العنوان:	untranslatability of semantically oriented qur'anic syntex
المصدر:	مجلة أفشوت
الناشر:	جامعة عبدالمالك السعدى - مدرسة الملك فهد العليا للترجمة - مجموعة البحث في الترجمة والدراسات المقارنة
المؤلف الرئيسي:	Abo Raof, Hussein
المجلد/العدد:	ع2
محكمة:	نعم
التاريخ الميلادي:	1999
الصفحات:	40 - 46
رقم MD:	592093
نوع المحتوى:	بحوث ومقالات
اللغة:	English
قواعد المعلومات:	AraBase
مواضيع:	القرآن الكريم ، ترجمة معاني القرآن ، تفسير القرآن ، السور و الآيات
رابط:	http://search.mandumah.com/Record/592093

Al-Jurjaani, Abdul-Qaahir (1984). *Dalaa' il al-I'jaaz*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khaanachi

Ali, Yusuf (1983). *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary*. Maryland: Amana Corp

Al-Qurtubi, abi Abdullah Muhammad (1997). *al-Jaami' li-Ahkaam al-Qur'an*. Vol. 1-20. Beirut: Daar al-Kitaab al-Arabi

Al-Zamakhshari, abi al-Qaasim Jaar-Allah (1995*). al-Kashshaaf*. Vol. 1-4. Beirut: Daar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyeh

Arberry, A. J. (1980). *The Koran Interpreted*. Vol. 1-2. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd

Halliday, M. A. K. (1967). 'Notes on transitivity and theme in English'. In *Journal of Linguistics*. 3, 2, 199-244

Halliday, M. A. K.(1985). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold

Irving, T. B. (1985). *The Qur'an: The First American Version*. Brattleboro: Amana Books

Newmark, P. (1982*). Approaches to Translation*. Oxford: Pergamon Press

Nida, E. A. (1964). *Towards A Science of Translating*. Leyden: Brill

Pickthall, M. (1969). *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd

Smalley, W. A. (1991). *Translation as Mission: Bible Translation in the Modern Missionary Movement*. Georgia: Mercer University Press

Welch, A. T. (1990). 'The translatability of the Qur'an: literary and theological implications of what the Qur'an says about itself'. In David M. Goldenberg (ed.) *Translation of Scripture*, 249-285

cited above in the first example.

Conclusion

The examples cited provide useful observations for applied translation studies and contrastive linguistics. This brief discussion also lends further support for the orthodox Muslim view that the Qur'an is translation-resistant (cf. Abdul-Raof, 1999). This view is also held by renowned Muslim and non-Muslim Qur'an translators like Pickthall (1969) and Arberry (1980). This widely-held view rests on the fact that Qur'an-specific linguistic and rhetorical textural elements constitute linguistic and rhetorical voids in any given TL. Arberry (1980:24) concedes that the rhetoric and rhythm of the Arabic of the Qur'an 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 splendour of the original. We believe that the orthodox Muslim view is also supported by the fact that skewing of valuable information is inevitable when rendering takes place between two culturally and linguistically incongruous languages, that translation theory fails to provide a solution to problems similar to the ones cited above, that translation is no more than an act of interpretation and an approximation, and that there is no total equivalence. According to Nida (1964:2), underlying all the complications of translation is the fundamental fact that languages differ radically one from the other. When perfect translation is impossible, in the view of Smalley (1991:3), because no two languages are the same, no two cultures are the same, the world views of no two peoples are the same, and when translation involves some kind of loss of meaning (Newmark, 1982:7), one therefore ought to concede that the translation of the Qur'an should be looked at as only an interpretation and an aid to understanding the Qur'an and should not be taken as a substitution. There are other numerous Qur'anic examples which represent a unique case for the non-equivalence of inter-textual translation. In the view of Welch (1990:273) many Arabic words that are central to the teachings of the Qur'an are rich in their connotations, and require a variety of English renderings in different contexts.

