



**Final draft
of the graduation project**

The Difficulties Of The Translation Of The Holy Quran To The English Language

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Abstract

This research is going to be about the translation of the Holy Quran to the English language. It will go to discuss the difficulties regarding this matter and some solutions to avoid them as we can. I will try to shed the light on the historical importance of this translation, and to explain this issue because of its religious and social significance. I will use some tools to help me in this study, such as making a questionnaire to ten English Literature Students (6males and 4females) from level 7 and 8. This questionnaire will contain many questions about the ways which we use to translate the quranic text, and which way is the best, according to their points of view. I will also mention a short interview with English Literature Student, graduated from Damascus University to ask her some questions regarding my subject.

Introduction

Translation in general defined as: 'the process of replacing a source language text by an equivalent target text'. The translation should be transparent that one feel of it as original rather than translation.

Undoubtedly, when the message of Islam, and Arabic civilization spread all over the world; there was kind of cultural diversity which in turn led to the flourishing of translation from Arabic to English and vice versa. There was a lot of scientific, literary, and even sacred books which translated in that period of time. The Holy Quran was one of these books which got a quota of this translation, considering it as the most important sacred symbol to quarter of billion people. There were many attempts to translate it to the English language, the oldest one was in 1509, it was from French. After this historical hint about my subject, I will start to speak about the essence of this research which is 'The difficulties of the translation of the Holy Quran to the English language'.

The Holy Quran is the word of Allah, revealed to prophet Mohammed (p.b.u.h) through angle Gabriel. It has guarded by Allah who set it down to all mankind. He said that he will keep it from any misrepresentation.

He said " إنا نحن نزلنا الذكر وإنا له لحافظون "

One of the prodigies of the Holy Quran is rhetorical style, it is looked at as a completed distinctive style which has its own eloquence, diction, density and variety of expressions. In other words, on one hand, it has a unique style, not like any poem, novel, or any types of literature. It combines between prodigious past and unseen future events on another hand. This is which make the quranic text potential snare for translators to fall in it.

The question is; can the Quran be translated?

Translation theorists said that this is impossible because no one knew its exact meaning except Allah.

This research is an attempt to speaking about some lexical and syntactical problems which make this translation impossible. I will support my argument by examples from Quran. But before I speak about the difficulties of translating the Holy Quran, I will start with the ways of this translation.

We can translate the Quran by two ways:

1- translation of the meaning

In this case; the translator must understand the meaning of the phrases before he starts the

translation. He must be masterful of the interpretation of Quran (Tafseer). He must also be versed in both Arabic and English languages.

However, we cannot consider this way as fulfilling translation, because some quranic phrases may have interpreted by more than one way. But it may be the most realistic way to translate.

2- translation word-by-word

It considered true way when we translate the terms, but it lacks a lot of realism and aesthetic.

The translator may face many obstacles of those words which be Arabic in its original but they do not have existence in English

After we know these types of translation, I will start to mentioning the difficulties of translation of the Holy Quran:

The first one lie in the words themselves, the translator cannot find equivalent English word of some Arabic words; in this situation, he needs to use more than one word to support the meaning.

Ex: the word "كُفْر": ingratitude to Allah and manifest disbelief in him and his religion".

This meaning is not achieved if we use word-by-word translation.

The second problem is 'the incongruity between Arabic Islamic idiom and English meaning'.

Ex: marrying more than one women " تعدد الزوجات "

The equivalent meaning in English is "bigamy" which designate to the opposite of Islamic aim, it indicates to commit a sin by marrying more than one wife or husband.

The third problem is 'spiritual more than be tangible'; the issue here is not the absence of terms or meaning. The Islamic idioms have spiritual religious denotation which does not exist in any other religion.

For example; the word "الإحرام" which mean special clothes to perform Al-Hajj.

So how we can deal with these problems?

I suggested some solutions to avoid falling into problems when translating the Quranic text:

1- using direct translation to the words which carried the same meaning in both source and target language. Ex: "كتاب" which mean "book".

2- using equivalent meaning. Ex: "صيام" which mean "fasting".

3- using of demonstration words when there is single Islamic term. Ex: fasting of Ramadan.

But also there is a problem; may the English reader does not know the meaning of "Ramadan".

4- using literary translation and add one word or more to clarification the meaning.

Ex: circumambulation; "طواف" we can translate it by this way: circumambulation around the ka'abah.

5- the explanation of the term if it does not have equivalent meaning. But you really ought to use this way only when you need but do not overuse this tautology in your translation.

