

A Study Of The Lexicons And Structures In The English Translations Of The Qur'an

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Behrouz Foroutan

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Author(s):

[Behrouz Foroutan](#) [2]

This text examines the intricacies of translating the Qur'an, exploring its necessities, challenges, and methodologies. From the miracle of its text to the unique capabilities of the Arabic language, it examines the proponents and opponents of Qur'an translation. It discusses the goal of translation and various methods employed, from literal translations to free interpretations.

The criteria for proper translation are highlighted, along with the evolving language of the Qur'an over time. Problematic wordings and structures are dissected, offering solutions and insights for conveying the message accurately. This comprehensive work serves as a guide for understanding and approaching the translation of the Qur'an, addressing linguistic complexities with clarity and precision.

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Preface

The Qur'an is the main source of Islamic belief, theology, and practice, making it profoundly important in regards to Islam. The Arabic text of the Qur'an is neither comprehensible for all Muslims around the world nor for all researchers or those who are interested in studying the text. For those who do not know Arabic, translation of the Qur'an plays a key role for conveying its message. Without a clear and correct translation, most people of the world become incapable of comprehending the message of the Qur'an.

In order to get a vision of the significance of proper Qur'an translation, we should consider the hundreds of millions who do not understand Arabic but would like to understand the Qur'an. Therefore, the translation of the Qur'an seems to be truly important. Different approaches to what "translation" actually is and the significance of the Qur'an result in a dispute between scholars and translators over the different methodologies used in translating its text.

In this writing, we have based our methodology for translation of the Qur'an on the language it uses and the message it is trying to convey. In regards to language, the Qur'an uses plain Arabic. And delivering the message of God was the main duty of God's Messenger (S) according to the Qur'an.

Accordingly, we have selected difficult words and structures used in the Qur'an and analysed them according to translations by the eight prominent translators of the Qur'an, including, Arberry, Shakir, Pickthall, Irving, Sarwar, Qara'i, Saffarzadeh, some of whom are Muslim, Shia or Sunni, and some not. Our goal was to find a method for conveying the message of the Qur'an as complete as possible.

Finally, it is my duty to express my sincere thanks to all of those who helped us including our advisors Dr. Seyd Mohammad Reza Hejazi, Dr Mohammad Reza Fakhr Rohani and Dr. Mohammad Rassafi also I give special thanks to Seyed Hossein Marashi who devoted his time for editing and Mohammad Amin Yazdanpanah for proof reading.

Behrouz Foroutan, Ph.D.

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Website: bforoutan.com

Email: bforoutan@gmail.com

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Chapter 1: Generalities

[Necessities Of Translating The Qur'an](#)

Indeed, translation has been one of the most important issues about the Qur'an since the early centuries of Islam, because the Qur'an truly is the main source of Islamic knowledge. The translation of the Qur'an is, therefore, considered as a gateway through which all nation, regardless of language, can enter and survey the Qur'an.

The Qur'an emphasizes that it is a reminder for all mankind¹, but asking the entirety of making to learn Arabic to such a proficiency that would allow them to independently study and understand the Qur'an is currently absurd. According to the aforementioned verses:

Why did God send a book in Arabic for all mankind while He, the All- Knowing, knew that, considering the diversity of language and culture, it is impossible to expect everyone to learn Arabic?

Accordingly, mankind in all its diversity can receive and learn the message of the Qur'an through two ways:

- a. By studying a clear and concise translation of the Qur'an in their own language.
- b. By someone who has the right credentials and can convey the message of the Qur'an to their language.

In either case, the Qur'an must be translated first. Without translation, the majority of the people of the world will be deprived from the Qur'an's message, therefore, the translation of the Qur'an has a pivotal role in understanding the text and Islam, whether some agree or disagree.

The Opponent And The Proponent Of The Translation Of The Qur'an

To the Muslims, the Qur'an is extremely sacred. It is the most reliable book in Islam, so Muslims are very sensitive about it. While one group believes the Qur'an cannot be translated, others disagree. The issue of translation has been a subject of dispute throughout history².

Groups that believe the Qur'an cannot be translated, bring reasons such as the following.

A) The Text Of The Holy Qur'an Is A Miracle

The Qur'an has been issued by the infinite divine source; therefore, it is beyond the capability of a finite being such as Mankind to translate it. They cite verse 17:88³ and conclude that any translation is in effect a 'new' Qur'an, separate from the original one. According to the aforementioned verse, Muslims may not publish a 'new' Qur'an or something similar⁴.

The Qur'an is a miracle and the Divine words have been issued from the infinite source, God. No one is comparable to God. He sent the Qur'an to the messenger to guide mankind. Additionally, it is proof of Muhammad's (S) prophethood. Put together, any 'new' Qur'an will fail to achieve these characteristics⁵.

B) Unique Styles And The Capabilities Of The Arabic Language

Arabic is the perfect language. For this reason, different aspects of the Qur'an are displayed in Arabic. Since other languages are not as perfect as Arabic, any translation of the Qur'an may lose the styles and meaning of the text⁶:

C) The Book Of Light

The Qur'an describes itself as the "**book of light (4:174)**"⁷. Translating the Qur'an will spoil it, that is, it will not be light anymore. Therefore, the Qur'an is untranslatable⁸.

D) Fear Of Deviation

For Muslims, the Qur'an is the holiest Book. Muslims believe the book is Divine, and has never and will never be deviated. However, that doesn't hold true for its translation. While the Arabic Qur'an cannot be deviated, the translation can, through addition or omission. This has occurred in the past at the hands of some orientalists. Although some may deliberately deviate the translation of the Qur'an, sometimes deviation occurs unintentionally. Therefore, translation can present a deviated version of the Qur'an to those who do not know Arabic.

Goal Of Translating The Qur'an

The significant difference between mankind and animal is intellect. Human beings can reason and draw conclusions. These two capabilities enable us to understand the realities of divine messages. Indeed, one must first understand, then set to analyse and judge. The Qur'an puts great emphasis on this,

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهِيَ أَقْسَىٰ عَلَىٰ مَن تَعْلَمُ الْقُرْآنَ

"We have made the Qur'an easy to (understand and) take heed from" (54:17; 54:32).

Today, Islam is as relevant as ever. Many people are now turning towards understanding the religion. There are many people all over the world who ask about the Qur'an and its teachings and how the deeper layers of Qur'anic verses can be accessed.

With respect to all the theories of translation, including those specifically designed for holy books, we believe that the methodologies of translating the Qur'an are strongly influenced by the intension of translators for translating the Qur'an and their personal taste towards it.

