

TRANSLATION ASSESSMENT OF QURĀNIC LEXICAL SYNONYMY INTO ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT: *The present study is aimed at investigating the translation accuracy of Qurānic synonymy into English. The renditions of the synonyms will be assessed in the light of a translation quality assessment model to pinpoint how far accuracy has been attained. Lexical synonymy, as defined by semanticists, refers to a major type of sense relation between lexical items which have the same meanings. Definitely, synonyms are of various types as classified by specialists where they reached the result that total synonymy is very rare in language. This may have its bearing on the translation of this linguistic area. If mistranslations of Qur'anic lexical synonymy are found out, alternative translations would be suggested. The Qur'anic texts have been randomly selected for evaluation. The paper is based on the hypothesis that mistranslations of Qur'anic lexical synonymy are more recurrent than accurate renditions. Inaccuracies in the translation of this type of sense relation could be attributed to a variety of reasons such as the semantic dissimilarities between the two languages, discursal and rhetorical differences etc. Six published translations of the Qur'an have been subjected to assessment as far as the topic under study is concerned. Consequently, the translation assessment has revealed the high frequency of inaccurate renditions of lexical synonyms found in Qur'anic texts. In addition, the synonymous lexical items found in the original (the Quran) seem to be chosen purposefully so as to convey some teachings of the Islamic religion.*

KEYWORDS: accuracy, assessment, differences, mistranslation, synonymy.

SYNONYMY IN ENGLISH

"It is almost a truism that total synonymy is an extremely rare occurrence, a luxury that language can ill afford"(Stephan Ullmann, 1962)

Introductory Remarks

Semanticists belonging to different schools of thought have introduced a variety of definitions to the concept of lexical synonymy. What all these definitions have in common is that they emphasize the idea of meaning similarity between lexical units rather than meaning identity. This is attributed the fact that those specialists hold the thesis that meaning identity leads to absolute synonymy which is very rare to find in language. They postulate some criteria for the existence of absolute synonymous lexical units in language. For instance, David Crystal (2008:470) states that lexical items which have the same meanings are synonyms. For two items to be synonyms, it does not mean that they should be identical in meaning. If two criteria are met, i.e. interchangeability in all contexts and identity of connotations (see section 1.4. below), one would get absolute synonymy which is very infrequent to come across.

Allen Cruse (2000:156) defines synonyms as being words whose "semantic similarities are more salient than their differences"

John Lyons (1995:60) draws a distinction between partial synonymy and absolute or total synonymy in that the former meets the criterion of identity of meaning, but fails to meet the conditions of absolute synonymy. He (ibid:61) confirms that "two (or more) expressions are absolutely synonymous if, and only if, they satisfy the following criteria: (i) all their meanings are identical, (ii) they are synonymous in all contexts, and (III) they are semantically equivalent ... on all dimensions of meaning, descriptive and non-descriptive"

The two words "exceptional" and "abnormal" are synonymous when they are used in describing the weather as in sentence (1):

1. The weather is *exceptional* / *abnormal*. Isn't it?
However, they turn to be opposites when they are used in describing a child.
2. My son is exceptional (his mental abilities are unparalleled).
3. My son is abnormal (he is psychologically unbalanced).

Accordingly, '*exceptional*' and '*abnormal*' are partially synonymous because they are not interchangeable in all contexts. This goes in line with what semanticists have proved. Ullmann (1962:142), in this regard, says that "very few words are completely synonymous in the sense of being interchangeable in any context". It is possible to say '*wide* or *broad* sense' but it is incorrect to say '*wide* accent' only '*broad* accent' is accepted. He (ibid: p.143) adds a distinguishing criterion between synonymous lexical items; it is to find their opposites. Thus, the verb *decline* is more or less synonymous with *reject* when it means the opposite of *accept*, but not when it is opposed to *rise*. *Deep* will overlap with *profound* in '*deep* sympathy' where its opposite will be *superficial*, but not in '*deep* water' where its antonym is *shallow*.

Cruse (1986:268), on his part, draws one's attention to the fact that absolute synonymy is "impractical to prove that two items were absolute synonyms ... because that would mean checking their relations in all conceivable contexts (it would also be theoretically impossible, if... the number of possible contexts were infinite)". Clarifying the value of talking about absolute synonymy, Cruse (2000:157) underlines that absolute synonyms are vanishingly rare and do not constitute a significant feature of the lexical frameworks of natural languages. He adds that "the usefulness of the notion lies uniquely in its status as a reference point on a putative scale of synonymy"(ibid).

The reason behind the rarity of absolute synonymy is attributed to the fact that it would be, as Kreiler (1998:97) put it, wasteful for a language to have two lexical units that occur exactly in the same contexts and with exactly the same sense. In brief, synonymy refers to the sameness of meaning (where semantic similarities of synonymous items outweigh differences), not to the identity of meaning. The rarity of total synonymy is attributed to the non-necessity of the presence of two lexical units whose uses and contexts are exactly the same. However, one can come across total synonyms in different dialects of the same language (e.g. *postman*/ *mailman*) and in scientific register (e.g. in phonetics, consonants like *p* and *b* are known both as *stops* or *plosives* and the same writer may employ both terms synonymously).

Types of Synonyms

Reference has been made (in section 1.1 above) to two types of synonyms; partial and absolute. Cruse (2000:158) talks of propositional meaning in that the latter can be defined in terms of entailment. If two lexical items are propositional synonyms, they can be substituted in "any expression with truth-conditional properties without effect on those properties" (ibid). In other words, it is possible for two sentences involving one member of a pair of propositional synonyms to be mutually entailing: *John bought a violin* entails and is entailed by *John bought a fiddle*.

