



Graduation project

Final Draft

The Difficulties of Translating Religious Texts in the Holy Quran-

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Abstract

This research focuses on the common difficulties that translators face in translating religious texts. The previous studies report that many of those, who translated the Quran admitted the difficulty of the translation and the inability of other languages to keep up the meaning of the Quran texts. In this study, the researcher uses a questionnaire and an interview. I found out that being aware of the difficulties and challenges is a useful way to make a real difference. Translators improved the translations, and non-Arabic speakers Muslims are able to understand their religion better. Also, the misconception of some Islamic aspects by non-Muslims decreased significantly.

Introduction

The translation is a fundamental way to transfer civilization and information from generation to another, or language to another. In addition, to through history, in the era of Abbasid, “Caliphate Ma'mun” specifically, a lot of Greek books were translated into Arabic, which opened horizons for Muslim scholars in development and civilization.

The translation or transport is a process of transformation an original written text (called the source text) from the source language into written text (target text) in the other language. Translation is a transportation of culture and thought. There are many types of translation: literal translation, creative translation, consecutive translation, and translation texts types. In translation texts types, there are texts like religion, literature, politics, speech, article, etc. Each one of these texts has conditions to translate it. There are a lot of differences. In particular, religion texts is the most important one.

The translation of the Holy Quran has a great importance in spreading Islam to non-Muslims countries. The great importance is attached to understanding of the Quran texts by non-Arabic speakers, as the non-Arabic speaking Muslims constitute about 80% of almost a billion and a half Muslims. Most of these Muslims are not fluent in Arabic, and they understand the Holy Quran from translations, that have been done by translators fluent in both English and Arabic languages.

In addition, English translations become very important nowadays, and their number have reached over 50 translations. This is due to the necessity of spreading Islam to non-Muslims, and to the great number, more than 900 million of English native speakers. The accurate translation to English has another great significance,

as it provides a true understanding of the Quran, especially because of the existence of distorted translations of the Quranic text meanings. Those distorted translations emerged because of the difficulties encountered by the translators. The Holy Quran contains huge linguistic terms, so it's not easy to transfer the full meaning from Arabic to other language, which need a lot of effort.

In this search, we will show some of the difficulties encountered by the translators while translating religious texts, especially in the Holy Quran.

Literature review

There are some studies about the difficulties of translation religion texts divided due to the linguistic difficulties to: Lexical Problems, Syntactic problems, Semantic Problems, Metaphor, Metonymy, and Polysemy.

One of those studies states that the translation from language to another language cannot be the same. There are no two languages that have the same word or use the same symbols to refer to the same meanings. Lexical problems consist of the inability to find a phonetic equivalent and idiomatic for some Islamic terms in the target language. The writer gives some examples of these difficulties:

"The following are some examples of these Islamic terms:

- (Taqwā) piety – "تقوى",
- (kufr) disbelief – "كفر",
- (shīrk) associating other gods with God – "شرك",
- (haq) truth – "حق",
- (ma'rūf) charity – "معروف",
- (munkar) wrong – "منكر",
- (ghaīb) the unseen/unknown – "غيب",
- (zakāh) alms giving – "زكاة",
- and (tāwbah) repentance – "توبة".

The English translations of these terms only give approximate meanings".

Syntactic problems, which mean problems with the arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences in a language "The many differences between Arabic and English cause various syntactic

problems when translating the Holy Quran to English. Tense is an obvious syntactic problem that translators usually encounter in translating the Holy Quran. Tense means the ‘grammatical realization of location in time’ and how location in time can be expressed in language. (Sadiq, 2010, p. 20).

“In translating the Holy Quran, tense and verb form should be guided by the overall context and by stylistic considerations. According to Abdel-Haleem [2], in the Quran, there is a shift from the past tense to the imperfect tense to achieve an effect which can pose some problems in translation. For example,

(الاحزاب: 10) (الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظُّنُونَا إِذْ جَاءُواكُمْ مِنْ فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ الْأَبْصَارُ وَبَلَغَتِ

Behold! They came on you from above you and from below you, and behold, the eyes became dim and the hearts gaped up to the throats, and ye imagined various (vain) thoughts about Allah! (Yusuf Ali’s Translation, 2000) (Al-Aḥzāb 33:10)

The verbs (‘جاءوكم’) comes against you’, (‘زاعت’) ‘grew wild’ and (‘وبلغت’) ‘reached’ are in the past tense, but the verb (‘وتظنون’) ‘think’ shifts to the present tense. This shift is for the purpose of conjuring an important action in the mind as if it were happening in the present. Tenses, in Arabic or in the Holy Quran, cannot be conveyed literally. In some cases, they need to shift to convey the intended meaning to the target audience” (Abobaker, Alsaleh, Munif, and Sharifah. November 2012).

