allah) Istawa( rose over) ( Mighty Throne** meaning without describing it, reinterpreting it, resembling it to creation, rejecting it , or comparing it to the attributes of the creation and also means , in manner which suits His Majesty.

Arthur John Arberry's renderings ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ into Then He lifted Himself to heaven , seems quite inappropriate and incorrect where Khan and Hilali's renderings ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ into Then He Istawa (rose over) towards the heavens , seems quite more appropriate and correct .Hence the correct and accurate translation is rendered by Khan and Hilali.

The tentative correct translation by Khan and Hilali
<u>ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ الْبَقَرَةِ</u> 29:
<u>Then He Istawa (rose over)</u> towards the heavens (SurahAl-Baqarah The Cow:29)

### Conclusion

On the basis of the theoretical part and data analysis, the current study has come up with the following conclusions:

- Since the Holy Quran has many beautiful features in terms of both form and content, no single translated version can ever encapsulate all these features. Even no combination of all translated versions can ever cover all the beautiful features of the original text. Therefore, it can be suggested that it cannot suffice to read only one translated version of the Holy Quran for those who do not know the original language. Although the non-native speakers of Arabic cannot receive the same effect as that created on the original readers, the more successful translated versions they read, the more approximate they become to the original text.
- The grammatical and the morphological categories of words pose a problem for a translator while transferring the Message.
- In some cases, the equivalence of Arabic lexis in English is problematic. However, English words are generally held to be synonyms. For example, the word 'Allah', so subtle but vigorous, is undoubtedly untranslatable in any language and particularly, in English.

- d) The study also showed that morphosyntactic, lexical and semotactic translation poses problems on different levels.

### Pedagogical Implications of the Study

Integrating this study, and other similar and related studies, into the course of translation teaching in Arabic and English course in Sudanese, Saudi and other Arab and Muslim universities, this may enhance the students' translational performance; the application of the knowledge of translational techniques and strategies to concrete texts.

### Recommendations

In the light of the findings of the current study, it is recommended that:

- a) The translator should explain grammatical and lexical ambiguities in marginal notes for a receptor.
- b) The translators should employ a number of strategies to render the Qur'ānic ayahs into English and to achieve approximate equivalent to the ST. One of those strategies is transliteration. This strategy involves retaining the linguistic forms of Arabic while translating it into English.

### Suggestions for Further Studies

- a) The results of the current study call for future research on assessing translation of the meaning of the Hadith.
- b) Cases studies could be conducted to further assess the renditions of other surahs of the Holy Quran.

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