

The English Translation of arabic " fii" in Quranic text

Tahraoui Said *

About bakr Belkaid university of Tlemcen. Algeria . Bright.mind@yahoo.fr

Received: 28/06/2020

Accepted: 05/12/2020

Published: 22/12/2020

Abstract:

The present paper attempts to investigate the English used in the translation of the Qura'an. By examining the English translation of one particular Arabic preposition "fii", the study hopes to contribute to a better comprehension of translating one of the Arabic prepositions which is commonly used.

Surah YaSin is chosen for this study because it is considered by most Muslims and Islamic scholars to be the "Heart of the Qura'an". This surah also, from a linguistic and translation research perspective, contains a significant number of the preposition "fii" (n=15) which means that the translation of this surah will provide a rich source for

investigating the English translation of this Arabic preposition.

In this study two translators of the Glory Quran have been taken to analyze the way these translators rendered the Quranic verses that contain "fii". The translations chosen are those of Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Muhammed Sarwar.

Key words: Lexic , grammar, Semantic, Arabic Prepositions, English

INTRODUCTION

Currently, The English language is the central language in terms of its social and political influences and is far more extensive in its division than all other languages.(1) The reason for the rise of the English language as the dominate

language of global communications in various domains such as science and technology; international business, finance and commerce; diplomacy; transportation and publishing include historical, political and socio-economic factors.

The dominance of English has also led to the language being the target language of choice in translation. Virtually all great literature and important documents written in a source language other than English have been translated into English. These include religious and philosophical tracts.

Gordon claims that English is the 4th most widely spoken language with 510 million speakers in the world after Mandarin Chinese, Hindi and

Spanish. More fundamental estimates, which include speakers with lower level of language fluency and awareness, have suggested that the overall total is in excess of one billion users of English. Crystal estimates that mother-tongue speakers of English have now reached around 300 million; a further 300 million use English as a second language and another 100 million use it fluently as a foreign language. This is an increase of around 40% since the 1950s.

The role of the translator in mediating source ideas across cultural

and national limits places him or her in a unique position in particular for understanding a range of development issues. Translating narratives from the global South (including Middle East) is a very useful source of knowledge about unfamiliar languages, native cultures and experiences, and is vastly useful for gaining an understanding of non-European societies. Moreover, translation can also have a critical influence in politics and can act as an agent for reconciliation or social addition. Therefore, translations can have a distinct effect on how global and human rights issues can be conveyed and communicated.

In terms of English translation of the Quran, there are several English translations of the Quran (2) claims that the first English translation of the Quran was made by Alexander Ross, the chaplain to king Charles commonly referred to as *The Alcoran of Mahomet* in 1649. The Orientalists and Arabs had started to translate the Quran from the thirteenth century onwards. conclusion of a research paper needs to summarize the content and purpose of the article.

The Quran has been translated into almost all the European languages of which the largest number of translations was brought out in English. Some Muslim scholars argue that translation of

the meaning of the Quran was done during the time of the Prophet as a solution for those who did not understand the language of the Quran. Without translation, it is not possible to make people realize and discover the greatness, magnanimity and supremacy of the *Shari'ah*, consciousness of the *din* and eloquence of the Quran. God unveils the truth and guides people towards the straight path (*al-sirat al-mustaqim*). (3)

The religious translation is one of the most complicated and difficult kinds of translation. This is due to several reasons. Religious texts are varied, for religion deals with all aspects of human life. Major religious texts are, moreover, characterized by holiness. Thus, these texts require to be tackled with greatest loyalty and care. These texts are culture specific, for culture is deeply rooted in religion. The wide gap separating the culture of Islam expressed in Arabic and that of non-Arab Muslim cultures using English as a medium of expression requires to be given its due recognition when translating such texts and to be bridged by certain devices and techniques. The problem is that it seems that the translators embarking on this type of translation do not have a guide to follow, and each one has to try to discover things for himself and develop

his own system. The problem, thus, crystallizes in the absence of a reliable guide system to be followed in translating such system. (4)

Bearing in mind the issues surrounding the translation of the Quran, this study attempts to investigate an aspect of the English translation of the Quran, namely how the Arabic prepositions "fii" " في " in the Qura'an are rendered into English in the translation texts.