References

Abdul-Raof, H. (1999). *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture and Exegesis*. London: Curzon

Al-Biqaa'i, Burhaan al-Deen abi al-Hasan (1995). *Nathm al-Durar fi Tanaasub al-Aayaat wal-Suwar*. Vol. 1-8. Beirut: Daa al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyeh

Where we have two stress particles: (أَنّ)before the subject (اللَّه) and (لَ) which is attached to (رؤوف); the TT has not managed to keep the second stress particle(لَ) which highlights the epithet (رؤوف -Most Kind) and strongly confirms the notion of 'extreme kindness of God'.

The other translation-resistant Qur'anic stress mechanism is where we have triple stress particles: (pronoun+أَلا+إِنّ) as in:

(أَلا إنّهم هم السفهاء)

[Surely they are the fools. Q2:1]

Where the TT has managed to introduce no more than one stress word (surely) for (إنّ) but failed to produce the other two ST stress particles (أَلا) and (هم).

Repetition of Pronoun: Pronouns, especially those which are coreferential with the noun 'God' are repeated to perform the semantic function of confirmation and stress the main thesis of a statement, as in:

(إِنّا نحن نزلنا عليك القرآن تنزيلا)

[It is We Who have sent the Qur'an down to you as a revelation. Q76:23]

Where the pronouns (إِنّا - we) and (نحن - we) are employed to double confirm the notion that 'the Qur'an is sent down and revealed by God'. From a psycho-linguistic point of view, the use of double pronouns is employed for a psychological purpose which is that of 'reassurance'; in this example, the double pronouns convey reassurance to the Prophet Muhammad. The TT has used the dummy subject 'it' which is normally used for the inanimate and non-human nouns. This can be taken as a misrepresentation of the ST emphatic pronoun (أنا). Most important is the loss of the interesting prosodic (phonetic) effect of the repetition of the nasal sounds represented by the nasal letter /n/ throughout the words of the statement (except for the word (عليك) in this six-word Qur'anic statement, we have saturated nasalisation where we have eight nasal sounds. Moreover, a significant rhetorical function which is that of polyptoton is also lost in the TT; this is represented by the repetition of the words (نزلنا) and (تنزيلا) which have the linguistic function of lexical cohesion.

Similarly, we have (إني أنا ربك)[I am your Lord. Q20:12] where we have repeated pronouns (إني - I) and (أنا - I) employed for the same reasons

sound grammatical alternative, we find that the past participle is used instead because it signifies a different intended meaning, as in:

(و على المولود له رزقهن)

[The family head must support women. Q2:233]

The ST deliberately employs the past participle (المولود- the family head, or 'the father' in Ali's translation) rather than the present participle (الوالد) which also means 'father' to signify that 'children are born for the fathers', i.e., the children will inevitably be bearing their father's name, and not their mother's. For this reason, the father must bear the cost of the mother's food. The TL does not distinguish between the two available, yet semantically distinct, SL alternatives. (It is important to note that this example is part of a larger Qur'anic text on divorce when the mother is pregnant.

Definite/Indefinite Nouns: The indefinite noun can also signify a semantic function in the Qur'an, as in:

(لنجعلها لكم تذكرة و تعيها أذن واعية)

[So We might set it up as a Reminder for you and so (your) attentive ears retain it. Q69:12]

Where the word (أذن- ear) is used as an indefinite noun to signify that 'only few people will listen to this reminder, while the rest will take no notice'. Also, the indefinite noun has a rhetorical signification which is that of *rebuke* and *censure*. These interesting semantic and rhetorical aspects of the ST indefinite noun are lost in the TT; the TL stands helpless and can only provide a plural noun as a linguistic requirement.

Stress Particles: Stress in Qur'anic discourse plays a semantic role of emphasising a given notion; there are quite a few stress particles used in the Qur'an such as: (إن -verily) (قد - must, will), (لن will never), etc., which are all possible to render in a given TT. There is, however, a stress mechanism used recurrently in the Qur'an where the translation-resistant stress particle (ل) is employed, as in:

(إن الله بالناس لرؤوف رحيم)

[Verily God is Most Kind and Most Merciful to mankind. Q22:65]

Qurtubi, 1997: 12-3).