We should ask why we translate the Qur'an. What are we trying to achieve? Are we communicating its unique style or the meaning?

We should seriously doubt the statement of a translator who claims to display the entire splendour of the text of the Qur'an. The source and target languages are two completely different languages, each with its unique features. Therefore, the beauties of the texts of each language are generally exclusive to that language and culture. The syntax, lexicons, and cultures are different; thus, translation causes considerable differences between the original text and the product when it comes to eloquence and beauty. However, this does not mean that translation cannot transfer the messages of the Qur'an.

When we study the Qur'an, we repeatedly see that on one hand the verses invite the reader to ponder and pay heed to its messages, and on the other hand criticize those who refrain from using reason and neglect the messages of the Qur'an. Clearly then, since not everyone knows or can learn Arabic, the conveying of the messages and the meaning of the verses has a key role in its translation, otherwise, how can we take heed or ponder on a text we don't understand? Hence, our first priority in this translation is to transfer the messages of the verses to the target language.

Methodologies For Translating The Qur'an

Considering how the message is conveyed to the target language, translations of the Qur'an can be classified into three main categories:

1. Literal translation of the Qur'an
2. Free translation of the Qur'an
3. Translation of the meaning of a sentence from the source to a sentence in the target language.

Literal Translations Of The Qur'an

In this type of translation, the translator does his best to translate every word in the source language to a word in the target language, fretting not to miss a single word. All the words of the text are translated literally in this type of translation, so the meanings of the words sometimes seem irrelevant and the sentences are not understandable. The result is that the translator has ruined the meaning of the source text and betrayed its readers, since he both failed to transfer the meaning to the readers and confused them. There are two main reasons for these types of translations:

The translator wants to be loyal to the text of the Qur'an, imagining that their duty is fulfilled only if every word is translated. We could say they feared presenting a clear translation.

They were unaware of the arts and methods of translation.

Free Translation

This type of translation attempts to convey the message using extra information which does not exist in the source text. This is not considered a loyal translation because even though the meaning is successfully conveyed, but extra information is attributed to the text, which the reader may accidentally

think is actually part of the original text. Therefore, this type of translation is considered a kind of exegesis rather than translation. If it has been written according to the reliable sources, it can be a concise and acceptable exegesis⁹.

Translation Of The Meaning Of A Sentence Of Source Text Into A Sentence In Target Text

This is a moderate type of translation. It is neither purely literal nor free translation. This type of translation tries to convey the meaning of a sentence in the source text through a sentence or sentences in the target language. The meaning of the sentences is not ruined through the processes of translation.

The Criteria Of Proper Qur'an Translation

Just like other knowledge, such as Tafsir, translation also has its own set of rules. The Qur'an is different from others scripts and thus, has its own set of rules, which must be considered when translating the Qur'an. Conforming to these rules produces acceptable and comprehensible translations of the Qur'an, which successfully convey the Scripture's message and knowledge. It follows that disregarding these rules produces void results.

- a) Translator should be fully aware of the target and source language, interpretation of Qur'an and Qur'anic sciences, including the history of the Qur'an, theology, and jurisprudence.
- b) The translation should not be dogmatic. Translators may not ignore scientific facts and acceptable rationalities buried behind Qur'anic texts.
- c) The general principles or rules of translation should also be observed in the translation of the Qur'an.

These rules have been set in order to convey the message of the Qur'an, instead of the translator's personal opinions.

Language Of The Qur'an

Language of the Qur'an¹⁰

When we speak about the language of the Qur'an, we do not mean whether it is Arabic or English or other languages. Clearly, the Qur'an is in Arabic. We mean how scholars describe the Qur'an's method of using language. There are different sorts of opinions, such as literary, mysterious, mystical, realistic language, and etc¹¹.

When we study the Qur'an and compare it with standard writing in Saudi Arabia, we find that the language of the Qur'an is the special semi-standard language of Saudi Arabia. It is astonishing how little the difference between the Arabic of the Messenger's (S) time and that of modern-day Saudi Arabia is.

Although the Qur'an uses a special semi-standard language used by the community of the Messenger (S) and it is close to modern standard language used in Saudi Arabia, in some cases the common meanings of the lexicons are not intended. In other words, the meaning of some of the lexicons have been modified through history, since all modifications in human life directly affect language as well. Historical, social, political, scientific, and cultural changes also change language. In addition, every field including religion borrows lexicons from the common language of the community according to its needs and gives new meaning to it.

Religion, opens new fields of discussion that may have been neglected before or may have not existed all together, such as the inner matters of human, metaphysics, angels, Jinn, the hereafter, and heaven and hell. God chose the messengers from among its primary target audience¹² and they spoke the same language¹³. As a result, religions borrow lexicons from their initial target audience, although it gave new meaning to some of the lexicons, according to its needs and intentions.

In conclusion, we may say that the language of the Qur'an is not a pure common language of the people, but rather an exclusively refined common language which is close to standard Arabic, let's call it and exclusive semi- standard Qur'anic Arabic. Therefore, understanding the Qur'an requires knowledge about the exclusive language and culture of the Qur'an itself. Simply referring to the common meaning of a lexicon, while neglecting the new exclusive Qur'anic language, causes misunderstanding, mistranslation, and misinterpretation of the Qur'an. Thus, neglecting the exclusive culture of the Qur'an takes you astray and may have you attribute your own opinions to it.

The Qur'an has used a plain language to convey its message, however, it is undeniable that it uses different methodologies to guide people. For instance, laws that forbid or permit, stories, examples, and predictions. As a result, some translators use complicated words and structures in order to be loyal to whatever language they think the Qur'an is using in any given verse, whether it is literary, mystical, or whatever else. However, this approach deprives the audience from understanding the message of the verses and in some cases even fails to be loyal to the meaning by mistakenly conveying a different message than that of the verse.

When we study the Qur'an, considering its text and we see that the Qur'an has introduced the language it uses:

بِاللُّغَةِ الْعَرَبِيَّةِ الْمُبِينَةِ

“[The Qur'an has been sent] in clear Arabic language” (26:195).

The Qur'an mentions that its language is in plain Arabic. It also says that the messengers, whose duty was delivering God's message to man, spoke and delivered the message with the language commonly used by their community.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا نَزَّلْنَا بِهٖ لُغَةً مِّنْ لِّسَانِكَ لِيُفَسِّرَ لَكَ آيَاتِهِ وَيُعَلِّمَكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنَّ إِلَهَكُمْ لَشَدِيدٌ

We did not send any apostle except with the language of his people, so that he might make] Our messages [clear to them.] (14:4).