2.0 The general use of the prepositions (English and Arabic languages):

Recently, there has been a blossoming of English translations of the Glorious Quran because of the growing Muslim communities in English-speaking countries, as well as greater academic interest in Islam. "Translation is ultimately a human activity which enable human beings to exchange ideas and thoughts regardless of the different tongues used" .(5)

So, this paper focuses on how the translators managed to convey the meaning of certain prepositions from English to Arabic. It is a semantic approach that deals with the translating of the preposition "Fii" in our glory Quran from Arabic to English.

Generally speaking, the prepositions are polysemous; it is "a semantic

characteristic of words that have multiple meanings" ,(6) This study is concerned with whether the translators of the Quran managed to find an equivalent of the particle "fi" in its different occurrences in the Quran or they did not. Arabic prepositions pose major problem when translated to English because the number of prepositions in English is more than the Arabic prepositions and their usage differs from one context to another. The examples presented in this study are taken from a several translated version of Quran.

Dr. Abbas Hassan says " the prepositions are used in Arabic language to add more information to the sentence' (7) .So, prepositions work as connectors; they join the elements of the sentence together in order to make a complete sense. "A Preposition is semantically empty as long as it appears alone, but when it comes in a sentence it denotes a meaning in its neighboring element; however it does not denote a time ". (8)

Moreover, the Arabic prepositions are little bit tricky because they have a primary meaning (general meaning) and secondary meaning (meaning is taking according to the context). Therefore, the main problem that this study is trying to emphasis on remains not only

in identifying the equivalent prepositions in the target language that the translators found, but also in understanding their usage in Arabic.

Prepositions in English employed to connect a noun or a pronoun, in an adjectival or adverbial sense, with some other word; a particle used with a noun or pronoun to make a phrase limiting some other word, and usually placed before the word with which it is phrased. They are called "the biggest little words" in English because they have very important functions. "Prepositions express a relation in space between two or more entities or a relation in time between two events, or various other abstract relations such as instrument and case ". (9)

They constitute a translating difficulty as attested in the following quotations "Among those who teach or learn the English language, prepositions have earned a reputation for difficulty if not downright unpredictability ". (10)

McCarthy states that "Our prepositions are a particularly troublesome lot to the non-native speaker of English.". (11)

2.1 Classification of the Arabic prepositions:

For Hasan: " Prepositions in Arabic are subdivided according to their form into separable and inseparable and

according to their type into original, redundant and quasi-redundant. (12)

The original prepositions denote a subsidiary meaning to the sentence and it is always connected with the verb and its regent. The separable is the one that has a free form which is not connected to the noun as **in**: "*fii*" (in), "min" (from) "ella" (to), "alla" (on). However, the inseparable prepositions are always attached to a noun like "bi" (of), "li" (for). The former does not add a new meaning to the sentence and does not have a regent (a verb). Their main job is to confirm the meaning of the sentence.

This paper is more concerned with the separable preposition "fii" of surah YaSin when it translated into English. Translators still have problems in understanding the original text (Quran) and in translating it into good Arabic and English language. They may make some mistakes in forms or structures when they translate from their first language into their second language.

Mona says "errors and problems in translations mostly result from the non-equivalent between the source and the target languages"(13). The knowledge of the semantic of English also becomes necessary and significant for the translation as the nature of English sentences differs from Arabic. Thus, it is apparent that language translators must

explore more explanatory methods of translating prepositions.

