Quran in Light of Frame Translation Evaluation of Homographs in the Semantics and Functional Equivalence Theory

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تقييم ترجمة المشترك اللفظي في القران الكريم في ضوء نظرية دلالة الأطر ونظرية النكافؤ الوظيفي

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Abstract

The current study aimed to evaluate the translation of fifty Quranic homographs by two translators (Shakir, of an Arabic background and Arberry, an English translator), in light of Nida's dichotomy of formal and functional equivalences. The researchers adopted a two-fold approach of micro (componential and morphological analysis) and macro-(contextual) analysis based on exegeses and specialized lexicons. The analysis of samples indicated preference in favor of the Arabic translator, which is in line with the hypothesized premise. It was shown that the threefold factors of Arabic morphology awareness, root culture and access to/awareness of exegeses as a source of awareness of *semantic frames*, proposed to improve the translation of the words under study, have the foremost impact on the output translation of homographs. Finally, a new approach is proposed to facilitate translating homographs of the Quran.

Keywords: Cognitive linguistics, frame semantics, homograph, homonym, Quran, translation.

المستخلص

قام الباحثون في هذه الدراسة بتقييم ترجمة خمسين كلمة من المشتركات اللفظية من القران الكريم لدى اثنين من المترجمين العالميين وهم شاكر واربري حيث ان اولهم عربي والاخر انجليزي. وقد تم تقييم الترجمة في ضوء نظرية التكافؤ الوظيفي والشكلي لنايدا. اعتمد الباحثون منهجا ثنائيا من التحليل الدقيق (تحليل التراكيب الدلالية والصرفية) والتحليل الاوسع (السياقي) في ضوء التفاسير المتفق عليها والمعاجم المتخصصة. اظهرت النتائج افضلية شاكر ذي الخلفية العربية على اربري الانجليزي الاصل، مما ينسجم مع الفرضيات المقترحة. ويعزى ذلك الا اسباب ثلاث وهي المعرفة بالصرف العربي وثقافة الام والاطلاع على التفاسير كمصدر لمعرفة الاطر الدلالية (المقترحة لتطوير ترجمة الكلمات قيد البحث) وهي عوامل ذات تأثير ملحوظ على نتاج ترجمة المشتركات اللفظية في القران الكريم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: علم اللسانيات المعرفي، الاطر الدلالية، المشترك اللفظي، القران، ترجمة

1. Introduction

1.1. The Language of the Quran

The Quran is, to Muslims, the direct words of the "Omniscient" and the "Knower of the unseen." According to Lees, it is an elegant and sublime masterpiece that is worthy of studying (cited in Ali, 2004). Its unique ability of using language to reveal out-of-time notions is unparalleled. For instance, imagine a fortune-teller living in the year 1000 explaining to people notions of the twentieth century, conveying concepts like the Internet, TV, aircrafts, computers or an ATM. Each of these items has to be explained in at least several pages, yet without evading being called "imposter". Thus, when the Prophet Mohammad preached the Quran describing some contents foretelling the future or explicating galaxies and their expansion; "The Heaven, We have built it with power. And verily, We are expanding it," (51:47) or the possibility, though with great hardship, of diving up to the sky; "O assembly of the jinn and the men! If you are able to pass through the regions of the heavens and the earth, then pass through; you cannot pass through but with authority," (55:33); the people found it too impossible to believe to the point of accusing him of being a "poet", "imposter," "liar," "insane", and "magician." (37:36; (51:52).

The Quran with its musical and rhetorical Arabic verses becomes more complicated as translators commit themselves to literality (Gibbs, 1947). The Quran relates concepts that people find incomprehensible or need time for meditation to be comprehended. Hence, advancement in science and time could considerably contribute to the advancement of interpreters' (exegetes and translators) understanding of the Quran.

Hence, untranslatability has been one of the most prominent arguments among stakeholders. In all cases, rendering a better translation is still attainable. Therefore, many endeavors have been made by researchers and translation critiques to improve previous translations of the Quran. Whether intrigued by curiosity of knowing Islam, or the intention of embracing it, the need for translating the Holy Quran into English is compelling.