Literature review

As Arberry (1973: x) puts it, the Quran is neither prose nor poetry, but a unique fusion of both. So it is clear that a translator cannot imitate its form as it is a Quranic-specific form have both the features of prose and poetry and utilizing beautifully the peculiar properties of the original language. Moreover, its form is so delicate fused with its content that neither form-focused nor content-focused translation can reproduce an equivalent translation in terms of either form or content. The notion of equivalence at different levels has always been an indispensable concept in translation studies and Quran translation, of course. As Abdul-Rauf (2001:7) "one cannot deny the centrality of equivalence in translation theory; it will continue to dominate translation training

programs and translation in general". He believes that, whether at a micro-level or at a macro-level, one cannot achieve absolute symmetrical equivalence for languages since their multiple layers of meaning and their cultures in which they flourish are drastically different. According to Baker (1992), the difficulty and problem in translating from one language into another is posed by the concept of non-equivalence or lack of equivalence. This problem appears at all languages levels starting from the word level to the textual level. By non-equivalence at the word level, she means the lack of a direct target language equivalent item for a source language item. The type and level of difficulty posed may vary to a large extent depending on the nature of non-equivalence. Different kinds of non-equivalence require different strategies, some very straightforward, others more involved and difficult in handling (Baker 1992: 20).

Significance of research

The significance of this research lies in its religious aspect. I identified the difficulties of the translation of the Holy Quran in order to know them better and clearer and so, the translator can avoid them as possible as he can. To make the Holy Quran easier to translate, to read and to understand. To help in an effective way in process of spreading Islam all over the world as a religion as culture and as a way of life 'The greatest way of life there it' to help to achieve the Holy Quran's grail goal of making people know Allah and love him. At the same time, a very important point I must put lights on, is that I confirm that the translation of the Holy Quran cannot be the Quran itself. That it is only an interpretation of its words and meanings. Because the word of God can not resemble by the words of humans or any other creatures for the matter what so ever.

Research questions

what are the difficulties which face us when we try to translate the Holy Quran into the English language?

Research methodology

I'll make a questionnaire to ten English literature students of KFU (6 males and 4 females) from level 7 and 8 about the rates of the possibility of translating the Holy Quran to the English language. It will contain questions regarding the translation of the meaning itself and the translation word-by-word and differences between them. and they will be asked to share their opinions in which is the better way to translation.

I'll also mention short interview with English literature student graduated from Damascus University to ask her about the cultural gap between Arabic and English language and in her point of view if this gap considered as barrier on the way to the translating the Quranic text. And to tell us about the lexical and syntactic differences between these two languages and their effects on the translation of Quranic text.

Ethical consideration

I certify that all the information of this research based on my study and information. I supported my point of view by examples and strong arguments of great authors without plagiarism from the others' words. I have quoted some phrases and referenced the authors' names and some other details.

Limitation of the study

This research presenting some points of views by asking some students of KFU who study some branches and faced them some problems when they try to translate the quranic text. They provided

me with their opinions which help to take them into account when we translate the Quranic text to transport the meaning of Quran to the English reader as much as we can. We studied these views and we have given the results on the basis of which.

Expected results

This research is conformed on many issues, the most important one is {The Quranic text cannot translate, and when we try to transport it, this translation will lose over than 80% of originality}.

This result comes from many points of view:

1- A linguistic point of view, ex: "الزانية والزاني فاجلدوا كل واحد منهما مائة جلدة"

These are some translation of the word "فاجلدوا"

Lashes (Dawood , 1956,1974,p.214)<weak connotation

Scourge (Arbery, 1964,1982,p352)<strong connotation

Flog (Ali,1934,1977,p896)<mild connotation

No absolute equivalent English meaning.

2-A cultural point of view, ex: "ولا تقربوا الزنى إنه كان فاحشة وساء سبيلا"

Some translator translated "الزنى" as "adultery" or "fornication" it distorted Islamic principle which consider any illegal sexual intercourse as prohibited act.

3-A psychological point of view, ex: "يوم يفر المرء من أخيه * وأمه وأبيه * وصاحبته وبنيه"

Some translator translated "وصاحبته وبنيه" as "his wife and his sons" or "his mate and children" the reader can feel that psychological attendance of these translations is not clear especially with linguistic mistakes which interfere to elute the spiritual effect of the original text on the reader.

4- A rhythmic point of view, ex: "سأصليه سقر * وما أدراك ما سقر * لا تبقي ولا تذر"

When we try to transport it to English the rhythm will hide because of rhetorical difference between Arabic and English.

All these points of view show that the Quranic text differs from its translations, this confirms on my previously result.