He (ibid) states that differences in the meanings of propositional synonyms necessarily involve one or more aspects of non-propositional meaning; differences in expressive meaning, differences of stylistic level (on the colloquial-formal dimension), and differences of presupposed discourse. Consider the following examples:

4. This was the first time they had had intercourse.
5. This was the first time they had had love.
6. This was the first time they had fucked.

Example(4) would be more likely than the others in a court of law, example (5) is probably the most neutral, while example (6) would be more likely in a typical novel found in an airport bookstall. "Propositional synonyms seem to be commonest in areas of special emotive significance, especially taboo areas" (ibid). John Saeed (1997:90) declares that there are fixed truth relations between sentences which involve the semantic relation of entailmentⁱⁱ. The following two examples exhibit propositional synonymy because they express roughly the same mean

7. a. The policeman assassinated the king.
- b. The king died.

Focusing on the above examples, one would easily recognize that it is logically impossible for somebody to assert (7.a) and deny (7.b). Kreiler (1998: 97) gives a very brief description of the relationship holding between entailment and synonymy in saying that "synonymy is an instance of mutual entailment".

In conclusion, there is a close relationship holding between propositional synonyms and entailment where the former cannot be expressed in isolation from the latter.

Collocational Restrictions on Synonyms

The collocational range of an expression is the set of contexts in which it can occur (its collocations). It might be thought that the collocational range of an expression is wholly determined by its meaning so that synonyms must of necessity have the same collocational range (Lyons, 1995:62). Cruse (1986:279) defines collocational restrictions as "co-occurrence restrictions that are irrelevant of truth-conditions". For instance, in *My grandfather passed away yesterday*, *passed away* imposes collocational restrictions on its grammatical subject, requiring it to be human. The role of collocational restrictions can be observed with reference to the partially two synonymous verbs: *kick the bucket*, *die*.

8. a. Keith kicked the bucket.

- b. Keith died.
- c.? The huge ox kicked the bucket.
- d. The huge ox died.

Unlike *die*, *kick the bucket* is fully normal only with a human subject. Accordingly, the sentences involving *die* and *kick the bucket* have "the same message-conveying potential" (ibid, p.280). However, the only difference between them is that (8.a), unlike (8.b), displays greater semantic cohesion in that its subject can be predictable from the rest of the sentence.

Synonyms do not necessarily have the same collocational range: to take an example "*big*" and "*large*", are synonymous, but there are many contexts in which "*large*" cannot be substituted for "*big*" without violating the collocational restrictions of the one or the other. Look at the following where "*large*" is not interchangeable with "*big*" e.g.

- 9. You are making a big mistake.
- 10. You are making a large mistake.

Sentence (10) is collocationally unacceptable or unidiomatic. In fact, there are factors determining speakers' choices of synonymous words which have to do with the situational or stylistic acceptability of particular forms rather than with their sense or reference (Lyons, 1968:450, Lyons, 1995:62) (also see Frank Palmer, 1981:92).

Connotations and Synonymy

Discussing the factors affecting the choice of one synonym rather than the other, Saeed (1997:66) considers speaker attitude as a distinguishing factor where some words imply negative speaker attitudes. The adjectives *skinny*, *thin*, *slender* mean 'the same thing' perhaps, but they differ in connotation, the values that people give to them: *thin* is neutral, *skinny* is rather pejorative, and *slender* is flattering. Lyons (1968, p.449) emphasizes that as far as actual language use is concerned, it is completely true that one word may be preferred to another because of its different "emotive or evocative associations." The degree of importance of this varies considerably from one style or situation to another. In using synonyms such as *freedom*; *liberty*, *hide*; *conceal*, one faces little difficulty to think of the occasions when a speaker or writer may deliberately employ one synonym rather than the other and make his choice on the basis of these connotations which the words are likely to evoke.

In this regard, Ullmann (1962, p.151) states that the choice between synonyms is based on the writer's selection of one synonym which is best suited to the context: the one which will carry the right amount of emotion and emphasis. He (ibid, 153) adds that an important function of collocations of synonyms is to make one's meaning clearer and more emphatic.

Supporting what was mentioned above, Kreiler (1998, p.98) argues that some synonymous verbs or adjectives differ in pragmatic value which, in turn, has its bearing on their potential co-occurrence. For instance, the verbs *hide* and *conceal*, the former is more common than the latter. Moreover, it is possible to say *We hid in the attic*, as well as *We hid the treasure in the attic*, but we cannot say * *We concealed in the attic*. Similarly, two lexical units are synonymous if they are compatible with the same subject. e.g.

Integral calculus is a hard subject to study.

Integral calculus is a difficult subject to study.

The words *hard* and *difficult* are both compatible with *calculus* and *subject*. However, *difficult* is not a synonym of *hard* in *hard chair*, *hard cover*, *hard knock* and the like because the two words have different ranges of compatibilityⁱⁱⁱ. As a conclusion, there is a close relationship holding between synonyms the connotative senses they evoke to the extent that the writer's or speaker's selections between sets of synonyms are determined with reference to the connotations they carry. Another decisive factor in such selections is the linguistic context where the best suited synonym is singled out.

Rarity of Absolute Synonymy

It has been mentioned in section 1.1 above that absolute synonymy is too rare to exist in language. This is due to various factors involved in this issue such as the absence of necessity of existence of two total synonyms interchangeably used in the same contexts where speakers would tend to use one synonym that is more commonly in use. This would lead to the death of the other synonym. Cruse (1986, p. 270) supports the view of rarity of total synonyms in saying that "absolute synonyms, if they exist at all, they are extremely uncommon". The two conditions of total synonymy i.e. interchangeability in all contexts and identity of cognitive and emotive senses are rarely met. Therefore, total synonymy becomes an extremely rare occurrence (Lyons, 1968, p. 447f).