Hence, the (un)translatability of the Quran has been a question of research for decades. These challenges are not posed by language only; but ideology and legitimacy as well. Actual translations of the Quran or its meaning have been made since the dawn of its relevance. The first translation was assumed by Salman al-Farisi, a companion of the Prophet (Benaili & Benatallah, 2016).

Unlike any other prophetic miracles, the Quran, for Muslims, is itself the miracle of Prophet Mohammad, a direct quote of God's

speech, and an informative and linguistic miracle. It challenged the most eloquent people to produce its match in Arabic, let alone in other languages. This reveals the magnitude of challenges on translators, and seems to be the reason for orthodox Muslim scholars to oppose translating it even into other Muslim languages (Gibb, 1947). The Quran describes its own linguistic uniqueness in the following verses:

" الر ۚ كِتَابٌ أُحْكِمَتْ آيَاتُهُ ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتْ مِن لَّدُنْ حَكِيمٍ خَبِيرٍ"[١١:١]

"Alif. Lam. Ra. This is a Book from One who is All-wise and All-aware. Its verses are well composed and distinctly arranged" [11.1]

"قُل لَّئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَن يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا" [٨٨:١٧]

"Say: 'If men and jinn bonded together to produce the like of this Qoran, they would never produce its like, not though they backed one another" [17.88]

The Quran's genre is an unprecedented "fusion" of prose and poetry, (Arberry, p: x). It is a novel form that astonished even the most classical eloquent people. Its emotional, musical, and aesthetic effect is another feature described in the Quran itself:

"لَوْ أَنزَلْنَا هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَىٰ جَبَلٍ لَّرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ"[٥٩:٢١]

"Had We sent down this Quran onto a mountain, thou should certainly have seen it humbling itself and crumbling down for the fear of God" [59.21]

According to Arberry (1998), rhythm and rhetoric of the Quran are so powerful, emotive and distinctive that any translation seems to be just a poor copy of the glorious original.

Besides its logical, informative, and epistemic uniqueness, the Quran has a numeric exceptionality. For instance, the word month is mentioned twelve times, the word day is mentioned 365 times, and the frequency ratio of water to land is 32 to 12, which resembles the water-land ratio on earth.

"أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِندِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا"[٤:٨٨]

"Had it (the Quran) been from any source other than God, you would have found many contradictions in it" [4.82]

1.2. The (im)possibility of translating the Quran

The needs for translating the Quran and its words are increasing nowadays following the spread of Islamic religion around the

world. However, translating Quranic words encounters many morphological, cultural, and contextual problems.

The legitimacy and possibility of translation of the Holy Quran is still a dispute among Islamic scholars. One direction completely refuses the idea of translating it and believe that the holy book is untranslatable. On the other hand, the other direction accepts its translation and stipulating that the translation should not be literal transference of the verses. Rather, the focus should be on translating the meaning of the text or the concept intended by the specific verse.

The proponents of the legitimacy of the holy Quran translation believe that "it is valid to translate all verses of the Quran to the overseas tongue" (Baker & Saldanha, 2008, p.201). Their rationale is that we live in an era when the wider demand for translations of the Quran, among Muslims and non- Muslims alike, has become far greater than at any time in the past. Thus, "non-Muslim crowds in various parts of the world turn to the Quran almost constantly in translation in the search for the bases of deeper mutual understanding" (Morris, 2000,p.53) . Hence, the need for the translation of the meanings of the Quran became as a corollary of the Islamic widespread religion around the world.

Many linguists and orientalists have highlighted the uniqueness of the Quran as a text, making it a genre of literary splendor (Tzoris, 2001). Mir (2000) establishes that the Quran masterful use of language on the word and phrase level is the source of richness for the Quranic literary repertoire.

Translating the words of the holy book has always been a problematic and controversial issue for translators in the Islamic theology. In addition, translating Quranic words might raise many serious problems in translation. These problems are due to the different meanings words can carry, and the misinterpretation between the intended meaning and their inherent notions. This could exclusively result in a certain amount of ambiguity in homographs (Hariz, 2023).