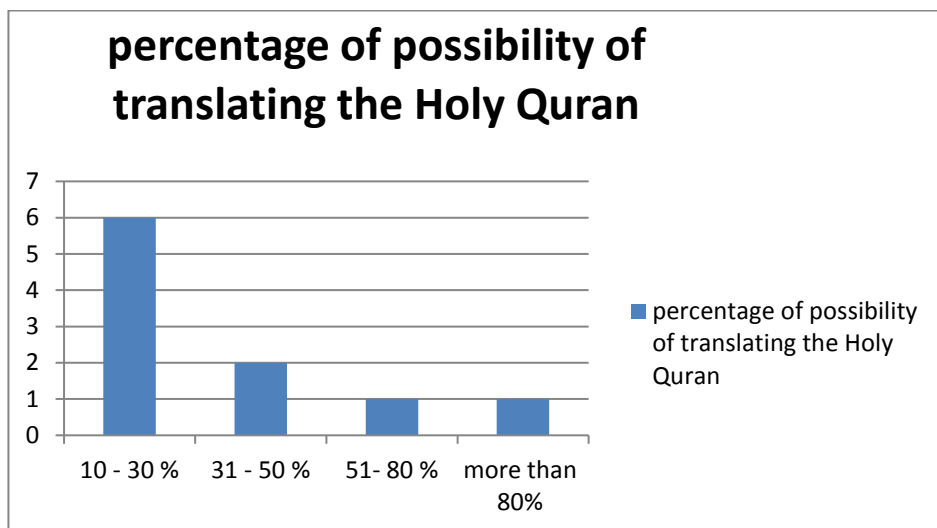
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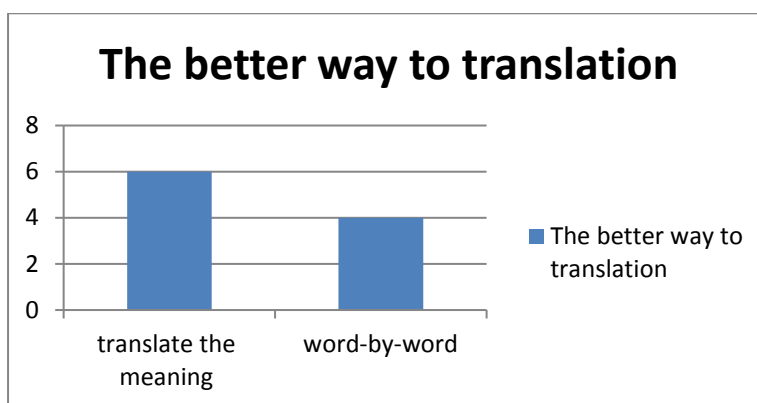
Appendix

(this questionnaire to some KFU's students)

in your opinion, how much percentage of possibility of translating the Holy Quran?



Which way is better to translation the Holy Quran?



What the differences between these ways?

(I will put only some answers)

1- " the translation of meaning is more realistic than word-by-word, it is limitless. In another hand; when I translate word-by-word I feel that I cannot transport the meaning with same effective of source text, because I have boundaries of words and linguistic barriers"

2-" the translation word-by-word is better because it can transport the correct equivalent meaning".

The interview with student of Damascus University

Do you think that the cultural gap between Arabic and English language put up barriers in front of the translation of the Holy Quran?

No, the barriers not founded; we build them in our minds when we thought that we can't translate. But when the translation flourished, we destroyed all those barriers. I really think that there is a cultural gap between any two languages but we can create many ways to skip this gap and spread cultural diversity.

Can you tell me about some lexical and syntactic problems which faced us when we translate the Quranic text, please?

One of the lexical problems in translating the Holy Quran is the absence of the equivalent of some Islamic terms. These terms have no direct denotation in English, so the translator becomes forcing to convey them in a communicative style. For example توبة (repentance); The English translation of this term only give approximate meaning.

The many differences between Arabic and English cause various syntactic problems.

Tense is an evident syntactic problem that translators may encounter in translating the Holy Quran to English.

Ex: "إِذْ جَاؤُكُمْ مِنْ فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ الْأَبْصَارُ وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظَّنُونَا"

The verbs جَاؤُكُمْ 'comes against you', زَاغَتِ 'grew wild' and وَبَلَغَتِ 'reached' are in the past tense, but the verb وَتَظُنُّونَ 'think' shifts to the present tense. This shift is for the purpose of invoking an important action in the mind as if it were happening in the present. Tenses in Arabic cannot be conveyed literally. In some cases, they need to shift to convey the intended meaning to the target audience.