3.0The Body and Data Compilation:

The body for this study is based on Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Muhammed Sarwar translation of Quran. The former was born in 1872 and died in 1953. His translation known as The Holy Quran- Text, Translation and commentary is published in Lahore, Cairo and Riyadh. This translation is well-respected by Muslim scholars. His first edition has later been republished in 2009 and 2010. In terms of the choice of translation, apart from Yusuf Ali's translation, as mentioned earlier, there is other well known English translation of the Quran such as the translations by Muhammad Marmaduke William Bickthal (1930-1967), Muhammad Asad (1980), Arthur John Arberry(1930), Muhammad Abdul Hakim Khan (1905), and Mirza Hairat Dehlawi (1912). Currently, the most important and authoritative version is by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. According to Kidwaiin his book, The Muslim World Book Review (1986:66-71), Abdullah Yusuf Ali 's translation of the Quran is by far the most popular translation. Abdullah Yusuf Ali is well known in the history of Quranic translations. Most of the revision involved the commentaries

rather than the translation. Hence, the original 1934 version was chosen for the study.

The later ,**Shaykh Muhammad Sarwar**, is a Pakistani-born American Islamic scholar specializing in Islamic theology and philosophy. He is also known as the first representative of the late Ayatollah Abul-Qasim al-Khoei . His works include the first contemporary English translation of the Quran (1982), currently its sixth edition (2011), and books about Islam. In recent years, his primary focus has been the translation of Islamic ahadith from Kitab al-Kafi (eight volumes) and Bihar al-Anwar.

As mentioned earlier only surah YaSin is chosen for the study, that because it is considered by most Muslims and Islamic scholars to be the "Heart of the Qura'an". This surah also, from a linguistic and translation research perspective contains a significant number of the preposition "fii" (n=14) which means that the translation of this surah will provide a rich source for investigating for English translation of this Arabic preposition.

Table 3.1 Basic Statistics of the translation text (Surah YaSin)

No. of verses (ayat)	83
No. of words	2988
No. of "fii"	14
Ratio of "fii" prep.	0.17

3.1 Data Generation and Analysis:

The data needed for the present study involved generating all instance of "fii" in the original text and mapping them to the English translation for this purpose. In total, 14 "fii" was detected in the original source text (Surah YaSin).

In this study two translators of the Glory Quran have been taken to analyze the way translators rendered the Quranic verses that contain "fii".

The translations chosen are those of Abdullah Yusuf Ali and As shown

SL text 1:

إني إذا لفي ظلال مبين (آية 24) -

TL text:

1 – Abdullah Yusuf Ali (14):

I would indeed, if I were to do so, be **in** manifest Error.

2 – Muhmmad Sarwar (15):

(Had I worshiped things beside Allah, I would have been **in** manifest error)

The following table shows the same translations for "fii" :

Translator	Translated verse	The preposition used
Abdullah Yusuf Ali	I would indeed, if I were to do so, be in manifest Error.	in
Muhammad Sarwar	(Had I worshiped things beside Allah, I would Have been in manifest error)	in

Table 3.2

in the table above; both translators succeeded to render an accurate translation of "fi" into (in) in English. The meaning of the sentence did not differ.

SL text 2:

- و فجرنا فيها من العيون. (آية 34)

TL text:

1 - Abdullah Yusuf Ali :

And we cause springs to gush forth **therein**.

2 - Muhammad Sarwar :

And have made streams flow **therein**.

The following table shows the same translations for "fi" :

As shown in the table above, both translators succeeded to interpret accurately "fi" into "therein" in English which means "in that place or thing".

Here in this example, the translators used very old-fashioned English partially to keep sense of the poetry of the original manuscript. **SL text 3:**

- إنا جعلنا في أعناقهم أغلالا. (آية 8)

TL text:

1 - Abdullah Yusuf Ali :

We have put yokes **round** their necks.

2 - Muhammad Sarwar :

We have enchained their necks up to their chains.

