

Text-types, Translation Types and Translation Assessment: A Case Study of Chapter 112 of the Holy Quran in Rodwell, Al-Hilali and Khan's Translation

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Abstract

This work examines translation as inter linguistic process- a socio-psycho-linguistic phenomenon- that is constantly seen at work in the art of Quranic translation. It employs the different translation of Suratul Ikhlas (chapter 112) by Rodwell, Alhilali and Khan and Turner as a case study. The aim of this paper is to discuss the methods adopted by these translators and identify the degree of closeness of their translation to semantic value of the original source (Quran). The work discovers that it is only Rodwell translation that has no exegetical elements, whereas Al-hilali and Khan made use of ellipsis and exegetical features. The use of exegetical expansion is more pronounced in Turner's work than in Al-hilali and Khan's. There are also a lot of assumed ellipses in Turner's translation. The paper concludes that a proper translation may include elements of gist or exegesis provided it does not jeopardize the semantic value of the source text.

Keywords: Qur'an, Translation, Ellipsis, Exegesis, Semantic value, Linguistic phenomenon

1. Introduction

The first translation of the Quran was carried out by Robertus Rotensis and Hermannus Dalmata in 1143 CE, when it was translated into Latin in the interest of the converts during the time of the Crusaders. (A-hilal and Khan 1997) The first English translation was from the French version in 1688 CE by Alexander Ross. In 1689 CE another Latin translation was presented by Maracci that included the Arabic text as well as extracts from different commentaries of the Quran. The translator, who was a priest and one of the leading church members, started with an introduction which was entitled 'Refutation of the Qura'n. It was in 1734 CE, that George Sale presented another English translation of the Quran from Latin, which was then considered the original English source for the translation of the Quran and was republished several times in Europe (Khaleel 2000). From then onwards, there followed many English and other European translations of the Quran, through which the translators expressed what they believed about Islam. This was sometimes done within the core of the translated text or in the form of footnotes or comments. This led some Muslims such as Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall to translate the meanings of the Quran into English, in an attempt to give the reader, as far as possible the most adequate rendering of the Quran into English.

The first Muslim who tried to translate the Quran into English was Dr. Muhammad Abdel Hakeem Khan in 1905 CE. However, in 1930 CE, there appeared another translation by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall entitled *The Meanings of the Glorious Quran*. He was a Christian Englishman who converted to Islam. In his view, the Quran cannot be translated and his work was merely an attempt to present the meanings of the Quran into English. This translation was followed in 1934 CE by that of Abdullah Yusuf Ali, which is most commonly used now, entitled *The Holy Quran*. Yusuf Ali was a Muslim scholar who had a good command of both Arabic and English language, his translation were free from the grave misinterpretations found in other translations. Yusuf Ali also added some comments at the bottom of each page, helping the reader to comprehend the text correctly. In 1956, another translation into English appeared entitled *The Koran: A New Translation*, presented by N.J. Daawood, which was published under The Penguin Classics series. In his introduction, Daawood says that the reason he presented this work was to supply the reader with a version of the Quran translated into modern English (Daawood 1956)

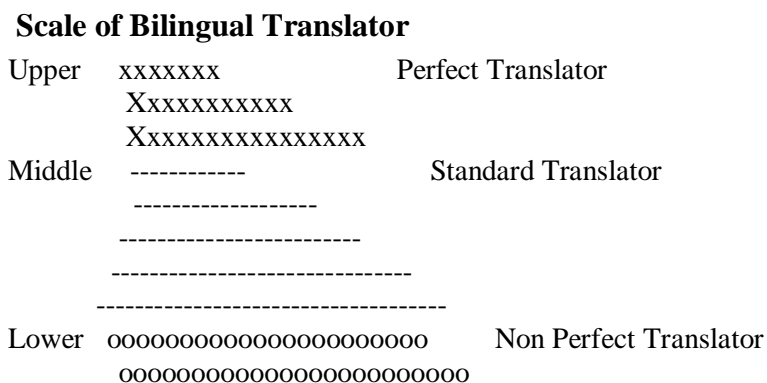
The translation presented by Arthur J.Arberry in 1955, entitled The Koran Interpreted was published by Oxford University Press. Arberry was a Christian professor in a British University.