Nevertheless, it is possible to find total synonyms on a very narrow scale in that they can be present in two dialects of the same language (e.g. Autumn in BrE, Fall in AmE). In addition, scientific terminology could embrace absolute synonyms. Ullmann (1962, p.141) reports on this issue stating that "scientific terms are precisely and emotionally neutral where this fact enables us to find out quite definitely whether any two of them are completely interchangeable, and absolute synonymy is by no means infrequent". Recent studies on the formation of industrial terminologies have shown that several synonyms will sometimes arise around a new invention, until eventually they are sorted out.

Synonymy in Arabic^{iv}

Introduction

Before dealing with Arab traditional scholars' treatment of lexical synonymy, one should have a look at the definitions of synonymy in Arabic. Amro Saybwayh^v (2004:24, Vol. I) is the first who touches the topic of lexical synonymy in confirming that speech involves lexical units whose meanings can be classified in terms of dissimilarity of form and meaning (e.g. *sat* and *went*), dissimilarity of forms, but similarity of meaning (e.g. *begin* and *start*) and similarity of form and dissimilarity in meaning (e.g. *lead/lead*). The second type of lexis in Saybwayh's classification is a clear reference to synonymy. However, he does not go in depth in the treatment of types of synonyms, it might be, owing to his focus on the syntactic description of Arabic. As quoted in Abid AŞyutı (1988:321, Vol. I), Fahr al-Dyn states that synonymy refers to "the lexical units that denote the same objects or things in the external world". On his part, İbin Ğinny (2011:115) confirms that the abundance of synonyms in Arabic is of much use to its speakers in that one meaning can be expressed by many lexical units whose senses are roughly the same. Yahy' Al-'alawi (2009:155, Vol. II) says that "synonyms are words which

are distinct in form but similar in denotation where they refer to the same essence". For instance, *saif* (a sword), *ṣārim* (a sword whose edge is very sharp to cut) and *muhanad* (a sword made in India) are partial synonyms because there are slight differences between this lexis. Ramaḍān AbdulTawāb (1999: 309) defines synonyms as "lexical units whose meaning is the same and they are prone to be substitutable in any context". He (ibid) adds that total synonymy, although it is not impossible, is very rare to occur and can be considered as language luxury that lasts for a short period of time where various factors (e.g. ambiguity embracing the synonym, emotional shades of meaning etc.) are involved in the disappearance of total synonyms. Such factors lead to the rise of fine differences in meaning between absolute synonyms which make each synonym suitable to a given context rather than the other. In a similar vein, Al'askary (1974:11) maintains that "if two nouns in a language refer to the same objects or essence, it means that each of which entails a particular situation which is distinct from the other. Otherwise, one of these two nouns is considered unnecessary to remain in language"

In a word, Arab linguists confirm the existence of two types of synonymy in Arabic; partial and total. Moreover, they underline the rarity of total synonymy due to the un-necessity of the presence of two absolute synonymous items for this will be considered as a residue. Nevertheless, what has gone before should not give the impression that all Arab linguists hold the thesis that the presence of synonymy in Arabic is gospel true (see section 2.2 below).

Arab linguists' views about synonymy

Arab traditional and modern scholars do not hold a unanimous agreement on the presence of the linguistic phenomenon of lexical synonymy in that some of them approved its existence by collecting as many synonyms as possible. This was introduced in form of textbooks or monographs consisting of such lexis. Others, on the other hand, deny it wholesale by detecting the fine differences between synonyms. Unquestionably, the approval of the existence of synonymy is prior in time to its denial because the presence of synonymy motivated some linguists to seek reasons to refute it (Mohammed, Munjjid, 2001:36). AŞyuty (1988:322, Vol. I) introduces the linguistic debate concerning the views of the existence or non-existence of synonymy between two eminent traditional Arab linguists ; Abu Ali al-Fārisi and Ibin Ḥālwai where the latter stated that he kept by heart fifty nouns denoting *the sword*, al-Fārisi said that he memorized only one lexical unit which is *the sword* denoting the same referent. To support his view, Ibin Ḥālwai mentioned many lexis (e.g. ṣārim, muhanad, ḥusām etc.) referring to the same object while Abu Ali al-Fārisi told his addressee that these items are just attributes of the same object, not names. This is clear evidence of the two opposing views held by traditional Arab linguists as far as synonymy is concerned.

For space necessity, one cannot go in detail in surveying the Arab linguists' theses concerning the presence or non-presence of synonymy in Arabic. Views of two linguists who belong to two different schools of Arabic linguistics will be discussed below. As a scholar of Basra school of linguistics, Ibn Fāris(1977:114) sides with those who deny the existence of synonymy in Arabic by saying that one finds slight differences between lexis which are regarded by many as synonyms. These supposedly synonymous words are used for emphaticness and hyperbole. Definitely, one cannot deny that verbs such as *أنطلق* و*ذهب* و*مضى* (set off, went, and walked) involve some shades of meaning that make them non-synonymous.

On the other hand, Ibn Jinny (2011:115) confirms that synonymy is a characteristic of the Arabic language that deserves in-depth thought and contemplation. He (ibid) devotes a chapter in his book "al-Ḥaṣāʾiṣ fī al-Naḥw" (Features of grammar) to the treatment of synonymy. The chapter in question is entitled "similarity of meaning and distinctness of roots and structures" where he shows that synonymy is of "abundant use which is evidence of the honor of Arabic in that one finds one meaning expressed by many nouns and structures. In searching for the essence of each noun, it is found that one meaning leads to another".