The following table shows the different translations for "fi" :

Translator	Translated verse	The preposition used
Abdullah Yusuf Ali	We have enchained their necks up to their chains.	round
Muhammad Sarwar	We have enchained their necks up to their chains.	Zero-translation

Table 3.4

As shown in the table above, both translators succeeded to interpret accurately "fi" into "therein" in English which means "in that place or thing".

As shown in the table above, the first translator, Ali, managed to render the exact intended meaning of "fi". The way he translated the proposition "fi" into (round) gave the impression that Allah will punish the disbelievers by putting around their neck a yokes which is true. He used an idiom "yoke round their neck" which means "a burden or something that oppresses people" to explain or render the meaning intended in this verse, (16) states that "idiom is an artistic expression of the language in which the individual meaning of its components is different from its literal meaning. He adds that idiomatic expressions are colorful, dramatics, lively, and closer to the way people really feel, and closer to the local culture."

Yet, the second translators didn't interpret "fi" (not mentioned in the English translated version of the Quranic text) i.e. zero translation.

"This will lead to the existence of "lexical gap", that is the presence of words in one language for which other languages do not have an equivalents." (17) and would also shifted the meaning

of the whole sentence when they ignored translating the preposition.

SL text 4

لهم فيها فاكهة و لهم ما يدعون. (آية 57)

TL text:

1 - Abdullah Yusuf Ali:

(Every) fruit (enjoyment) will be there **for** them.

2 - Muhmmad Sarwar:

Therein. They have fruits and whatever they desire.

The following table shows the different translations for "fi" :

Translator	Translated verse	The preposition used
Abdullah Yusuf Ali	(Every) fruit (enjoyment) will be there for them.	Zero-translation
Muhmmad Sarwar	Therein. They have fruits and whatever they desire.	therein

Table 3.5

As shown in the table above, the first translator did not translate "fi" into the target text. He failed to make an accurate link between the elements of

this example. Whereas, the second one gives an appropriate translation of this verse.

SL text 5:

- و لهم فيها منافع و مشارب. (آية 73)

TL text:

1 - Abdullah Yusuf Ali :

And they have (other) profits from them (besides), and they get (milk) to drink.

2 - Muhmmad Sarwar :

From cattle they get milk and other benefits.

The following table shows the same translations for Arabic "fii" :

As evident in the above table, both translators used "from" to render the meaning of "fii". They gave an accurate and straightforward translation of "fii". In this context the preposition "fii" in the original text means "from" in English because it is used to express or indicate the source and the origin of profits or benefits.

SL text 6:

- و نفخ في الصور. (آية 51)

TL text:

1 - Abdullah Yusuf Ali :

The trumpet shall be sounded.

2 - Muhmmad Sarwar :

When the trumpet is sounded.

The following table shows the same translations for "fii" :

Translator	Translated verse	The preposition used
Abdullah Yusuf Ali	The trumpet shall be sounded.	Zero-translation
Muhmmad Sarwar	When the trumpet is sounded.	Zero-translation

Table 3.7

As evident in the table above, both translators did not translate "fii" into English. Some translators want to shorten sentences and make its meaning easier to grasp. The problem is that translators cannot express identically the ideas and the words of Quran accurately in a readable and flowing way because the Quran was written in a classical Arabic language which requires more study of the standard Arabic language in order to fully appreciate and comprehend the meaning intended in each verses or words. Furthermore, the Quran has, as we mentioned previously, both in word and out word meaning, neither should be rejected.