He was of the opinion that the Quran being a great work should not be translated. Hence he chose to name his work “an interpretation” rather than a translation. Despite the fact that Arberry was a non-Arab, non-Muslim, yet he had moderate views about Islam and the Quran. The last and most recent translation is presented by M.M. Khatib entitled The Bounteous Koran, authorized by Al-Azhar in 1984 and first published in 1986. Khatib is an Egyptian Muslim who has a good command of both English and Arabic and has acquired a good deal of knowledge about Islamic culture.(Al –hilali and khan 1997)

The term “translation” is the mental term used for all tasks where the meaning of an expression in one language (the ‘source’ language) is turned into the meaning of another (the ‘target’ language), whether the medium is spoken, written or signaled. It is an operation performed on languages through the replacement of textual material in one language (source language) by equivalent textual material in another language (target language). By replacement of textual material we mean a replacement of source language graphology, grammar and lexis by equivalent target language graphology, grammar and lexis. Source language (SL) means the form from which the translation is made and target Language/ receptor language (TL/RL) is the form into which the SL is to be changed. By equivalence we mean text in different languages can be equivalent in different degrees (fully/partially equivalent), in respect of different levels of presentation (equivalent in respect of context of semantics, grammar, lexis etc) and at different ranks (word-for-word, phrase-for-phrase, sentence-for-sentence). Since meaning is central in translation, it will not be acceptable to say that translation only involves changing of form of the first language to the form of the second language.

Translation consists of transferring the meaning of the SL into the TL which is done by going from the form of SL to the form of TL by way of semantic structure. It’s meaning, which is being transferred must be held constant while the form changes. It is therefore the expression in TL of what has been expressed in SL, while preserving semantic and stylistic equivalencies. It consist of studying the lexicon, grammatical structure, communication situation and cultural context of the SL text, analyzing it in order to determine its meaning and then reconstructing the same meaning using the lexicon and grammatical structure which are appropriate in the TL and its cultural context. Therefore, a good translator needs to know his SL well; he must also have a thorough understanding of the field of knowledge covered by the source text and of any social, cultural or emotional connotations that need to be specified in the TL if the intended effect is to be conveyed. The same special awareness needs to be present for the TL so that points of special phrasing, contemporary fashions or taboos in expression, local (e.g. regional) expectations and so on can all be taken into account. The aim of translation is to provide semantic equivalence between SL and TL.

It is interesting to note that the question of translation is an inter- lingual thing. It is essentially bilingual and so applies to more than one language. This means that the problems that we often see with translation relate on both linguistic and sociolinguistic dominion of language acquisition and usage. Hence the type of translation will vary according to the translator’s point on the scale of bilingualism, which is according to the degree of proficiency acquired in the languages. The more perfect the translation, the higher on the scale of bilingualism the translator is; and the less perfect the translator, the lower on the scale of bilingualism the translator is. The scale can be represented as below



In spite of the seeming coherent system that man's universal culture system appears to show, there are peculiar and autonomous entities in it. Since in translation, cultural and sociological features are usually rendered in the target language (TL), so, full translation is an ideal thing for a good translator.

Hence, we shall agree with the school of thought that what takes place in the world of translation is partial translation, either because some part of the source language (SL) text is "untranslatable" or for the deliberate purpose of introducing 'local flavor' into TL text or speech. When cultural and sociological features have a universal appeal, perfect translation is possible, but when those features are culture bound or restricted to a particular society, then translation becomes difficult. In consequence, for a translator at a high point on the scale provided above, good flashes of literature (in term of the use of language) are found when unrealistic features are expressed but when the experience to be related (translated) is restricted, translation breaks down.

On the other hand, non-perfect translator, who is at the lowest point on the scale of bilingualism makes an almost non-sense translation of universal features where restricted or cultural bound features are concerned, their weakness may become apparent, but is usually done in a refined way to preserve the local color. So a good translator is he who combines an equivalent linguistic experience (language performance) with equivalent linguistic competence. Translation as a courier of human mode of thought and understanding can't be perfect but can bet standard, because no human product can be perfect. So to condemn or dismiss the validity of translation because it is not always possible and never perfect is absurd.

Not everything can be translated, especially in theologies where there are mysteries which can only be described, which would be sacrilegious and radically inaccurate to paraphrase or transpose. In an attempt to translate context can be lost. Since no two languages agree in all of these areas, a complete satisfactory translation is obviously impossible. There are various stages in translation process. All these stages or steps include some pre-translation exercise, translation and post-translation actions, which can be captured with the diagram in Figure 1.

The reason for choosing these translators lies in the fact that Rodwell's was the first translation done from Arabic text and being a member of church, his translation is likely to be affected by the socio-religious orientation. On the other hand, Al-hilali and Khan's may also reflect Islamic orientation in their work. Turner, his moderate views point about Islam, qualifies him as a middle course translator. As this is a short paper, I select one of the shortest chapters of the Quran (chapter 112) as a case study. This and other sociolinguistic feature identified in the different translation of Suratul-Ikhlas will be discussed in the next section. The three different versions of Suratu 'al- Ikhlas by the three translators are presented below

2. Source Text

Bismi lla:hi 'al-rahma:n 'al-rahi:m

- i. Qul huwa'al- la:hu 'ahad
- ii. all:ahu s-samad
- iii. Lam yalid walam yu:lad
- iv. Walam yakun lahu: kufwan 'ahad