In addition, the Qur'an has repeated that it is a guidance for all mankind, not just a limited group of people. It is clear that the language of the majority of the people is not literary, mystical, mysterious, and etc. When we study the syntax used in the verses of the Qur'an, we find the language and structure to be extremely close to plain standard Arabic.

This language is understandable for all Arabs, still used nowadays by the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula. Nevertheless, we should take into consideration that plain and standard language is one thing, deep message is another. The Qur'an has both. It is a plain language conveying deep messages and using different methodologies in a way understandable to the common people of the community. The messages go very deep and each person can learn as much as their capacity. Hence, a translator should do his best to convey the messages of the Qur'an to the target language in plain standard language and avoid literary or complicated translation. In addition, the reader has a vital role in our choice of translation method. The Qur'an is a book for all mankind, so it must be translated in a way that all mankind who speak the target language can understand the translation too.

Changes Of The Meanings Of The Words During The History

When translating, the effect of time on the meaning of words must be taken into account. Translation must be produced based on the meaning which words had at the time of revelation, otherwise, it may result in distorted translation.

We consider the word مَكْرُوه (Makruh) in the verse 17:38:

كُلُّ ذَاكَ كَانَ مَكْرُوهًا لِّرَبِّكَ مَكْرُوهًا

Arberry: All of that the wickedness of it is hateful in the sight of thy Lord

Qara'i: The evil of all these is detestable to your Lord

Pickthall: The evil of all that is hateful in the sight of thy Lord

The word Makruh in this verse goes back to great sins such as homicide, prostitution, and etc. in the time of the Messenger (S), which is called the early years of Islam. Nowadays, however, Makruh is defined as, "All disliked deeds that are not forbidden or detested". A translator who misses this change of meaning will deliver a distorted translation. These kinds of changes are in Target and source

Misunderstanding Of Fidelity To Source And Target Texts

An important factor to always consider when translating is that the syntax and lexicon of the source and target language are different. They each belong to different cultures. Faithfulness to the source text requires faithfulness to the target language too.

Using the same structures and phrases of the source text in the target language will not work, making the translation ambiguous and sometimes wrong. This is why some parts of the translations of the Qur'an are not understandable, for instance, structures such as tamyiz, sighah al- ta'ajjub, and kam khabariyah have been improperly translated. I have discussed these types of structures in this dissertation as much as possible, Chapter three.

[1.](#) See the following Verses of the Holy Qur'an: 6:90, 12:104, 35:1, 38:87, 18:52, 81:27.

[2.](#) Rezai Isfahani, 1391 Sh, p. 79- 108.

[3.](#) The Verse says the following:

قُلْ لِّلنَّاسِ إِذْ نَادَوْهُم بِاللِّسَانِ أَوِ اجْتَمَعُوا بِهِمْ أَذْ ذَا الْقُرْآنِ هِذَانِ لَوْ كَانُوا عَاذِمِينَ ۚ لَوْ كَانُوا يَفْقَهُونَ ۗ فَلْيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَخْتَصِمُونَ لَهُ ۚ لَعَلَّهُم يَرْجِعُونَ

“Say if all the human being and the jinn assembled to bring a Qur'an like this they will not be able to bring it, even if they help each other”.

[4.](#) Biazar Shirazi 1376 Sh, 1/70.

[5.](#) Dhahabi 1396 A.H., 1:25.

[6.](#) Biazar Shirazi 1376 Sh, 1/72.

[7.](#) The Verse says the following:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ۚ وَإِذْ نَادَىٰ نُوْرًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ

“O People! Indeed, a proof from your Lord has come to you and We have sent down to you a clear light.”

[8.](#) Muqatil b. Sulayman al-, 1423 A.H. v. 1, p. 425.

[9.](#) al-Dhahabi 1396 AH, 1:120.

[10.](#) See Shakir, 1389, p. 115-132

[11.](#) Shakir 1431 A.H, 116.

[12.](#) Cfr. 2:151, 3:164, 12:2.

[13.](#) Cfr. 14:4.

[14.](#) Isfahani 1391sh, p. 167.

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SHARES

Chapter 2: The Study Of Problematic Wording In The English Translations Of The Qur'an

Wording

Words and phrases are the important elements of language and play a key role in translation too. Words and phrases must be translated using appropriate equivalents. Equivalence means approximation to the original version, but we should take into consideration that finding an identical equivalent is impossible. The translator first tries to understand the communicative lexicons, then attempts to transfer and redistribute the sum total of the explicit and implicit information of the original text in a natural and clear language that the target uses.

In order to practice the teachings of the Qur'an, people must be able to understand it first. Therefore, it is vital that the meanings of the lexicons are correctly transferred to the target language, otherwise, the message of the verses will be lost. There are three types of lexicons in the Qur'an: letters, common words, and technical words.

The main elements of translation in regards to the Qur'an are vocabulary and lexicons. Instead of relying on their memory or copying the works of others, translators have to use dictionaries to translate and search the vocabulary both in Target Language and Source Language. Sometimes translators fail to hold up to this rule and thus, fail to deliver an acceptable translation or find the right equivalent.

Wording And Its Role In Transferring The Message

The common law in translating lexicons is that the target must understand it. The meaning must be precisely and clearly conveyed, otherwise, the intention of the Qur'an will not have been transferred, which is against the philosophy of its revelation and the aim of the translation.

We should divide Qur'anic lexicons into two groups:

First group: lexicons with an available equivalent, such as Pronouns: **أنت** she or: **هو** he or words such as iron (**حديد**). This group doesn't present any specific difficulty, although some may need more than one word in order to be properly understood, such as:

- **انتما**: you two men or you two women

- **انت**: you one man or you one woman

Second group: technical Qur'anic words. It is unquestionable that some words are the product of the culture that Islam created, thus, having no equivalent in other languages, such as, Qisas, Ihram, Salat, and Zakat.

God invites people to observe the law of Qisas because it acts as a lesson and discourages aggression, resulting in security and peace in the society. On the contrary, retaliation and revenge bring insecurity and cause hatred.

Qisas is done when the criminal intentionally incurs the harms to the other one or intentionally has killed the other, so this law prevents and punish the criminals and wrong doers, so says Qisas bring life (peace and security) for you, and it is worth adding that condition of Qisas and how it should be done it has been clarified in Qur'anic teachings. While the retaliation has not a law and it is outcome of wrath.