1.2. Homographs in Arabic

Regardless of whether sounding alike or not, homographs are words that have the same spelling but completely different meanings (Crystal, 2011). Examples are bear (the animal) and bear (the verb). However, when we deeply investigate the etymology of such words, we may find a relationship indicating that these words were once one. Or, we can find a (folk) etymology; a story stating how these words were originally one. For instance, the word calculus has two meanings; the first is related to

mathematics; calculating the differentiation and integration, and the second is related to medicine, a tartar; a stone in the kidney or bladder. A folk etymology states that the story behind how this word gained these two different meanings is because once people used to utilize stones to calculate by means of an abacus.

Frame Semantics

In the 1970's, Charles Fillmore extended his 1968's Case Theory into a more comprehensive concept, Frame Semantics, which relates understanding words to the reader's backgrounds (or frames). In other words, it is impossible for a reader or listener to understand what exactly a single word means without access to the essential knowledge pertaining to that word (Fillmore, 1982). According to him, frame semantics offers a special technique for examining meanings of words by relating each word not only one to another in the context they occur in, but also to the backgrounds (frames); i.e, the experiences, beliefs, and the environment related to these words.

Hence, frame semantics theory is not primarily a lexical theory; rather, it is a semantic theory. That is, rather than being a theory about words, it revolves about meaning in a context of frames. However, deeper understandings of a text prosper when the interrelationships between the words, meanings, and phraseology are considered while deeper, more systematic and semantic levels

of that text are expounded. Fillmore (2005) notifies that the words earth, ground, and land, are near-synonyms but they give quite different meanings in different contexts or in his own words, "evoke different frames." He further reviews the above mentioned near-synonyms in different conventional collocations in examples to show how frames of knowledge of these pairings can reveal the different nuances of these near-synonyms. For instance, the sentence, "kestrels sometimes nest on the ground" indicates that otherwise these birds usually nest on trees or in niches of buildings. Otherwise, when reading a sentence like, "auks rarely build their nests on land" one realizes that these birds mostly build their nests in the sea. When we hear of someone "spending three hours on land" we realize that this was a transit during a sea voyage. Furthermore, when we read that "Jack spent the afternoon on the ground" we induce that this refers to an interruption of an air travel. There is still another example of "someone spent only a few years on earth" connoting that s/he is now in heaven or on another planet. The accurate understanding of these near-synonyms is derived from our knowledge of the frames represented by the familiarity with the conventional pairings of (land-sea, ground-air, earth-heaven, etc) (Filmore, 2006).

2. Statement of problem

There are three, among other broad factors, that complicate translating the Quran on the word level. The first factor is that there are not absolute synonyms in Arabic, especially in the Quran. In English for example, the words resume and curriculum vitae have exactly the same meaning. Probably one reason is that English has borrowed many words from different languages. The Quranic Arabic is mostly pure and indigenous (still controversial). For that reason, there are many homographic words in it. It also uses words that are close in meaning but not exactly synonymous. These pseudo-synonyms pose an extra challenge to the translation of the Quran on the word level. The second factor that makes words harder to translate is the translators' lack of (access to) knowledge in exegeses of the Quran. This is especially for the non-native translators. The third factor is that the language of the Quran is elevated, and classical. Non-Arab translators need to be fluent in Arabic to cope with translating the Quran. Diglossia (or abandoning the standard or classical Arabic) substantially contributes to defamiliarizing words of the Quran. At first glance, some polysemous words look easy to interpret or translate, but exegeses surprise us that the unexpected meaning is the one intended even when the context suggests otherwise. This is one of

the major reasons for translators' failures in rendering the correct meanings ad hoc without referring to exegeses.

3. Significance of study

The Quran is the holy book and the direct word of God to Muslims, who constitute an indispensable and integral part of the world community. Improving the Quran translation could present to the world a better understanding of Islam, and a more precise access to the Quran itself as an authentic source and a valued replacement for media, which usually take words out of context. Better translation of the Quran could also mitigate terror, since non-Arab Muslims constitute a considerable part of terror organizations (Rabasa et al, 2004). According to Atta (2022), less than twenty percent of Muslim population are non-Arab. This means that the majority of Muslims study and gain their knowledge of their own dogma by translation. Therefore, the accuracy of translating Quranic words is the first building block of understanding the Quran for most Muslim and non-Muslim population.