On their part, modern Arab semanticists postulate some conditions for the presence of synonyms in Arabic:

1. Identity of reference to the same objects or things where some scholars think of its rarity.
2. Belonging to the same linguistic environment i.e. the two synonymous words belong to the same (not different) dialects.
3. The presence of the synonymous items in the same age i.e. synonyms should not be sought between two distant periods in history (i.e. the pre-Islamic era and the Abbasid age) (Munjid, 2001, p.35).

The Rise of Synonymy in Arabic

Discussing the reasons behind the abundance of synonyms in Arabic, traditional and modern linguists have remained preoccupied with studying the linguistic phenomenon due to the absence of introducing a unanimously accepted definition and the distinct views they hold concerning synonymy. The following reasons behind synonymy are introduced according to the different research methodologies followed by linguists who belong to different schools of thought:

1. Conventuality. This reason is introduced by Ibn Jinny (2011, p.373) in that it is possible for two lexical units to be of the same use when Arabs used to agree to employ both lexis to refer to the same meaning. This is especially badly needed in poetry.
2. Inter-marriage between dialects: traditionalists and present-day linguists refer to this issue in that the abundance of lexis in some dialects to convey the same meaning could be accessible to one speaker who takes such lexis from these dialects. However, this goes in contradiction with the second condition of synonymy postulated by modern Arab linguists in section (in section 2.2 above).
3. Borrowing from different languages: The Arabic language tends to borrow some lexis particularly from Akkadian as a Semitic language; and from other languages also (e.g. Persian). These lexical units have the same meaning in common to refer to a particular referent. Accordingly, these words have become naturalized in Arabic (Munjid, 2001, p.80; Subḥy Aṣāliḥ, 2009, p. 295).
4. Derivation and distinct considerations: Mamḥūd alMubārek (1960:173) states that when one looks at how words are conventionally used and how things are named, he would find out that the thing named has many attributes. Possibly, each attribute could be used as a name for that thing where new derivatives are coined from such words; moreover, this is conducive to the rise of synonyms in languages. This is in evidence in naming *الدار*, *والمنزل*, *والمسكن* which are respectively translated into *dwelling*, *home* and *house*. In Arabic, the name *dwelling* is normally called so because one finds security and peace in it, *home* is a place where one lives in and *house* is called so because it is circular in origin (according to the regional

traditions) . All these words denote the same referent. Traditionalists paid attention to such lexis and they called them equivalent lexis. They were defined as lexis which denotes the referent whose essence is the same, but its attributes differ (e.g. Attributes of Allah and names of Prophet Mohammed).

5. The Qurân whose revelation was made in Classical Arabic enriched the language with what some Arab linguists and theologians consider to be synonymous words (Aşâlih, 2009: 292).

Many other reasons (e.g. metonymy, metaphorical use, deletion of some sounds of a word etc.) for the rise and abundance of synonymy are introduced by linguists (ibid). However, these reasons are too controversial among linguists to introduce in the present paper.

Advantages of Synonyms

Scholars hold distinct views concerning the merits of the presence of synonyms in Arabic. It is a language which is famous for the abundance of its synonyms owing to the wide resources of coinage of new words the language enjoys. As a characteristic distinguishing Arabic from other languages, it is possible for the archaic words to be revived in use. Such archaic words involve synonyms (Aşâlih, 2009, p. 293). For instance, AbdulTawâb (1999, p.321) underlines that synonymy leads to the expansion of the lexical repertoire of the language which gives wide choice to poets, orators and writers to use synonyms in different contexts. In addition, synonyms can enable language users to avoid repetition and express emphaticness or hyperbole in a more rhetorical style by employing homonyms, rhythm etc. Finally, one may reconsider his use of a given word by using a more rhetorical synonymous word (Munjid, 2001, p.90)

Translation Assessment Models

Going through the history of translation theory, one is going to come across various models of translation evaluation^{vi}. All these models are intended to assess the target text (TT) in comparison with the source text (ST) as the assessor will take into account the translator's lexical, syntactic, cultural, discursal and pragmatic choices and put them in juxtaposition with the ST writer's to find out whether these choices were accurate or not. Early translation critics called for translation evaluation which is based on the translation product i.e. the TT without any reference to the ST. The adherents of this ideology of assessment believe that if a TT reads naturally to its readers, the translation then is sound and adequate. Therefore, " a work is examined for its content, style and sometimes for its aesthetic character, both the author and his work is judged only on the basis of a translation without consulting the original work (Katherine Reiss, 2000:2) Such a call declined and did not get currency in the translation circles concerned because of its subjectivity (e.g. unsupported by examples from both texts, the critic's judgements are passed depending on his preferences, etc.). Consequently, calls have been voiced for objective translation assessment which is based on comparing the original and the TT.

Accordingly, translation quality assessment models have been designed by specialists as they draw on the theories of language, and of culture. Such assessment models are generally classified in two types depending on the translation theory they adopt: equivalence-based models and function-based models. The former seek to find how far accurate lexical, syntactic,

semantic and discorsal equivalents are accessed by the translator. Function-based models, on the other hand, are concerned with judging the translation on the basis of the function it serves in the target culture. Functional theories of translation stress equivalence at text level linking language function to text types (Jerome Munday, 2012:110). Since it is settled in translation theory that the text type plays a decisive role in selecting the translation method on the part of the translator, legal texts (religious texts included) necessitate the use of the literal translation method because such texts do not lean themselves to other translation methods (e.g. dynamic, communicative etc.). This is owing to the fact that inaccurate lexical/grammatical choices on the part of the translator would definitely lead to convey disfigured messages to the TT readers about the content of the original. Accordingly, this would sometimes result in taking erroneous political decisions or deriving inaccurate provisions from religious texts. Extrinsic managing may be another factor involved which represents the translator's ideological intervention in the ST, which clearly shows up in the world views that he intentionally chooses to present in the TL text (Mohammed Fargal, 2008.2).