Qisas is in response to intentional harm. Thus, it prevents crime by punishing criminals. According to the Qur'an, Qisas brings life (i. e. peace and security). How Qisas should be executed has been clarified in Qur'anic teachings. Meanwhile, retaliation and revenge have no law, they are the outcome of wrath. However, some translators including Ali Quli Qara'i, Pickthall, Arberry, and some other translators have translated Qisas as retaliation or revenge or other equivalents. In English dictionaries, 'retaliation' and 'reveng' and their likes convey a negative meaning, but Qisas does not have a negative meaning in the Qur'anic culture. E.g.

Webster's New Third International Unabridged Dictionary:

Retaliation:

Etymology: Latin *retaliatus* (past participle of *retaliare* to retaliate) + English *-ion*:

An act of retaliating: requital; especially: return of evil for evil

Oxford Thesaurus

Retaliation:

Revenge, vengeance, reprisal, retribution, requital, recrimination, repayment; response, reaction, reply, counter-attack; archaic a Roland for an Oliver.

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (4th Ed):

Retaliation:

Action against someone who has done something bad to you.

So, it is clear that Qisas in Qur'anic culture has one certain meaning while the literal translation of this word may convey negative meaning to the reader and destroy the image of Divine commands. So, we see the importance of the lexicon in the translating of the Qur'an. We study the two other words to see differences in the Qur'anic words and its translation

Clearly, we see that meaning of Qisas is different from the equivalents which translators have decided to

Shakir: He it is who created you from clay, then He decreed a term (life time) and there is a term named with Him.

Irving: He is the One Who has created you all from clay; then fixed a term. A deadline has been set by Him, yet you go on doubting!

Saffarzadeh: Allah is the One Who created you of clay, then ordained the term of your life and in His Presence is The Knowledge of, but thereafter you people doubt about The Truth.

Qara'i: It is He who created you from clay, then ordained the term of your life the specified term is with Him and yet you are in doubt.

Pickthall: He it is who hath created you from clay, and hath decreed a term for you. A term is fixed with Him. Yet still ye doubt!

Sarwar: It is He who has created you from clay to live for a life-time and the span of your life is only known to Him. You are still suspicious!

Yusuf Ali: He it is who created you from clay, and then decreed a stated term for you. And there is with Him another determined term; yet ye doubt within yourselves.

Arberry: It is He who created you of clay, then determined a term life time (and a term is stated with Him); yet thereafter you doubt.

Ayat, 7:34; 4:77; 13:38;7:135 -

وَلَقَدْ جَاءُوكُم بِالْحَقِّ فَاذْكُرُوا الْيَوْمَ الَّذِي خُلِقْتُمْ فِيهِ طِينًا مِنْ عَرَقِ الشَّجَرِ الْمُنْتَهِي سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ

فَالْوَاغِيُونَ كَذِبًا لَقَدْ جَاءُوكُم بِالْحَقِّ فَاذْكُرُوا الْيَوْمَ الَّذِي خُلِقْتُمْ فِيهِ طِينًا مِنْ عَرَقِ الشَّجَرِ الْمُنْتَهِي سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ

مَا كَانَتْ لِقُرْآنِهِمْ قَوْلًا مَكْرُومًا يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهِ إِلَّا اللَّهُ قَدْ كُنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ لُكُومًا

قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ فَمُسْتَقَرًّا عَلَى ظُهُورِهِ ثُمَّ رَزَقَهُمْ مِنْ حَلْقِيهِ أَثْقَالًا ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُمْ فِي بُطُونِ إِهْلَامٍ كَالَّذِي يُخْرِجُ الْحَبَّ مِنَ الْعُنُقِ وَالنَّخْلَ مِنَ بُطُونِ النَّخْلِ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ عُيُونَ النَّاسِ يَجْعَلْ اللَّهُ مِنْ عَمَلِهِ غُجْرًا وَأَنْ يَسْعَى

Akhadh

Akhadh - أَخَذَ

(Akhadh) literally means 'seized', but the meaning differs when it is collocated with different words³.

Akhadh should be translated according to the text it has been used in, otherwise if it is translated literally, the meaning of the verse will not be correct or understandable. We consider the different meanings and usages of this word in the Qur'an and the translations to work out a proper equivalent for every case:

[a. Make, Take](#)

Surah Ali `Imran, 3:81 -

وَاِذْ اٰخَذَ الرَّحْمٰنُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّۦنَ

Shakir, Pickthall, Sarwar: when Allah made a covenant with..., Irving: So, God accepted an agreement from the prophets.

Saffarzadeh: When Allah took the covenant of The Messengers.

Qara'i, Arberry: When Allah took a compact concerning the prophets.

Yusuf Ali: Allah took the covenant of the prophets.

Analysis:

The word (akhadh) added to the word (mithaq) means 'to take or make covenant or compact', even though the literal meaning of (akhadh) means seize. The translation of Irving is incorrect. The rest are acceptable.

[b. Take Away, Destroy, Damage, Remove](#)

Surah Al-An'am, 6:46 -

اَلَاۤ اِنَّ اِخْتٰذَ الرَّحْمٰنِ لَوَ اَنَّ اَرَادَ اَنْ يَّحْبِسَ السَّمْعَ لِيَوْمٍ اَوْ اَنْ يَّحْبِسَ الْبَصَرَ لِيَوْمٍ اَوْ اَنْ يَّحْبِسَ الْقُلُوْبَ لِيَوْمٍ

Irving: if God should snatch away your hearing and your eyesight

Shakir, Saffarzadeh, Qara'i, Pickthall: if Allah takes away your Hearing and sight

Qara'i, Yusuf Ali: should Allah take away your hearing and your sight

Sarwar: if God was to disable your hearing and vision and veil your hearts

Arberry: If God seizes your hearing and sight

Analysis:

The meaning of akhadha al Samm' wa al- Absar in the aforementioned verse means 'making them deaf and blind'⁴. God warns those who oppose Him that no one can give them their hearing and sight if it is destroyed by God. As we can see, however, some have translated this verse literally, sometimes successfully conveying the message and sometimes not. For instance, seize is the literal meaning of akhada, but it seems that words such as 'take away' or 'disable' can convey the meaning of the source text into the target text better.

c. Seize, Take, Drag

Surah Al-'Ara'af, 7:150 -

أَخَذَ بِرَأْسِ أَخِيهِ فَأَجَادَ تَرَ شَيْءَ فَنَافَهُ

Shakir, Irving, Saffarzadeh, Qara'i, Pickthall, Yusuf Ali: he seized his brother by the head, dragging him towards him

Sarwar: grabbed ...