4. Purpose of study

Over the course of reading English translations of the Quran by world known translators, the researcher observed several errors in the translation of Quranic words, especially those carrying several meanings. Therefore, the study is a critical review of translating

Quranic words with several unrelated meanings; homographs, which in term contribute to the promotion of translating the Quran as a whole. Finally, new methods are recommended to improve the reality of translating Quranic homographs.

5. Data and methodology

5.1 Data

Two translations of fifty words are analyzed in the current research through error analysis. Two approaches on two different levels of analysis are used. On the micro-level analysis, morphological and componential analysis are used. Then, on the macro-level these words are examined in light of the consensus exegeses as a representation of Fillmore's frame semantics theory. In other words, it is proposed that the semantic frames are realized through the translators' awareness of the exegeses of the Quran, especially when exegetes analyze the Quranic verses and words from different perspectives, such as the linguistic structure, the historical context (causes of revelation/asbabul nozol=scenes), and traditional narratives. In brief, this theory conceptualizes that linguistic knowledge alone cannot result in full understanding of meanings of words without relating this knowledge to the encyclopedic understanding or circumstantial "scenes" or "frames" (Fillmore & Baker, 2001).

Two translations of these words by Arberry and Shakir are assessed and analyzed. Sometimes the translators are compared with other well-known translators that are not the focus of the current study such as Pikthal, Sarwar and Sahih International. Each interpreter has their own distinctive features. For instance, Arberry's translation is characterized by brevity, classicality, and literariness. Shakr's translation is more of paraphrastic and parenthetical, etc.

The words under analysis represent a random part of a larger corpus selected by bilinguals and expert translators.

5.2 Methodology

The words were analyzed in light of Frame Semantics Theory, which establishes that linguistic knowledge alone cannot result in full understanding of words without relating that knowledge to encyclopedic knowledge (the exegetes in the Quranic case) (Fillmore & Baker, 2001). It is hypothesized that the translators' awareness of the Quran commentaries is essential to demonstrate the frames of semantics of words , since these exegetes analyze the Quran verses and words in different perspectives such as the linguistic structure, and historical context and asbabulnuzul (causes of revelation). At the word level, further specialized books of al-wujooh and al-nazaer (faces and asymmetries) are used for

semantic analysis. Such books deal specifically with homographs and polysemies of the Quran. These books are adopted for more accurate word meanings in the Quran. For the morphological analysis, Al-Sammaraei's book meanings of lexical structures (ma'ani al-abnyah, 2017).

The researcher highlights the semantic loss induced by the ambiguity of these words that have similar spelling yet different meanings, resulting sometimes in translation failures. These mistranslations sometimes stem from overlooking exegeses and lack of awareness of the internal structure or morphology of these complicated words. Then the methods and failures of English and Arabic translators are compared.

6. Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How can awareness of Frame Semantics theory improve professional translators in the task of translating homographs?

2. Does cross-textuality help improve the translation of the Quranic words under study?

3. Are there differences between non-native and Arabic native translators in terms of their English translation of homographs in the Quran?

7. Hypotheses

In the current study, it is hypothesized that:

1. Awareness of Frame Semantics and Equivalence theories can be epitomized by exegeses and hence they can improve the translation of the words homographs, polysemies, and near-synonyms.

2. Verses containing homographs, polysemies, and near-synonyms among others can be explained and consequently translated by other verses in the Quran (cross-textuality).

3. Non-Arab translators are more subject to failure in translating homographs since they have less access to the genuine Arabic exegeses of the Quran and because their awareness of Arabic morphology is not efficient enough to deal with homographs.

8. Analysis

Out of larger corpus, fifty homographs of the Quran are selected randomly to examine the hypothesis of the current study. The paper exhibits the mistranslated words and sheds light on possible reasons behind such errors to elicit insights that contribute to promoting translating homographs. Often, better alternatives are given for each mistranslated homograph.