Therefore, an equivalence-based model of translation assessment will be chosen to evaluate the English translations of Qur'anic lexical synonymy to uncover how far accuracy in translation has been attained. This is due to the fact that the concern of the present study is on the lexical accurate choices of translators in handling lexical synonymy in such a text type. It is Peter Newmark's semantic-communicative translation model. He (1988:39) maintains that:

Communicative translation attempts to produce on its readers an effect on its readers as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original. Semantic translation attempts to render, as close as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original.

Accordingly, semantic translation will be the criterion of passing judgments on the quality of the renditions of Qur'anic lexical synonyms. Communicative translation is not suitable to use because the effect on readers is not measurable and "inoperant if the text is out of TL space and time" (Newmark, 1981:69).

Assessment of Translations of Qur'anic Lexical Synonyms

The present subsection is devoted to the translation assessment of Qur'anic lexical synonyms as found in many Qur'anic ayas. Six published translations (whose translators belong to different linguistic and cultural backgrounds) of the Qur'an will be consulted: Arberry's, Hilâli and Khân's, Irving's, Pickthall's, Shaker's and Ali's. As a procedure of assessment, Qur'anic ayas involving synonyms will be introduced hand in hand with one complete translation of the aya under discussion. It will be Hilâli and Khân's translation because it is written in modern English while the rest try to tailor a Biblical garment to the Qur'anic surahs by citing lexical items (thou, thy, citeth, maketh, etc.) which have become outdated. Moreover, being native speakers of Arabic and scholars of Islamic theology have enabled both translators to introduce a better translation for the Qurân. The researcher shall mention the lexical choices (made by translators) that are supposed to be equivalents to synonyms in the original. Besides, page numbers of the TTs will be written down following the translators' names. In case inadequacy in translation is figured out, alternative translations will be introduced by the researcher.

For space limits, three pairs of partial synonyms, i.e. verbs, nouns and adjectives found in various Qurānic ayas will be chosen to see whether these partially lexical synonyms are accurately translated or not^{vii}

Partially Synonymous Verbs

A lot of verbs which are, on the face of it, regarded by specialists in Arabic linguistics and theologians as being lexically synonymous. For instance, the pair of these synonymous verbs, جاء ja' : (came with something tied with belief and resourcefulness) and أتى 'tâ : (came with something to remove doubt and ignorance). Arab semanticists (e.g. Al'askary, 1974) treated the two verbs as synonymous, and said that detecting any difference of meaning between both is too difficult to pinpoint. However, dictionary makers and theologians noticed a slight difference in meaning between both when they appear in Qur'anic texts as illustrated by the paraphrase above made by the researcher.

13. " قَالَ إِنْ كُنْتَ جِئْتَ بِآيَةٍ فَآتِ بِهَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ " Sûrat Al-A'âf(The Heights:106)

qâl in kunta jita bi'yatin fa'ty bihâ in kunta min aş-Şâdiqyyn

Hilâli & Khân (P.215) Pharaoh said: " If you have come with a sign, show it forth, if you are one of those who tell the truth."

The above Qur'anic aya contains the two verbs under discussion where the first, جاء ja', conveys the sense of truth and belief in that Pharaoh in his inner-self is fully convinced of Moses' message as being true. This is clarified in the words of Pharaoh as the Qur'anic text introduces it by selecting the verb referred to. Despite his conviction, Pharaoh, before his courtiers, obstinately doubts Moses' message that is why the Qur'anic text selects the verb أتى 'tâ to convey the sense of doubt and disbelief (Munjid, 2001: 148).

As for the translations of the aya, they are distinguished by the lexical choice of *bring* or *come with* to the first verb and *show* or *produce it* to the second one. The first lexical choice is appropriate while the second should be accompanied by the adverb *at once* to convey disbelief and challenge that the verb implies.

The two verbs أثار *âthara* and فَضَّلَ *faṭala* are normally translated into *prefer*. However, their contextual meaning reflects some difference in meaning in that the former involves the sense of preference between valuable and non-valuable things. It also implies a pejorative connotation. The latter involves preference between two positions or ranks whose values are close to one another (Ibin Fâris, 1981:292, Vol.III).

a " بَلْ تُؤْتُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا " Sûrat Al-A'lâ(The Most High:16)

Bel tw'truun alhyât aldunnyâ

Hilâli & Khân (P.835) Nay, you prefer the life of this word.

As far as the renditions of the aya are concerned, all translators selected the word *prefer* as an equivalent to the verb in the original. It is an inadequate choice reflecting a different sense from what is intended in the ST because the pejorative sense involved is neglected where it can be accurately expressed by verb *favour*.

b " وَاللَّهُ فَضَّلَ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ فِي الرِّزْقِ " Sûrat An-Naḥl (The Bees: 71)

Wallâhu faḍḍala ba'dakum 'alâ ba'dn fy ar-Rriziq

Hilâli & Khân (P.356) And Allâh has preferred some of you to others in wealth.

As for the translations, Irving and Pickthall selected the verb *favour* while Ali (P.267) translated it as follows: "Allah has *bestowed* His gifts and sustenance more freely on some of you than others". Arberry and Shaker used the verb *prefer* as a lexical equivalent. The researcher thinks that the verb *bestow* is the most accurate equivalent for it is a neutral of connotations if it is compared to *prefer* or *favour* since Almighty Allah does not show favoritism or preference of His creatures one to another. On the contrary, He bestows wealth and gifts on them. This is what is introduced in theology books where theologians give utmost priority to linguistic evidence in interpreting the Qurân.