Arberry: ...laid hold of his brother's head.

Analysis:

The literal translation of this word is intended in this verse, so it seems all of the translators are correct.

d. Choose, Pick Up

Surah Al-'Ara'af, 7:172 –

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِنْ آلِ آدَمَ مِمَّا خَطَبُوا تَنْزِيلَهُمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ

Shakir, Pickthall: And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants...

Irving: When your Lord took their offspring from the Children of Adam's loins...

Saffarzadeh: when Your Creator and Nurturer brought forth From the Children of `Adam, from their Loins.

Arberry, Qara'i: When your Lord took from the Children of Adam, from their loins

Sarwar: When your Lord asked all the offspring of Adam) before their birth

Yusuf Ali: When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam

Analysis:

In general, it means taking something from something apart as if they are separated.⁵ According to different exegesis this word has been interpreted in different ways for the above verse. However, it seems that when akhadha comes with “ظَهَرَ فَوْرُهُمْ” “ظَهَرَ فَوْرُهُمْ” , finding a proper equivalent is not difficult. In this example, the word akhadha conveys the meaning of (chose) and it seems that ‘bring forth’ and ‘take’ can convey such a meaning.

e. Strike

Surah Hud, 11:67 -

وَأَخَذَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّاعِقَةَ جَاءَةً

Shakir: the rumbling overtook those who were unjust;

Pickthall: the awful Cry overtook those who did wrong (

Yusuf Ali: The (mighty) Blast overtook the wrong-doers;

Irving: The Blast caught those who had been doing wrong,

Saffarzadeh: a Divine Outcry overtook the evil-doers;

Qara’i: The Cry seized those who were wrongdoers,

Sarwar: A blast struck the unjust.

Arberry: And the evildoers were seized by the Cry Blast

Analysis:

Al- Şayha is interpreted as a sort of punishment striking the wrongdoers, but words such as seize and catch, which are literal translations, and words like overtake do not imply punishment in standard English, although they are not wrong either.

f. Punishment

Surah Hud, 11:102 -

وَأَخَذَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّاعِقَةَ جَاءَةً

Shakir: And such is the punishment of your Lord when He punishes the towns while they are unjust surely His punishment is painful, severe

Irving: Even so will your Lord seize things when He takes over any towns while they are doing wrong; His seizing will be painful, severe.

Saffarzadeh: Such is the overtaking of your Creator and Nurturer: When He overtakes the wrongdoers of the towns, His Punishment is painful and severe.

Qara'i: Such is the seizing of your Lord when He seizes the townships that are wrongdoing. Indeed His seizing is painful, severe.

Pickthall: Even thus, is the grasp of thy Lord when He grasped the townships while they are doing wrong. Lo! His grasp is painful, very strong.

Sarwar: Thus, was the punishment of your Lord when He punished the unjust people of the towns. The punishment of your Lord is certainly severe.

Yusuf Ali: Such is the Chastisement of thy Lord when He chastises communities in the midst of their wrong: grievous, indeed, and severe is His chastisement.

Surah Al-Muzammil, 73:16 –

فَاَخَذْنَاهُ بِالْأَيْدِي وَسِيلًا

Shakir: so We laid on him a violent hold, Irving: so We seized him mercilessly;

Saffarzadeh: so We seized him with a Destructive calamity;

Qara'i: so We seized him with a terrible seizing.

Pickthall: We seized him with no gentle grip.

Sarwar: We seized him with a severe retribution

Yusuf Ali: so We seized him with a heavy Punishment.

Arberry: so We seized him remorselessly

Analysis:

In both of the aforementioned verses (akhadh) means punish, but some of the translators translated it literally, the meaning is not transferred correctly and therefore the readers are confused. Words such as seize, hold, overtake, and grasp are neither clear nor correct. We suggest the following translation:

“Thus, it’s the punishment of your Lord when He (wills to) destroy (the wrongdoers of) a town while they wrong. Indeed, His punishment is painful and severe.”

“But Pharaoh disobeyed the messenger (and rebelled against him), so We punished him heavily.”

g. Take

Surah Yunus, 10:24 -

﴿ اِذَا الْاَرْضُ اَخَذَتْ لِبَاسَهَا الْاَخْضَرَ وَالْاَرْضُ تَسْتَبِيحُ... ﴾

Shakir: until when the earth puts on its golden raiment and it becomes garnished.

Irving: when the earth takes on its trimmings and looks attractive,

Saffarzadeh: when the earth has taken on her ornaments and is flourished.

Qara’i: When the earth puts on its luster and is adorned,

Pickthall: when the earth hath taken on her ornaments and is embellished

Sarwar: When the land becomes fertile and pleasant

Yusuf Ali: till the earth is clad with its golden ornaments and is decked out (in beauty): the people to whom it belongs think they have all powers of disposal over it.

Arberry: till, when the earth has taken on its glitter and has decked itself fair.

Analysis:

The word (akhadh) here means put on and take on and it seems the translations are acceptable.

Ahl

Ahl - اهل

This word has an extensive range of meaning, including close relative, family, dweller, follower, those who belong or adhere to a place, etc.⁶. This word collocates with other words and produces an even greater variety of meaning, making it troublesome for translators. Therefore, the text, collocations, and exegesis of this verse must be studied in order to understand its appropriate meaning and find a correct equivalent. We shall study this word and its different collocations and examine what equivalents translators have found to be appropriate.

Ahl Al-Kitab, Ahl Al-Injil

(Ahl) meaning those who believe in a creed or teachings of a book or those who follow it. This example refers to Christians and Jews who believe in the Gospel and Torah respectively. Translators use the expression 'People of Book'. (Ahl) here means people.

أهل الكتاب ، أهل الإنجيل

Yusuf Ali, Arberry, Sarwar, Irving, Saffarzadeh, Qara'i: People of the Book

Pickthall: People of the Scripture,

Shakir: followers of the book

The translators used two different equivalents to the word of (Ahl) in this group: people and followers. Although 'follower' seems to be more precise, but 'people' is not wrong either, because English-speaking audience knows that "People of Book" refers to Christians and Jews while "People of Gospel" refers to Christians. Both translations are acceptable.

The People Of...

(Ahl) meaning people, dwellers, those who live in a place

أهل القرى ، أهل القرية ، أهل القرية ، أهل القرية ، أهل القرية

Qara'i, Saffarzadeh, Shakir, Pickthall, Sarwar, Yusuf Ali: the people of ...

Irving: townsfolk.