١ـ "**جَابُوا** الصَّخْرَ بِالْوَادِ" [9:89]

Yusuf Ali: who cut out (huge) rocks in the valley.

Mohsin Khan: who cut (hewed) out rocks in the valley (to make dwellings)

Arberry: who hollowed the rocks in the valley.

In this verse, Arberry used a single word that exactly means جَابُوا , to cut shapes into rocks (concave) which exactly corresponds to the Quranic exegeses. However, the first two translators were able yet less accurately to transfer the meaning into English (with parenthesized explanation). Khan went further to give in parenthesis more details that are not specifically mentioned in the Arabic verse.

٢ـ "إِذْ **تُصْعِدُون** ولا تلوون على احد والرسول يدعوكم..." [3: ١٥٣]

Yusuf Ali: Behold! ye were climbing up the high ground

Mohsin Khan: (And remember) when you ran away (dreadfully)

Arberry: When you were going up

In this verse, Arberry translated the word تُصْعِدُون literally. In fact, it is a heteronym with the word تَصْعَدُون (climb up) since they have the same spelling with different meaning and pronunciation

(as indicated by the different diacritics). Arberry was not aware of the most common (but not the intended) meaning of this homographic word. According to the exegetes, the word تُصْعِدُون here means "escaping" rather than "going up" or climbing (Berg, 1995). Another possible confusion of Arberry besides homograph could be attributed to the background (physical) contextual story of the Battle of (mountain of) Uhud, where "going up" is a possible action or semantic frame.

٣ـ "يَسْتَنبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُم" [4: ٨٣]

Yusuf Ali: the proper investigators would have Tested it from them (direct).

Mohsin Khan: the proper investigators would have understood it from them (directly).

Arberry: those of them whose task it is to investigate would have known the matter.

In this verse, Yusuf Ali used "Tested" to mean "deduct" or "investigate." It goes without saying that he, unlike the other two translators, failed to render the exact meaning of يَسْتَنبِطُونَهُ . If we look up the word "test", no such meaning could be found anywhere.

٤ـ "فَأُمُّهُ هَاوِيَة" [٩:١٠١]

Yusuf Ali: Will have his home in a (bottomless) Pit.

Mohsin Khan: He will have his home in Hawiyah (pit, i.e. Hell)

Arberry: shall plunge in the womb of the Pit

The three translators tried to convey the meaning in a neat literal way. However, Khan transliterated the word هَاوِيَة deeming that the word (which literally means "falling" has no equivalent in English. In the Quran, "hell" have different names depending on the level or depth of hell. It seems that Khan is among the translators who believe that names of hell are distinct or proper nouns thus have to be transliterated Abdul-Raof (2013). Yet he explained it in parenthesis. Ali used a parenthesized explanation to sacrifice the form and give further explanation of the meaning of the word هَاوِيَة. Arberry used a metaphoric meaning by using the word "womb" to refer to the word أمهُ (which literally means "his mother", to produce a literal translation "plunge in the womb of the Pit."

٥- "وما جعلنا القبلة التي كنت عليها إلا لنعلم من يتبع الرسول ممن ينقلب على عقبيه وإن كانت لكبيرة إلا على الذين هدى الله وما كان الله ليضيع إِيمانكم " [٢:١٤٣]

Yusuf Ali: And never would Allah Make your faith of no effect.

Mohsin Khan: And Allah would never make your faith (prayers) to be lost (i.e. your prayers offered towards Jerusalem).

Arberry: but God would never leave your faith to waste.

Mohsin Khan here excelled in the translation of the word إيمانكم to correspond with the exegetes dictating its meaning to be "prayers", (Al-Qurtubi, 2006). The context backs up Khan with the occurrence of the word القبلة (direction of Kaaba).

٦ـ "فَلَمَّا رَآهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَأَنَّهَا جَانٌّ" [27:١٠]

Yusuf Ali: But when he saw it moving (of its own accord) as if it had been a snake ,

Mohsin Khan: But when he saw it moving as if it were a snake ,

Arberry: And when he saw it quivering like a serpent

Pickthall: And throw down thy staff! But when he saw it writhing as it were a demon.