Another study talks about the elements to give an accurate and appropriate translation:

"Grammatical equivalence, redundancy and paragraphing are the most important key elements that ought to be taken into account in order to produce an accurate and appropriate translation" (Rachid Agliz.2015).

Intended meaning in the Quran is not only words, but it contains rhyming verses of the Quran, for example when you read “الرحمن علم القرآن خلق الإنسان علمه البيان” how to convey the rhythm of these verses? Of course, this is impossible, it translates in a funny way and who reads the translation may not understand what the verse. But reading the Quran in the Arabic language has the most in terms of taste and sweetness.

In the end, there is a difference between the word of God and the words of people. Anyone who reads the Quran and understands it well, aware that it is impossible to translate its meanings and purposes into other languages perfectly. There are many mistakes which translators make, whether deliberately or out of ignorance. Being aware of difficulties and challenges translators face will decrease these mistakes. (Rachid Agliz.2015).

Significance of Research

Arab Human Development Report states that the average number of books translated in the Arab world is 4.4 million books per year, while each million citizens in Hungary have about 519 books annually. There are several reasons for weakness in translation in the Arab world, one of these reasons is the difficulties encountered by the translator during the translation. Translation difficulties may prevent the translator from even starting the process of translation, while having the knowledge of difficulties that may face the translator will remove the obstacle which might prevent the translator from starting the translation, plus it will improve the quality of translations.

Research Questions

What are the difficulties of translating religious texts in the Holy Quran?

Research Methodology

The researcher uses a questionnaire and an interview in this research. These two methods will take place in an Islamic Education Foundation Al-Hamra in Jeddah. The researcher attends religious lectures there. The questionnaire will be distributed among 20 females from the audience attending the lecture. All of them are non-Arabic speakers and fluent in English. The participants will answer 6 questions (see appendix). Then, the researcher will interview the lecturer and 3 translators, (fluent in both Arabic and English languages) who work in the Foundation. After the questionnaire and the interview are done the final results will approve, whether being aware of the difficulties and problems translators face are useful or not.

Ethical Considerations

This study was approved by the Islamic Education Foundation Al-Hamra. All participants in this study have the right to keep their names, age, or any other personal information anonymously. Also, all participants join this study voluntarily, and have the right to refuse any question and not to answer it. Eventually, all information in this study is correct, and far from falsification.

Limitations of the study

This study explains the difficulties in translating religious text that is why it takes place in Islamic Education Foundation Al-Hamra. The study will examine the lecturers and the audience. The researcher interviews 3 lectures, and gives a questionnaire to 20 people from the audience. Only females participate.

Expected Results

The researcher expects this study help the translators to improve their work, and decrease the amount of mistakes. After this research the translator will be aware of most difficulties which translators confront. A translation of the religious text will be easier and faster. Non-Arabic speakers Muslims will understand the Quran better and more accurate. Non-Muslims and non-Arabic speakers' people will become able not to misunderstand the religious text.

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Appendix

Questionnaire questions: the answers are yes and no.

- 1- Have you ever seen different translations of the Quran in the same text?
- 2- Do you feel that existing translations are enough to get the meaning or there are questions in your head, even after reading the translation?
- 3- Do you know someone misunderstood the religion because of the distorted translations of the Quran in libraries?
- 4- Did you ever attend religious lectures in other centers or just in this place?
- 5- Do you think the reason of the problems with the translation is the lack of knowledge or the difficulties that may face the translator?

Interview questions:

- 1- Have you ever read about the difficulties of translation before you start translating religious texts?
If your answer is "Yes" was it useful for you? Explain your answer.
- 2- Do you think the reason of the problems with the translation is the lack of knowledge of the difficulties that may face the translator? Why?
- 3- Do you face any difficulties while translating religious texts? How do you deal with them?
- 4- Do you think that there is a difference between the translator who is aware of the difficulties and mistakes of translation and the translator who does not? Explain how.
- 5- Do you think that being aware of difficulties of translation that translators face while translating religious text is important or not? Why?