2.1 Rodwell's Translation

In the name of God, The Compassionate, The Merciful

- i. Say He is God alone
- ii. God is eternal
- iii. He begets not and He is not begotten
- iv. And there is none like Him

2.2 Al-hilali and Khan's Translation

In the name of Allah The Most Beneficent, The Most Merciful

- i. Say, O Muhammad, He is Allah (the) One.
- ii. Allah As-samad, (the self sufficient master whom all creatures need He neither eats nor drinks)
- iii. He begets not, nor was He begotten.
- iv. And there is none co-equal or comparable to Him

2.3 Turner's Translation

In the name of God The Compassionate, The Merciful

- i. Say, My God is One
- ii. The cosmos is a manifestation of His eternal names, for He is mirrored in all things in a most subtle manner, and He is free from all wants and needs.
- iii. He does not begot or produces anything nor is He begotten or produced by anything.
- iv. And there is nothing in the whole of cosmos that can be likened to Him.

3. Analysis

Rodwell's translation here can be regarded as having no exegetical element, but Al-hilali and Khan includes ellipses and exegetical features. An ellipsis in translation theory is a lexical grammatical meaning substituted with zero. That is, in the source text, something is left unsaid but is understood from the context. It can also be referred to as part of the structure that is omitted, for reasons of economy or emphasis or style, but which is recoverable from a scrutiny of the context. Traditional grammarians refer to it as an element being "understood" while the textual linguist tends to constrain the notion as being elided (or ellipse). The traditionalists claim that ellipses in Arabic and in the glorious Quran fall into two categories

- i. Ellipses that is concerned with clarifying and expounding the utterance further, the translator has to resort to a word or more for more clarification without additional an element or utterance that will result into another shade of meaning not originally implied. However, if there had been explicit mention of the covertly implied exegetical element, such ellipsis is considered as some sort of unnecessary tautology in the translation.
- ii. When the source text which requires the presupposition of ellipse element, this is done either for rational (logical reasons) or grammatical (structural) consideration

There are different types of exegetical ellipses in translation which differ from one another. However Ibn Jin identifies four types of ellipses

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| i. Sentence ellipse | jumlah |
| ii Word ellipse | kalimah |
| iii Letter ellipse | harf |
| iv Phrase ellipse | shibh jumlah |

Either of these can occur in translation for semantic or pragmatic reasons.

Considering the translation of al-hilali and Khan *qul huwa 'allahu ahad* Say, O Muhammad: He is Allah the One. Omission of the addressee, (Muhammad), and the vocative particle *ya* in the source text, represent ellipses of phrase where translation rendered as "O Muhammad" as an exegetical to amplify the semantic value of the verse and introduce local flavor into the text source or speech. This will enable the listener or reader to have the full grasp of the message. In Turner's translation of the same verse "say my God is one". There is evident of the most obviously exegetical version of translation. If we consider the above Turner's translation, the word *Huwa* in the source text, which refers to what is mentioned after the pronoun is used by Allah as a reference pronoun. This is referred to as cataphoric reference *'al-lafzu al-muhi:l* and what is referred to in the text is known as *al-muha:l'laihi*. But in the translation of Turner's, the reference word is translated as "my" instead of "He". This type of translation is referred to, in a sociolinguistic theory of translation as "substitution reference *al'ihalat al'istibdailiyyah*" this is when a word is introduced to replace another word, and perform the same function as the one replaced. *Huwa* is originally translated as "he" but Turner translated it as "my" referring to Muhammad, while in the source text it is referring to Allah. This is done in order to add value and exegeses to the translation. This exegesis may be inferred from the circumstances surrounding the revelation of the chapter. It is reported in Ibn Abbas that the unbelievers invited the Prophet to join them in worshipping their gods. Muhammad refused to participate in their worship. They inquired further about the concept of his God, "Who is your God"? The chapter was now revealed to him as a response to the question of the unbelievers. "Say, He Allah (God) is One".

Turner is definitely wrong here as it is well known that the Quran was revealed in Arabic and the word *Huwa* is originally part of the revealed verse. GOD, in his wisdom, would have used *ila: hi:* translated as "my God".

Turner's translation of *Huwa* as "my" affects the semantic value of the original source text. Unlike the unbelievers, in the pre-Islamic era where each tribe has his own god, Allah is One for every body and One alone. The other verses translated by Al-hilali and Khan also includes elements of exegetical expansion and cohesive reference. Cohesion is recently been observed among textual linguists as strategy of linking and correlating two or more words through which textual element in the text are structurally observed. However, the sociolinguist translator employ elements of cohesion where the original Arabs source text involves a high degree of repetition of meaning (i.e. semantic repetition) or where there is need of introducing pragmatic features for exegesis. Al-hilali and Khan translated the second verse as *Allah As-samad* (the self sufficient master, whom all creatures need.