Finally, the pair of partially synonymous verbs *أختار* *ihtâr* and *أصطفى* *iştfî* is normally rendered to *choose* and *select*, respectively. However, the two verbs imply a fine difference in meaning in that *أختار* *ihtâr* means to take something for its essential goodness whereas *أصطفى* *iştfî* to take something for its purity of essence (Al'askary, 1974).

a. "وَأَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَىٰ" Sûrat Tâhâ(13)

W'ana 'htartuka f'stam' lima ywhÿ

Hilâli & Khân (P. 414)" And I have chosen you. So listen to that which will be revealed (to you). As for the translations of the above aya, all the renditions involve the verb *choose* without giving any comments to convey the exact meaning of the verb. Accordingly, the verb should be collocated with the following: "And I have chosen you for your essential goodness. So listen to what will be revealed (to you)"

b. "إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ آدَمَ وَنُوحًا وَآلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ" (la'umrân:33)

Inna Allâh iştfâ Adam waNuḥ wa'al Ibrâhym wa'al 'umrân 'alÿ al'âlamyn

Hilâli & Khân (P.72) Allah chose Adam, Nûh(Noah), the family of Ibrâhim (

Abraham) and the family of 'Imrân above the 'Âlamîn (mankind and jinn).

As for the renditions, four of them involved the verb *choose* to be a lexical equivalent to the verb under discussion. Pickthall's translation contained the verb *prefer* which is inaccurate to convey the sense of the verb in the Qur'anic text. It seems that Irving's rendering is somehow more accurate than others' for he uses the verb *select* to convey the lexical meaning of the verb *أصطفى* *iştfî*. His translation reads (p.54): God *selected* Adam and Noah, Abraham's House and 'Imrân's House over [everyone in] the Universe. However, it needs some commentary between brackets" God selected Adam and Noah, Abraham's House and 'Imrân's House" for their pure essence" over [everyone in] the Universe

Partially Synonymous Nouns

In several Qur'anic contexts, the pair of lexical synonyms "زوج: *zawj wife*" and "أمرأة: Emra'ih *wife*" appears with two distinct senses although they are lexically partially synonymous. The noun زوج, *zawj: wife* is used in contexts where the spousal relationship is full circle and is characterized by birth-giving between a male and a female. Moreover, the spousal relationship is distinguished by a close intimacy between both partners till death. The noun امرأة Emra'ih: *wife* ", on the other hand, describes the spousal relationship being characterized by separation and some defects in the sacred link between both partners.

a. "وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ" Sûrat Al-Baqara (The Cow: 35)

Qulnâ yâAdam 'skun anta wajawjuka aljanna.

Hilâli & Khân (P.8) And We said: O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in Paradise.

All the six translators selected the word *wife* to be an equivalent to the word زوج in the original which is a rather inaccurate lexical choice. The exact contextual meaning is not transferred accurately; the word *wife* should be accompanied with a commentary showing that the spousal relationship holding between Adam and Eve is a full circle one featured by birth-giving and intimacy.

The alternative translation runs as follows: And We said: O Adam! Dwell you and your wife (your close and intimate partner) in Paradise.

b. " ضَرَبَ اللهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا امْرَأَةَ نُوحٍ وَامْرَأَةَ لُوطٍ كَانَتَا تَحْتَ عَبْدَيْنِ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا صَالِحِينَ فَخَانَتَاهُمَا." At-tahreem(Prohibition: 10)

Ḍaraba Allahu maṭalan lillaḍyna kafaru Emra'ita Nuḥ Emra'ita Luṭ kānatā taḥta ' abdayni min ' ybādina ṣāliḥyini faḵānatāhumā.

Hilāli & Khan (P.774) And Allāh has set forth an example for those who disbelieve: the wife of Nūh (Noah) and the wife Lūt (Lot). They were under two our righteous slaves, but they both betrayed them (their husbands by rejecting their doctrine).

All the rest renditions produced to the above aya have included the word *wife* to be an equivalent to the word *Emra'it*. The exact meaning has not been conveyed adequately apart from Hilāli & Khān's translation which explicitly indicates the type of betrayal that happened between both prophets and their wives.

The synonymous pair of **والد** and **أب**: *father* has appeared in many Qurānic contexts where the former refers to the immediate fatherhood involved in giving birth to one's sons whereas the latter can refer to the forefathers of a man. This is not true of **والد**; wālid.

a " وَيَاوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا " Albaqara(The Cow:83)

wabilwālydny iḥsānā

Hilāli & Khan (P. 16) Be dutiful and good to parents.

The five translations of the above aya contained the word parents as an equivalent to the ST item الوالدين which is a semantically adequate rendition since the contextual meaning of the original word refers to one's parents not to his predecessors.

b " مِلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ هُوَ سَمَّاكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ " Sūrat Al-Haj(Pilgrimage:78)

Millata Abyyikum Ibrāheem huwa sammākum almuslimyn

Hilāli & Khān (P.453) It is the religion of your father Ibrāhīm(Abraham)(Islamic Monotheism). It is He Who (Allāh) Who has named you Muslims.

Apart from Irving's translation which is an accurate one because he has chosen the word forefather as a lexical equivalent to the word **أبيكم**, all the renditions which are under assessment proved failure in making an adequate lexical selection appropriate to the word in question. Irving's translation (p.341) runs as follows:" The sect of your forefather Abraham. He has named you Muslims".