This has also been translated correctly by all translators.

Member Of The Family

أهل البيت

We see the translation of (Ahl) in this collocation as follows:

Irving: people in this house.

Shakir, Pickthall, Sarwar, Yusuf Ali, Arberry: people of the house.

Qara'i: members of the household.

Analysis:

(Ahl) means member of family. In verse (33:33), it exclusively refers to specific members of the Messenger's (S) family while in verse (11:33) it means members of Abraham's family⁷.

It seems Qara'i's translation is more understandable than the rest in addition to being close to the meaning of the words in the source language.

People Who Remind God

أهل آل ذا الذِّكْرِ

Shakir: the Followers of the Reminder; Irving: people with long memories;

Ṣaffarzadah: the learned men of the previous religions;

Qara'i: the People of the Reminder;

Pickthall: the followers of the Reminder;

Sarwar: the People of the Book;

Yusuf Ali: those who possess the Message.

Arberry: the people of the Remembrance

Analysis:

The word (Ahl) with (al-Dhikr) refers to a special group whom should be referred to when God's message seems unclear. This definition could mean a group of Christians for the Christians or Jews for the Jews too⁸. But in this verse a specific group of trusted and divine people who are qualified to be inquired about God's law is meant, therefore, it would be better to transliterate the word (Ahl al-Dhikr) instead of translating it.

According to this, the translation of Sarwar and Irving is incorrect and other translations need further clarification, otherwise they shall fail to correctly convey the meaning of this collocation in this verse.

The Dwellers Of Fire, Hell

Surah Saad, 38:64 –

أهل النار

Qara'i: the Inmates of the Fire; Irving: the people in the Fire,

Saffarzadeh, Arberry: the inhabitants of the Fire,

Pickthall: dwellers in the Fire;

Sarwar: the dwellers of hell fire, Yusuf Ali: the People of the Fire.

Analysis:

Ahl an-Nar are wrongdoers who will dwell in the fire in the hereafter for whatever wrong deeds they committed. It seems that the translations offered here are acceptable, except for Yusuf Ali whose translation could be improved since it appears to be only a literal translation.

People Who Observe Taqwa

Surah Al-Muddaththir, 74:56 –

أهل النُّورِ وَاللَّهُ بِتَقْوَاهُ

Shakir: He is worthy to feared and worthy to forgive, Irving: He is Entitled to be heeded, as well as Entitled to grant forgiveness!

Saffarzadeh: Allah is The Source of Righteousness and The Owner of Forgiveness.

Qara'i: He is worthy of] your [being wary] of Him [and He is worthy to forgive.

Pickthall: He is the fount of fear. He is the fount of Mercy.

Sarwar: He alone is worthy of being feared and He is the Source of Forgiveness.

Yusuf Ali: He is the Lord of Righteousness, and the Lord of Forgiveness.

Arberry: He is Worthy to be feared, Worthy to forgive.

Analysis:

Here (Ahl) means 'worthy of'. This verse says that God deserves to be feared and He deserves to show forgiveness⁹. According to what was mentioned before, it seems the translations of Shakir, Qara'i, and Arberry are more acceptable than the rest. The rest need to be corrected.

Bu'dan

Bu'dan - رَبِّهِمْ لَعْنًا -

Surah Hud, 11:44 –

رَبِّهِمْ لَعْنًا لِّلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

Shakir: Away with the unjust people;

Irving: Away with such wrongdoing folk!"

Saffarzadeh: Away with The wrongdoers!

Qara'i: Away with the wrongdoing lot!

Pickthall: A far removal for wrongdoing folk!

Sarwar: Curse to the nation the unjust/ oppressive.

Yusuf Ali: Away with those who do wrong

Arberry: Away with the people of the evildoers!

Analysis:

The word of Bu'dan is used in the form of prayer and through which God curses the wrongdoers. God states that the wrongdoers are far from God's mercy¹⁰, so the translations should be in the form of a prayer and also convey that they are far from God's mercy. None of the translations seem to be in the form of prayer, so this is suggested instead: "May the wrongdoers be away (from God's mercy)."

The suggested translation for all the verse 11:44 is as follows:

رَبِّهِمْ لَعْنًا لِّلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

And it was said, "O earth! Swallow up your water. O sky! Stop (raining)." And the water came down and the command was carried out and the ship rested on the Mount of Judi. It was said, "May the wrongdoers be away (from God's mercy)!"

Arberry: Shall I direct you to the people of a household who will take charge of him for you and look after him?

Analysis:

Bayt here means family, and Ahl al- Bayt means members of a family¹¹. The verse is about the story of Moses¹².

Household Of The Messenger Of Islam (S)

Surah Al-Ahzab, 33:33 -

اِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللهُ تَجْلِيْلًا لِّقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّ اللهُ ذَلِكُمْ لِيُزِيلَ عَنْكُمْ كُلَّ نَجَسٍ وَّ يُطَهِّرَ الْاَكْثَرُ لَكُمْ لَا تَطْهَرُوْنَ

Shakir: Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the House!

Irving: God merely wants to remove any blight from you, since you are People of the (Prophet's) House, and to cleanse you thoroughly.

Saffarzadeh: Verily, Allah's Will is to remove away impurity from You, the people of the Messenger's Household and to purify you with a thorough purification

Qara'i: Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.

Pickthall: Allah's wish is but to remove uncleanness far from you, O Folk of the Household, and cleanse you with a thorough cleansing.

Sarwar: People of the house, God wants to remove all kinds of uncleanness from you and to purify you thoroughly.

Yusuf Ali: And Allah only wishes to remove all abomination from you, ye members of the Family, and to make you pure and spotless.

Arberry: And obey God and His Messenger (S) People of the House, God only desires to put away from you abomination and to cleanse you.

Analysis:

According to the commentaries of the Qur'an, Bayt here means the house of the Messenger (S) of Islam. The "people of the house" refers to specific members of the house of the Messenger (S), which is a matter of dispute between the Shia and Sunni's scholars. Regardless of who the members of the house of the Messenger (S) whom have been purified by God are, it seems it is the duty of the translator

God).

Taht

Taht - تَحْتِ

The word (تَحْتِ: taht) literally means under, beneath, but literal translation of this word in some verses may cause ambiguity, such as verses: 2:25; 2:266; 3:15; 3:136; 3:195; 3:198; 4:13; 4:57; 4:122; 5:12; 5:85; 5:119; 9:72; 13:35 and more. We shall analyse one of these verses.