The word جَانٌّ is one of the confusing homographs selected in this study. It is a name of a type of snakes which moves very fast (Ibn Kathir, 1985). However, none of the three translators fell into the trap of mistranslating this homograph. What is interesting though is that another famous translator, Pickthall, did. He opted the other

meaning (demon=jinni). According to Al-Hilali (1995), no exegete has been reported to go with that meaning.

In light of the above verse, the researcher proposes for the first time the theory of **the Quran interprets (translates) itself**, to be recommended as an approach that could contribute towards the accuracy of Quran translation. A fundamental premise highlighted herewith is that there are two types of verses in the Quran according to the Quran itself. Some verses are **decisive** (Muhkam) while others are **allegorical** (Mutashabih). The latter could bear many interpretations for which we have to refer to the former to decide the real meaning. This theory could be relied on as an approach for translating homographs and other word-level forms in the Quran, especially by non-Arab translators who always struggle finding the authentic Arabic exegeses and whose Arabic is not good enough to understand the language of exegeses.

The decisive and allegorical verses are explained in the Quran itself:

"هُوَ الَّذِي أَنزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُّحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ"[٣:٧]

"He it is Who has revealed the Book to you; some of its verses are decisive, they are the basis of the Book, and others are allegorical"[3:7]

Hence, the homograph in the allegorical verse (6) of the data under analysis bears more than one meaning and it is related in the Quran in another decisive verse:

"فَأَلْقَاهَا فَإِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعَىٰ"[20:20]

"So he cast it down, and lo! it was a serpent, gliding"[20:20]

This verse reveals the true meaning of **جَانٌّ** in the previous verse even without referring to exegeses. In fact, some exegetes resorted to interpreting (explaining) the Quran by the Quran. It is reported by al-Suyûthî (1994) that Prophet Mohammad initiated this method when he explained the meaning of **ظُلْمٍ** in the verse:

"الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمَانَهُم بِظُلْمٍ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمُ الْأَمْنُ وَهُم مُّهْتَدُونَ"[82:6]

"Those who believe and obscure not their belief by <u>wrongdoing</u>, theirs is safety; and they are rightly guided" [6:82]

Prophet Mohammad is reported to have explained the underlined word in the allegorical verse above to mean "polytheism" rather than "wrongdoing" deducing from another decisive verse:

"يا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ ۖ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ"[13:31]

"O my son! do not associate aught with Allah; most surely polytheism is a grievous iniquity"[1] [31:13]

٧ –"إن الله لا يظلم مثقال ذرة" [4: ٤٠]

Yusuf Ali: Allah is never unjust <u>in the least degree</u>.

Mohsin Khan: Surely! Allah wrongs not even of the <u>weight of an atom</u> (or a small ant).

Arberry: Surely God shall not wrong so much as the weight of an ant.

Muhammad Sarwar: God does not do even an atom's weight of injustice.

Sahih International: Indeed, Allah does not do injustice, [even] as much as an atom's weight;

Again, the selected translators were aware of the exegetes' reference that the word ذرة means "a small ant." Other translators such as Sarwar and Sahih International were short of knowledge to understand that the more common meaning of "particle" or "atom" is not the intended meaning in the verse.

٨ –"وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّىٰ لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ "[39:8]

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[1] Translated by M. H. Shakir (1996).

Yusuf Ali: And fight them on until there is no more <u>Tumult or oppression</u>,

Mohsin Khan: And fight them until there is no more <u>Fitnah</u> (disbelief and worshipping of others along with Allah)

Arberry: Fight them, till there is no <u>persecution</u> and the religion is God's;

Another confusing polysemous word is here showing varying competence of translators. Mohsin Khan excels again to prove his awareness of the exegetes concerning this ayah. Although the other translators were close to touching upon the meaning, but they were not precise. The meaning of "tumult" is possible of فِتْنَةٌ yet, it is not consistent with what the prominent exegetes narrated (Hamza, 2008). The exact meaning in the context occurring in the verse was translated effectively by Khan, (disbelief and worshipping of others along with Allah). This is consistent with another verse in the Quran where it is stated by exegetes and the word فِتْنَةٌ pragmatic context itself that the word means disbelief. It is obvious that tumult cannot be worse that murder.

"وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ" [2:191]

"The sin of <u>disbelief</u> in God is greater than committing murder"[2] [٢:١٩١]

This verse again indicates that the homographic (arguably polysemous) word فِتْنَةٌ carries the second less obvious meaning of (disbelief). It is another instance of translating the Quran by the Quran approach proposed in the current study.

٩ـ ''أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنكُم مِّنَ الْغَائِطِ'' [٤٣ : ٤]

Yusuf Ali: Or one of you cometh from <u>offices of nature</u>, or ye have been in contact with women.

Mohsin Khan: Or on a journey, or one of you comes after <u>answering the call of nature</u>.

Arberry: Or if any of you comes from the <u>privy</u>.

In this ayah, the three translators were fairly capable of coping with the level of euphemism in the metonymic word **الْغَائِطِ** which is confusing to other translators not included in the study. Yusuf and Khan paraphrased in order to reach the level of euphemism; Arberry used the single word of privy which resulted in less euphemism. This word is homographic with another that means "feces," which is also possible in the context, to make it an

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[2] Translated by Muhammad Sarwar (2011)

enormous challenge to translators. This reveals the level of excellence and subtleness in both the source and target language a translator should have to overcome such challenges.

١٠ـ " اهْبِطُوا مِصْرًا فَإِنَّ لَكُمْ مَا سَأَلْتُمْ" [١ : ٦١]

Yusuf Ali: Go ye down to any town, and ye shall find what ye want!

Mohsin Khan: Go you down to any town and you shall find what you want!

Arberry: Get you down to Egypt; you shall have there that you demanded.

The Muslim scholars unanimously agreed that the word مِصْرًا means an anonymous town rather than Egypt, the country (Ally, 2012). According to Arabic morphology, it is indicated by the tanween "nunation" and the alif according to the most authentic readings (scriptures) of the Quran (Akkila and Abu-Naser, 2018). Arberry failed to render the accurate translation in this part, which is evidently attributed to his unawareness to the exegetes' views.

Such confusion is not seen in English. English capitalize the first letter of proper nouns. Look at the following examples where capitonym (words giving different meanings when capitalized)

plays an essential role in clarifying the intended meaning. Otherwise, it would be very hard to understand the sentence.

A turkey may march in Turkey in May or March! [3]

Will Smith will smith. (The actor Will Smith will work as a gunsmith) (Bechade et al, 2017)

The above sentences would have been very difficult to understand without capital letters and capitonyms, which are unavailable in Arabic.

8. Discussion and Conclusion

Unsurprisingly, the elevated genre and distinctive rhetorical features of the Holy Quran never cease to challenge translators on the word level. Translators need to have encyclopedic knowledge of exegeses as well as a total command on both the source and target language in order to render subtleties of the Quranic homographs. Hence, the translator must consult the most authentic commentaries of the Quran that are authentic and supported by Arabic experts to produce an acceptable translation.

On the individual level, Arberry has a better capability of finding single word equivalents than the other two translators. This could

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[3] This phrase is from https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/grammar-vocabulary/story/capitonyms-317475-2016-04-11

be justified by his vast vocabulary since he is a native speaker of English. He sometimes relied on his linguistic knowledge of Arabic, which is not sufficient to produce a perfect translation of homographs in the Quran. Mohsin Khan sacrifices the form for the meaning. Therefore, when he is not certain of a single word equivalent, he uses parenthesized explanations. Yusuf Ali's translations were close to touching upon the meaning, but they were not precise. Therefore, he used synonyms, transliterated words that have straightforward equivalents, and translated words that needed transliteration. Most non-native speakers depend in their vocabulary on dictionaries. Dictionary explanation is obviously not enough to translate Quranic words.

In general, the observations supports the hypothesis of the current study.

The **Quran translates itself** theory and approach proposed in this study could very well improves translation of the Quranic words including homographs as much as the study is concerned. This translation approach could be especially advantageous to non-Arab translators whose Arabic is not good enough to understand the Classic Arabic language of exegeses.

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