The pair of synonyms, **إنسان**; insān, *Man* and **بشر**; baṣar, *Human* , involves a fine difference in meaning in that the former refers to the sense that a human is a social being who gets adapted with what goes round it. Besides, the word in Arabic is morphologically derived from a verb whose sense conveys forgetting after awareness. The latter, on the other hand, is morpho-semantically derived from the word *skin texture* which is related to Man's creation and corpse (Al'askary, 1974, p.227). Accordingly, in all Qurānic texts the word **إنسان**; insān, *a human* appears with the sense related to the mental tasks and duties that he should shoulder because

of his knowledge and awareness. The word, بشر; *bašar*, *Man*, on the other hand, appeared in *ayas* describing Man's creation and shape (*ibid*).

18.a "اَفْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ (3) الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ (4) عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ" *Sûrat Al- 'Alaq* (The Colt 3-5)

Iqra warabuka al'kram allady 'allama bilqalam 'alama alinsâna mâlem ya ' lam

Hilâli & Khan (P.864) Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. He has taught man that which he knew not.

The rest of the renditions introduced involved the word *man* as the translators took the contextual meaning into consideration. Nevertheless, Arberry's [(p.805) "Recite: And thy Lord is the most Generous who taught by the pen, taught Man that he knew not] translation seems to be sounder than others' because in his rendition he capitalized the word *Man*.

18.b "وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ مِنَ الْمَاءِ بَشَرًا" *Sûrat Al-Fûrqân* (The Criterion :54)

Wahua allady kalaqa mina alma' bašarâ

Hilâli & Khân (P.485) And it is He Who has created man from water.

With the exception of Irving's translation, the other four renditions involve the word *Man* to be an equivalent to *bašar* in the original. Such a lexical selection is inappropriate owing to the fact that what is contextually meant is Human to refer to humanity in general. Irving's (p.364) translation reads as follows: "He is the One who created humanity out of water". So, it an accurate translation of the above *aya*.

Partially Synonymous Adjectives

Partial synonymous adjectives are very recurrent in Qur'anic texts where the fine differential senses between such adjectives can be figured out because they are used in distinct contexts. And Arab dictionary makers detected such differences when they introduced them in their writings. One can cite the following pair of such adjectives شحيح *šahyḥ*: *niggardly* and ضنين *ḍanyyn*: *skimping* where the former refers to miserliness associated with stinginess to prevent oneself from doing good deeds including money-spending. The latter, on the other hand, means the unwillingness to spend or grant priceless things (e.g. knowledge) (Al'askary, 1974:170)

a "أَشِحَّةً عَلَى الْخَيْرِ" *Al-Aḥzâb* (The Confederates:19)

' šḥṭan 'ala alḥyr

Hilâli & Khân (P.563) Being miserly towards you (as regards help and aid in Allâh's Cause).

Various translation equivalents were introduced to the adjective شحيح *šahyḥ*: in the above *aya* such as *covetous*, *sparing*, *skimping* and *niggardly*. The latter adjective which was selected by the translator Shaker and Arberry seems to be the adequate lexical equivalent to what is found in the original due to the reason that it connotes with the sense of unwillingness to be generous with money, time etc. (OALD,2001,p.585)

b "وَمَا هُوَ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ بِضَنِينٍ" *At-Takwir* (Winding Round and Losing its light:24)

wamâhwa 'alâ 'lgyb biḍanyyn

Hilâli & Khân (P.823) And he (Muhammad) withholds not a knowledge of the Unseen.

The remaining five translations involve some lexical units such as *grudging(ly)*, *avid*, *tenacious* and *niggardly*. All these lexis are inaccurate to convey the exact meaning that the adjective carries. Therefore, the original should be translated as follows" He is not skimping of the Unseen" because the adjective *skimping* connotes with the sense of the unwillingness to spend invaluable objects such as time, knowledge etc.

The pair of the adjectives شديد *šadyd*: *severe* and عصب *ašyb*: *distressful* can be cited here to serve the same function of distinguishing such fine differences in meaning.

Munjjid(2001,p.187) states that the former adjective indicates utmost severity while the latter conveys the sense of distressfulness to encompass Man or things with power.

a "وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ" Al-Anfāl(The Spoils of War: 25)

Wa' 'lamw inna Allāh šadydu al'iqāb

Hilāli & Khān (P. 234) And know that Allāh is Severe in punishment.

As for translators, Arberry; and Ali used the equivalents *terrible* and *strict*, respectively where both lexis are inaccurate to convey the sense in the original. The other four translations chose the word *severe* which needs a modifier to signal the sense more accurately.

b "وَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوطًا سِيءَ بِهِمْ وَضَاقَ بِهِمْ ذَرْعًا وَقَالَ هَذَا يَوْمٌ عَصِيبٌ" (Hūd:77)

walammā ḡa'at rusulunā Luṭan sy'a bihim waḏāqa bihim ḏar'ā waqāl hād yawmun 'aṣyib

Hilāli & Khān (P. 296) And when Our messengers came to Lūt(Lot), he was grieved on account of them and felt himself powerless for them(lest the town people should approach them to commit sodomy with them). He (Lot) said: "This is a distressful day."

Finally, the adjectives *بعيد* *ba'yd* which means too far in distance to access: and *قاصٍ* *qāṣin*; means remote but can be accessed or reached(Munjjid, 2001,p.205-2011)

.a " الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ فِي الْعَذَابِ وَالضَّلَالِ الْبَعِيدِ " (Saba':8)

'llaḏyna lāyw'minwna bilāḥirati fy 'l'aḏāb wa'lḏḏalāl alba'yd.

Hilāli & Khān(P. 576) Those who disbelieve in the Hereafter are (themselves) are in a torment, and in far error.