Surah Ta Ha, 20:76 -

جَنَّاتٍ فِيهَا نَدِيمٌ أَدْرَىٰ لَهُ مَنَافِقُ الْأَشِدَّاءِ فِيهَا أَعْنَابٌ وَنَخْلٌ وَنَخْلٌ أَكْثَرٌ وَأَنْهَارٌ فِيهَا تَجْرِبُ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ وَأَنْهَارٌ فِيهَا تَجْرِبُ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ وَأَنْهَارٌ فِيهَا تَجْرِبُ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ وَأَنْهَارٌ فِيهَا تَجْرِبُ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ

Shakir: The gardens of perpetuity, beneath which rivers flow, to abide therein and this is the reward of him who has purified himself)

Irving: the gardens of Eden through which rivers flow, to live in forever.

Saffarzadeh: In the Gardens of Eternity wherein Streams flow they shall dwell forever;

Qara'i: the Gardens of Eden, with streams running in them.

Pickthall: Gardens of Eden underneath which rivers flow.

Arberry: underneath which.

Sarwar: wherein

Yusuf Ali: Gardens of Eternity which they will enter: beneath them flow

Analysis:

As we see, literal translation of taht distorts the meaning of the verse, 'rivers that are under gardens'. What the verse actually means is gardens through which rivers flow, therefore words such as wherein and through are more appropriate for taht in such verses.

As-hab

As-hab - أَصْحَابُ

(As-hab) is driven from (s-h-b) (14: ص ح ب):

The meaning changes when it is collocated with other words, although it generally means colleague,

companion, those who are with someone¹⁵ or something¹⁶ regardless of whether the companion is good or not¹⁷. Using these words may cause confusion or make the translation seem strange. We shall examine the translation of this word in different collocations and attempt to find an appropriate equivalents for them. Despite the variety that collocations cause, in all cases the meaning of 'being together' is always true.

As-hab Al-Jannah, As-hab An-Nar

Surah Al-'Araf, 7:44 -

أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ وَالْجَنَّةِ ۗ أَمْ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ

Shakir: the Dwellers of the Garden, the Inmates of the Fire.

Irving, Qara'i: inhabitants of the Garden, the inmates of the Fire;

Saffarzadeh: the companions of the Paradise - the companions of The Fire;

Pickthall: the dwellers of the Garden - the dwellers of the Fire;

Sarwar: The people of Paradise - the dwellers of the fire;

Arberry: Inhabitants of Paradise- the Inhabitants of the Fire;

Yusuf Ali: The Companions of the Garden- the Companions of the Fire.

Analysis:

In these collocations (As-hab) means those who dwell, live, are imprisoned, stay, and etc. somewhere. In short, it means to be somewhere. Therefore, translator who translated the (As-hab) to dwellers, inmates, or inhabitants have successfully conveyed the meaning clearly compared to those who used literal translations such as companions, people of, and etc. The same story applies to the following collocations:

أَصْحَابُ السَّعِيرِ

أَصْحَابُ الرَّعْسِ

أَصْحَابُ الرَّهْمِ وَالرَّهْمِ

أَصْحَابُ السَّمْعِ الْعَمِيَّةِ

أَصْحَابُ الْقُرْآنِ

أَصْحَابُ الْكُوفَةِ

It is worth mentioning that sometimes these collocations refer to a certain people, referring to certain names of places and people. In such cases, transliteration isn't wrong.

As'hab Musa

Surah ash-Shu'ara', 26:61 -

أَصْحَابُ مُوسَىٰ

Shakir, Irving, Saffarzadeh, Qara'i, Sarwar, Arberry: the companions of Moses,

Pickthall: those with Moses;

Yusuf Ali: the people of Moses.

Analysis:

(As-hab) in this collocation means those who were with Moses, regardless of whether they were obedient or not. We know historically that even though they are called the people of Moses, but they were not all of his people¹⁸. In conclusion, it seems translating this word to (companion) is better than its alternatives.

As'hab Al-'Araf

Surah Al-'Araf, 7:47 –

أَصْحَابُ الْأَرْوَافِ

Shakir: the Dwellers of the Most Elevated Places,

Irving: The Companions on the Heights,

Saffarzadeh: the men on the Heights (of The Barrier),

Qara'i: the occupants of the Elevations,

Pickthall: the dwellers on the Heights,

Yusuf Ali: The men on the Heights;

Arberry: the dwellers on the Battlements.

Analysis:

Culturally, As-hab al- a'raf is a certain group of people which will be kept on the barrier between hell and heaven waiting for God's judgment¹⁹. Therefore, it seems more appropriate to translate it as the name of a group, rather than translating the words itself so as to have the reader notice them instead of passing by without noticing what happens to that group.

As'hab Al-Fil

Surah Al-Fil, 105:1 -

اَءْصَٰبِ الْفِيلِ

Shakir: the Possessors of the Elephant;

Irving, Saffarzadeh, and Pickthall: the owners of the Elephant.

Arberry, and Qara'i: the Men of the Elephant.

Sarwar: the people of the elephant,

Yusuf Ali: the Companions of the Elephant.

Analysis:

As-hab al-Fil is an army commanded by Abraha who marched towards Mecca to destroy the Kabbah in the year when the Messenger of Islam(S) was born. The army rode elephants, hence the name As-hab al-Fil, which literally means the army with elephants²⁰. This is a title exclusively given to the Army of Abraha, therefore, transliterating the title (As-hab al-Fil) is not wrong. However, if one insists on translating, a clear translation such as 'the army which rode Elephants' or 'The Riders of Elephants' must be used. According to what we have mentioned, none of the aforementioned translations seem appropriate because they are literal translations. Some are even wrong, although they may be accepted considering some justifications. Some translators have made the same mistake with (اَءْصَٰبِ الْفِيلِ): the Violators of the Sabbath.

As-hab As-Sabat

Surah An-Nisa', 4:47 –

أَصْحَابِ السَّبْتِ

Irving: the masters of the Sabbath;

Qara'i, Sarwar: the People of the Sabbath;

Arberry: Sabbath men.

As-hab al- Qubur

Surah Al-Mumtahana 60:13 -

أَصْحَابِ الْقُبُورِ

Shakir: those in tombs,

Irving, Arberry: the inhabitants of tombs;

Saffarzadeh, Yusuf Ali, Pickthall: those buried in the graves;

Qara'i: the occupants of the graves.

Analysis:

As-hab al- Qubur refers to the dead, as if they are companions of the grave. The translation must convey the meaning of dead people in the grave. It seems that some of the translations that are literal could have been improved to prevent reader confusion, which both betrays readers of the target language and the source text, because the meaning has been neglected.