Foregrounding/Backgrounding: This is recurrently used in the Qur'an and plays a significant semantic role, as in:

<div dir="rtl">

(و مما رزقناهم ينفقون)

</div>

[And (they) spend out of what We have provided for them. Q2:3]

The linguistic unit (و ممـا رزقـاهم - of what We have provided for them) is foregrounded as a semantic prerequisite for this Qur'anic statement; the linguistic requirement of the TT, however, does not allow this to happen. Thus, the intentionality of the ST is not met. The ST focuses on the fact that 'God' is the original Provider of what they are 'spending' rather than on 'expending'; in other words, this foregrounded unit functions like a topical theme. The TT provides a different thematic organisation and consequently a significantly different meaning.

Qur'anic word order is always semantically oriented; al-Jurjaani (1984:133) draws attention to the structures in which the theme (المحدث عنه) i.e., 'what is being talked about' and the 'point of departure for the clause as a message' (Halliday, 1967:212 and 1985:39) is placed, for a semantic reason, before the negated rheme (الخبر -what follows the theme), as in:

<div dir="rtl">

(و اللذين هم بربهم لا يشركون)

</div>

[And those who do not associate anything with their Lord. Q23:59]

Where the noun (بربهم-with their Lord) acts as the theme of the statement and placed before the negated rheme (لا يشركون-do not associate anything). The good reason for this type of thematic order is that it is more 'powerful' in delivering a strong-worded negation of the action denoted by the verb(يشركون) . Thus, placing the theme in this position followed by the negative article لا) - not) produces negation which is much more powerful than the ordinary alternative word order:

<div dir="rtl">

(و اللذين لا يشركون بربهم)

</div>

The TT, however, fails, because of the linguistic gap, to maintain the ST semantically oriented word order. The TT is in fact a translation of the alternative SL word order which is neither powerful nor emphatic.

Past Participle/Present Participle: Although the present participle is a

In this example, the noun (الحجرات - the apartments) is used in the plural form to signify 'respect' and 'esteem' for the Prophet Muhammad. A singular noun does not have this semantic function. Although the TT employs a plural noun as well, it does not signify the same semantic value of the ST plural noun.

Morphological Form: The selection of one form rather than another is also based on semantic grounds, as in:

(يوم ترونها تذهل كل مرضعة عما أرضعت)

[On the day when you see it, every nursing mother will neglect whatever she is nursing. Q22:2]

In this example, the word (مرضعة nursing mother) is selected in this form rather than in the other possible, but semantically distinct, form (مرضع) because the first form illustrates vividly the on-going action of breastfeeding a baby while the second alternative signifies a habit, i.e., a mother who breastfeeds her baby, yet she is not performing it now; the first form, therefore, is employed for a rhetorical purpose as well as that of hyperbole to enrich the warning depicted in this Qur'anic statement. Again, the TT cannot cope with this semantically oriented morphological variation.

Past/Present Tense: The present tense is selected in the Qur'an to signify 'continuity' and 'renewal' of an on-going action, as in:

(إن اللذين كفروا و يصدون عن سبيل الله)

[As to those who rejected (God), and would keep back (men) from the Way of God…Q22:25]

We can notice a tense shift in this Qur'anic statement: the first verb (كفروا - rejected (God))is in the past while the second (يصدون - would keep back) is in the present tense to signify a habitual action: the unbelievers are 'continually' engaged in the same action, namely 'keeping back people from the way of God'. The TL requires a past tense and even if a present tense is used, the intended semantic function of the ST present tense will not be delivered to the TL audience. It is perfectly possible, from a syntactic point of view, for the ST to use a past tense (صدوا) but the intended meaning will be drastically different; a past tense form, however, will not signify continuity but an action performed at a certain point in the past (cf. al-