As far as its renditions are concerned, all translators of the above aya chose the adjective *far* to convey the contextual meaning expressed in the original. This lexical choice is unsuccessful because it does not reflect the exact meaning of the adjective. Accordingly, the aya should be translated as follows: Those who disbelieve in the Hereafter are (themselves) are in a torment, and in *too far error to access the right path*.

.b " فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَانْتَبَدَّتْ بِهِ مَكَانًا قَاصِيًا " Mariam(Mary:22)

faḡamalathu f'ntabaḏat bhi makānan qaṣyy'

Hilāli & Khān(P.404) So she conceived him, and she withdrew with him a far place.

Arberry chose the adjective *distant*, Irving, Ali and Shaker used the word *remote*; and Pickthall chose the word *far* in their translations. Since accuracy in translation is necessary to meet, the adjective *remote* followed by the phrase in parentheses (but reachable) should be used here. The alternative translation is to read as follows: So she conceived him, and she withdrew with him to a remote (but reachable) place.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The translation quality assessment has indicated that translators of the TTs mainly have been unable to make adequate lexical selections with comments to convey the accurate senses of partial synonyms found in the original i.e. the Qurān. Such comments may lead to overtranslation which is inescapable from if translation accuracy is sought. The English translations of the Qurān which have been subjected to assessment have clearly indicated that overtranslation is unavoidable to attain translation adequacy. This is true particularly of religious texts because they are pregnant with fine senses in the original that positively or negatively affect the understanding of such texts by TT readers. In other words, wrong or inaccurate messages may be conveyed to TT readers if meticulous understanding is not secured on the part of the translators in handling lexical synonyms. As maintained by Arab semanticists, the rarity of absolute synonymy has resulted in inaccurate renditions of lexically synonymous

verbs, nouns and adjectives found in the original. Partially lexical synonyms in the original have been found to be chosen on purpose so as to serve the conveyance of religious teachings in the Qurân.

CONCLUSIONS

Theoretical conclusions

On the basis of the theoretical frameworks of lexical synonymy in both languages (see section 1. and 2. above), the following conclusions have been reached:

1. Semanticists in both languages underline that absolute synonyms are very rare to come across due to the absence of necessity of having two lexis or more which exactly share the identical meaning.
2. Semanticists in both languages hold the same thesis concerning the reasons behind the rarity of total synonymy.
3. However, in both languages, it is not infrequent to find total synonyms provided that they are used in two dialects of the same language (e.g. Fall in AmE and Autumn in BrE).
4. Borrowing from other languages is a common source of enriching both languages with lexical synonyms.
5. Collocational restrictions and connotations are two common denominators (in both languages) governing the occurrences of lexical synonyms in different contexts.
6. Nevertheless, Arab semanticists hold two opposing views concerning the existence and non-existence of synonymy in Arabic whereas English semanticists adhere to the position that synonymy is present in the language.

Practical conclusions

The findings in the present subsection have been drawn on the basis of the translation quality assessment (see subsection 3.1 above) carried out to the Qur'anic texts involving lexical synonyms. They run as follows:

1. The translations assessed have proved the very high rate of inaccurate renditions of partially lexical synonyms (such as nouns, verbs and adjectives) found in the Qur'anic texts. This has validated the hypothesis of the present paper.
2. The translation difficulties of rendering lexical synonymy stem from the semantic and rhetorical differences between the two languages involved in the translation process.
3. Commentaries and paraphrase are two translation techniques which very necessary for translators to resort to in their attempts to convey the exact senses in the TTs. This is especially very evident in the translations of religious texts (the Qurân included) because they are pregnant with cultural loads.
4. Arabic-speaking Muslim translators have ranked first to produce more accurate translations of lexical synonyms which have been subjected to assessment. This is attributed to their linguistic competence and Islamic cultural background.
5. Overtranslation is inescapable from in translating lexical Qur'anic synonymy to secure translation accuracy of such a linguistic phenomenon.
6. Extrinsic managing in translating religious texts generally gives rise to more explanations and commentaries so as to reflect the translator's ideology. This can be easily evidenced in rendering partial synonyms of the Qurân.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Dr. Riyad A. Ehwain from Arabic Dept. / College of Arts of al-Mustansiriyah University for providing me with some advice and valuable sources in Arabic.

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Endnotes

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- ⁱ Total synonymy and absolute synonymy are two terms interchangeably used in the present paper.
- ⁱⁱ Entailment is a term referring to a relation between a pair of propositions such that the truth of the second proposition necessarily follows from (is entailed by) the truth of the first (e.g. I can see a dog – I can see an animal). One cannot both assert the first and deny the second (Crystal, 2008, p.169-170).
- ⁱⁱⁱ Compatibility is a term used in semantics; it refers to the lexical relation of compatibles which are characterized by two defining features; the absence of systematic entailments between sentences differing only in respect of compatibles in parallel syntactic positions. The second defining feature of compatibility guarantees a genuine relationship of sense; it is that a pair of compatibles must have a common superordinate. The relationship is exemplified by *dog* and *pet*. They both fall under the superordinate animal (in the sense of creature) (Cruse, 1986, p.92).
- ^{iv} Arabic linguistic texts are translated by the researcher when introducing the Arab linguists' treatment of lexical synonymy.
- ^v Death-dates of Arab scholars are mentioned immediately after their names in the bibliography because such death-dates (according to Hijri Calendar abbreviated as h.) are traditionally important in Arabic linguistics to recognize which school of thought the linguist belongs to.
- ^{vi} Translation evaluation and translation assessment are in free variation in the present study.

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^{vii} The ISO transliteration system is used in Latinizing the Arabic texts in the present study because the system is in wider currency if compared with other systems.