He neither eats nor drinks. In the above translation, the translator might consider the fact there are some information in the Arabic text which need to be mentioned in the translation to give an adequate understanding of the message passed by Allah. That is, there is an ellipsis of information. The translator then brought the information by introducing exegetical expansion in its translation.

The third verse is a free translation devoid of any exegetical features. The fourth verse is translated as "and therefore is non co-equal or comparable unto him". *Kufwan* is translated freely as "co-equal" but the translator believes that the "equality of Allah to none" is not adequate enough to describe the uniqueness of Allah. The word *kufwan* means more than its original meaning, probably; this informs Turner to introduce, in his own translation, additional phrase which extends the meaning to involve "non comparability". This is also another demonstration of exegetically led translation which involves rephrasing between the source text and target text. In Turner's translation of the verses, the introduction of exegetical expansion is more pronounced in his work than Al-hilali and Khan. If one goes through the translation, there are a lot assumed ellipses which reflected in his work. Let us take the last verse translated for illustration, "and there is nothing in the whole of cosmos that can be likened to him", this phrase is introduced in the translation to add exegetical values to the translation. Al-hilali and Khan translation could be referred to as amplified translation as it adds parenthetical comment into its work for the sake of clarity. However, the parenthetical comments are the source of much of the controversy the translation attracts (see Yaqub 2000). Rodwell's translation can be regarded as having no exegetical channel. This is considered as free-translation free in the sense that no additional information is added, no assumed ellipses and no introduction of exegetical elements.

4. Issues in the Art of Quran Translation

It is necessary before concluding this paper to discuss some important issues about the art of literary translation and to suggest qualities recommended for translators in general, and for Quran translators in particular. The first and most important point is that both Arabic and English languages come from two different families of languages: Semitic and Germanic families respectively. Therefore, they have two quite different sentence structures and we would expect different kinds of problems in translation arising from the gaps between these two languages. For example, a particular word in one of these languages might not have equivalence in the other; as the word *Ar-rahma:n* for which Khatib (1986) encountered great difficulty in finding English words that precisely match the Arabic meaning.

Another major point that the translator must realize is that any literary text is composed of a complex set of systems in relation to other sets outside its boundaries; and thus, he must not focus on one set at the cost of the other. The translator must also observe the cultural differences between the source language and the target language and should not ignore any cultural factor. This means that the translator must be well acquainted with the cultural and social factors in both the languages.

The art of literary translation necessitates that the translator be skillfully trained, have good linguistic, cultural, social knowledge, a good deal of imagination and common sense. He must also work hard to reach a translation that is as close as possible to the original. The art of translating the Quran, however, requires in addition to the above qualities, that the translator must be a native speaker of Arabic, or acquire its nativity, as well as a Muslim who acquired deep knowledge of Islamic history, culture and tradition. These qualities being present in Al-Hilali and Muhsin Khan made their translation more adequate than the other two translations mentioned above. However, as we have seen from the above discussion, that Turner has some misinterpretations of words or verses of the Quran, despite his moderate view about Islam, due to the fact that he is not a Muslim and non-native speaker of Arabic.

It is obvious that not many individuals would be qualified for such a daunting task of Quranic translation. Therefore, I suggest that the translation of the Quran should not be an individual effort, but rather a team effort of Muslim scholars who have reasonable command of English as well as a team of linguists who are native speakers of Arabic and have a good background on Islam and Islamic teachings. These two teams sitting and working hard together should be able to overcome most of the difficulties, misunderstandings and misinterpretations faced and presented by Turner and previous translators. This type of translation is urgently needed today, especially when Islam is facing challenges from the West

5. Conclusion

This work is an attempt to explore the feature of ellipses and exegetical features as related in the three different translation of Rodwell, Al-hilali and Khan, and Turner in rendering a standard and acceptable translation to the general audience. An exegetical translation can be shorter than the source text but it can be sometimes longer and easily shade into general observation triggered by the source text but not really explaining it. In general, while translation may include elements of gist or exegesis, the dominant mode of translation is the one which involves rephrasing between the source text and the target text. Translation is a complicated process; however, a translator who is concerned with transferring the meaning will find that the receptor language has a way in which the desired meaning can be expressed, even though it may reflect additional words or phrases. In Arabic-English translation, which contains gist, there is more likely to arise a degree of repetition of semantic repetition in the Arabic source text (i.e. semantic repetition). The paper then suggests some qualities for translation in general and the Quranic translation in particular among which are communicative competence in both the source language and the target language, skillful training, and should not be an individual effort but a team effort. There is no doubt that a good translator must have adequate grasp of both the source language and target language.

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Figure 1: Stages in Translation