(غَلَبَتِ الرُّومُ)   [The Roman Empire has been defeated. Q30:2]

Although the subject noun (الرُّومُ) is masculine, the ST employs a feminine pronoun (تْ) attached to the verb (غَلَبَتْ). The semantic reason for using a feminine pronoun which is coreferential with a masculine subject is to indicate humiliation for the Romans under Heraclius because of the moral corruption which led to their defeat by the Persians who were unbelievers (cf. al-Biqaa'i 1995, 5:5840). The Romans were 'people of the Book' and were expected to be morally good. The feminine pronoun also has a rhetorical function of sarcasm. Although the TT meets the TL syntactic requirements, it fails to inform the TL reader about an important piece of information in the ST; this is due to the fact that the TL suffers from a linguistic gap.

Singular/Plural Nouns: A singular noun can be used in the Qur'an rather than a plural which indicates a generic sense, as in:

(وَلَوْ أَنَّمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ أَقْلَامٌ وَ الْبَحْرُ يَمُدُّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ سَبْعَةُ أَبْحُرٍ
مَا نَفِذَتْ كَلِمَاتُ اللَّهِ)

[And if all the trees on earth were pens and the Ocean (were ink), with seven Oceans behind it to add to its (supply), yet the Words of God would not be exhausted (in the writing). Q31:27]

Where the noun (شَجَرَةٍ - a tree) is used in the singular to signify that every single tree is included in making all of them into pens. The ST has not, therefore, chosen the generic noun (شَجَرٌ / أَشْجَارٌ - trees) because it will not convey the intended meaning. This semantic variation which is signalled by the ST syntactic element of the singular cannot be delivered by the TT. Similarly, the use of the noun (كَلِمَاتٌ - words) as plural of paucity has a semantic function; it indicates that even if you are able to make all kinds of trees into pens, you will exhaust no more than a few meanings of the words of God; here lies the concept of paucity for which a plural of paucity is employed. This semantic role cannot be conveyed by any TL (cf. al-Zamakhshari 1995, 3:486).
Similarly, in:

(إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُنَادُونَكَ مِنْ وَرَاءِ الْحُجُرَاتِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ)
[Most of those who call out to you from outside the apartments do not use their reason. Q49:4]

Untranslatability of Semantically Oriented Qur'anic Syntax
Hussein Abdul-Raof*

Introduction

Qur'anic discourse is characterised by unique and prototypical linguistic and rhetorical textural features which constitute insurmountable translational hurdles. During any translation process, features of this kind will force the translator to manage the source text (ST); this in turn will eventually lead to skewing of information of the (ST), undermining its intentionality, and most importantly, reducing its informativity. The present discussion focuses on some syntactic elements which, from an exegetical perspective, play a significant semantic role in the ST. It is important to recognise that these syntactic elements are Qur'an-specific whose rendering to another target language (TL) is impossible. This is the main thrust of this paper.

Looking at the Qur'an as a divine message to mankind, and taking into account the fact that the target text (TT) cannot linguistically accommodate these semantically oriented Qur'anic syntactic elements, the TL reader has been denied significant information and the ST is seriously abused. The translation of Qur'anic statements is taken either from Ali's (1983) which represents a literal approach using archaic English, or Irving's (1985) which represents a communicative approach using contemporary English. The semantic account of Qur'anic syntactic elements will be based on Qur'an exegesis.

Limits of Untranslatability

The following discussion provides a number of cases which illustrate the serious gaps that cannot be filled by the linguistic system of any given TL; thus, the TT fails to convey to the TL reader what the ST is about. Among the syntactic elements that constitute severe limitations on Qur'an translation are:

Masculine/Feminine Nouns: We sometimes encounter in the Qur'an nouns or pronouns which are used in the masculine rather than the feminine or vice versa for a good and sensitive semantic reason, as in:

* Hussein Abdul-Raof, Department of Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Leeds, Leeds LS1 9JT, Britain.