This will lead to a problem, each time the translators read the Quran, they will come up with a new translation of the words or ideas and different words will

No. of prep. "fii" translated to "in"	8
No. of prep. "fii" translated to "therein"	2
No. of prep."fii" translated to "round"	1
No. of prep."fii" translated to "for"	1
No. of prep."fii" translated to "from"	1
No. of prep."fii" omitted	2

Table 3.8

be used to express their thought or perceptions. This will have a tremendous effect on the non-Muslim readers who is reading the translation of the Quran for the first time or the non-Arabic speaking Muslims who had been embraced the Islam. The best way to overcome the translation difficulties that related to our issue is that "the translators must depend on a number of dictionaries in both Arabic and English to determine the specific meaning of the words. The translators must also consult the various commentaries of the Quran to obtain the appropriate interpretation of the Quranic verses."(18)

However, from the above examples there were different translations of the Arabic preposition "fii" as this diagram shows:

Conclusion:

This paper is mainly intended to investigate the linguistic and the polysemous sense of the Arabic preposition "fii" in surah YaSin. It identifies the link between the primary and the secondary sense of the preposition "fii" in the chosen examples. Bear in minds that this preposition has secondary meaning which are "elevation", "termination", "attachment", "company", "a causative particle", "measurement", "a partitive particle" "from", "round", therein" and sometimes zero-translation.

The Quran is the only religious book in the world that gives us tools of interpretation. For example, the Quran says that there are open ended verses, ambiguous verses and specified verses. Linguistically speaking, it is called intertextuality and intratextuality aspects. In order to overcome these difficulties, the translators of the Quranic text should speak both languages fluently and should follow the Islamic scholar traditions.

It is an attempt to qualify the translation of Quran by Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Muhammed Sarwar. As shown in the above mentioned examples and their commentaries. Sometimes the translators accurately approached the interpretive meaning in their

translations of the preposition "fii", other times they failed to convey the intended meaning. All in all, the above mentioned translators were seeking to follow prophet Mohammed footsteps (May peace be upon him) when he said:

خيركم من تعلم القرآن و علمه

The best of you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it.

References:

- 1- Crystal, D, The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English language, 2nd ed, Cambridge University press, 2003, P 25.
- 2- Ushama, Issues In Translation Of The Quran, Malaysia, 2008, p 42.
- 3- Ushama, Ibid, p 04.
- 4- Sariyya, S, Translation Islamic Religious Texts into English. First Edition. Yatub House for Publishing and Distribution- Damascus, 2009, p 14.
- 5- Antar S. Abdellah, What Every Novice Translator Should Know. Translation journal, 2002, Vol. 6, No. 3. P 02.
- 6- Koffi . E, Applied English Syntax: Foundations For Word, Phrase, and sentence analysis. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 2010, p 299.
- 7- Hassan, Abbas, An-Nahow Al-Waafi " Comprehensive syntax ", vols,15th edition, Cairo: Dar Al-Ma'arif, Vol 1, 2004, p 30.
- 8- Hassan, Abbas, Ibid, 32.
- 9- McCarthy. K, Teaching English Prepositions , Cambridge grammar of English Carter and McCarthy, 2006, p 462.
- 10- Pittman, G. A. Activating The Use of English Prepositions. London: Longmans, 1966, p 96.
- 11- McCarthy. K, op cit, p 135.
- 12- Hassan, Abbas, op cit, p 43.
- 13- Baker . M, In Other Words: A Coursebook In Translation, London and New York: Routledge, 1992, p p 20-21.
- 14- Abdullah Yusuf Ali, (April 14, 1872 - December 10, 1953) is a British-Indian Islamic scholar who translated the Koran into English. His translation of the Quran is one of the most widely known and used in the English-speaking world. He was also one of the trustees of the East London Mosque.
- 15- Shaykh Muhammad Sarwar , is a Pakistani-born American Islamic scholar, specializing in Islamic theology and philosophy.
- 16- Maxos. H, The Arabic Idioms, Damascus, 2003, p 04.
- 17- Mazin Fawzi Ahmed, Investigating Some Semantic Problems

In The Translation of The Holy Quran,
2006, P 6.

18- Abobaker Ali, M Alsaleh
Brakhw, Munif Zarirruddin Fikri Bin
Nordin. and Sharifah Fazliyaton shaik
Ismail. Some linguistic Difficulties in
Translating The Holy Quran From
Arabic Into English, International
journal of social science and humanity,
2012, p 590.