Sadr

Sadr - صدر

(Şudur) is the plural form of (Şadr), literally meaning breast. The Qur'an uses this word in two ways, none of which actually means breast. Some translators have translated it literally and confused the readers. We shall study the equivalent that translators have chosen and analyse them:

Surah Faatir, 35:38 –

Shakir, Qara'i, Pickthall, Arberry: Surely Allah knows what is in the breasts,

Irving: God is Aware of what is on your minds;

Saffarzadeh, Sarwar, Yusuf Ali: Allah is the Knower of The secrets of the hearts.

Analysis:

The translators have chosen to use breasts, minds, or hearts to translate *Ṣudur*. A simple search in the verses of the Qur'an and reliable exegeses shows that the meaning of (*Ṣadr*) in the Qur'an is not mind or breast, but the spiritual heart or soul which has been placed within the breast according to the Qur'an. This soul is what gains good and bad qualities, although it is not visible²¹.

The translation of *Ṣadr* changes when collocated with (*Yashrah*, literally means expanding) and (*Yadhiq*, literally means reducing) and their roots, as we shall see next.

Surah Al-An'am, 6: 125 -

فَمَنْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ يَنْزِلْ بِهِ الْوَحْيَ وَالْحَقَّ قَوْلَهُ ۗ وَمَنْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ يَنْزِلْ بِهِ الْوَحْيَ وَالْحَقَّ قَوْلَهُ ۗ وَمَنْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ يَنْزِلْ بِهِ الْوَحْيَ وَالْحَقَّ قَوْلَهُ ۗ
وَمَنْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ يَنْزِلْ بِهِ الْوَحْيَ وَالْحَقَّ قَوْلَهُ ۗ وَمَنْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ يَنْزِلْ بِهِ الْوَحْيَ وَالْحَقَّ قَوْلَهُ ۗ وَمَنْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ يَنْزِلْ بِهِ الْوَحْيَ وَالْحَقَّ قَوْلَهُ ۗ

Translations:

Shakir: Therefore, for whomsoever Allah intends that He would guide him right, He expands his breast for Islam And for whomsoever He intends that He should cause him err, He makes his breast straight and narrow as though he were ascending upwards.

Irving: God lays anyone's breast open to Islam whom He wants to guide, while He makes the breast of anyone He wants to be led astray seem cramped, tight, just as if he were climbing up to Heaven. Thus, God places a blight on those who do not believe.

Saffarzadeh: And whomsoever Allah Wills to guide, Expands his breast for Islam, and Whomsoever He Wills to be left in his Error, He makes his breast closed And narrow as if he is climbing up to the very sky. Thus, Allah puts an Ignominious Chastisement on those who refuse to believe;

Qara'i: Whomever Allah desires to guide, He opens his breast to Islam, and whomever He desires to lead astray, He makes his breast narrow and straitened as if he were climbing to a height. Thus, does Allah lay] spiritual [defilement on those who do not have faith.

Pickthall: ... He expanded his bosom unto the Surrender, and whomsoever it is His Will to send astray,

He makes his bosom close and narrow as if he were engaged in sheer ascent.

Sarwar: God will open the hearts of whomever He wants to guide to Islam, but He will tighten the chest of one whom He has led astray, as though he was climbing high up into the sky. Thus, God places wickedness on those who do not accept the faith;

Yusuf Ali: Those whom Allah willeth to guide, - - He openeth their breast to Islam; those whom He willeth to leave straying, - - He maketh their breast close and constricted, as if they had to climb up to the skies: thus, doth Allah lay abomination on those who refuse to believe.

Arberry: Whomsoever God desires to guide, He expands his breast to Islam whomsoever He desires to lead astray, He makes his breast narrow, tight as if he were climbing to heaven) ascending upwards (So God lays abomination upon those who believe not).

Analysis:

The aforementioned translations are literal translations. The clarity of these translations can be improved. The word Şadr collocates with Yashrah and Yadhiq and obtains new meanings, such as, increasing capacity and reducing capacity. The same applies to 94:1; 15:97.

Therefore, we suggested the following translation:

...so whomever God wills to guide (due to his good deed and good intentions), He increases His capacity to (embrace) Islam, but whomever He wills to lead astray (due to his evil intentions and bad deeds), He reduces his capacity (so he cannot exercise patience in God's path) as if he ascends upwards to the sky. Thus, God brings spiritual impurity to those who abandon belief²².

Surah Al-'Araf, 7:2 -

كِتَابًا نَزَّلْنَا فِي الْقُرْآنِ فَلَا يَشْفِقُ فِيهِ صَدْرُكَ دَائِرَاجًا مِّنْهُ فَزَلَّ تَنْذِيرًا بِهِ

Translation:

Shakir: A Book revealed to you so let there be no straitness in your breast on account of it

Irving: A Book has been sent down to you, so do not let your breast feel it is under any constraint)

Saffarzadeh: This] Holy [Book Is sent down to you, so do not let your Heart be depressed (by problems Related to your Mission).

Qara'i: This is [a Book that has been sent down to you so let there be no disquiet in your heart on its account.

Pickthall: It is (a Scripture that is revealed unto thee (Muhammad) so let there be no heaviness in thy heart therefrom.

Sarwar: A book has been revealed to you, Muhammad. You should not hesitate to convey its warning

Yusuf Ali: A Book revealed unto thee, - - So let thy heart be oppressed no more by any difficulty on that account

Arberry: A Book sent down to thee so let there be no impediment in thy breast because of it.

Analysis:

In this verse, (Ṣadr) means spiritual heart.

In (فَوَيْلٌ لِلْالْبَاطِنِ إِذْ يُخَالِفُ بِمَا جَاءَهُ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِ) it means doubt of or disquiet in the heart²³. The equivalent used by some translators such as Qara'i seems more appropriate than those who used (breast) and literally translated it.

Therefore, we suggest the following translation:

(It is) the book which has been sent down to you, so your heart should not be filled with disquiet concerning it (if you see people disregard it).²⁴

Solution For Translating The Words Of The Qur'an

There are three types of words in the Qur'an:

Words which have equivalents in the target language: We use the equivalents that exist.

Words which are ambiguous and have various meanings, such as *sadr*, *Ahl*, and etc.: These words must be translated according to their meaning in the text and literal translation must be avoided. However, many the translators avoided to used proper equivalents and use the literal meaning instead.

Words with no equivalent because they are exclusively Qur'anic words, such as *Qisas*, *Ka'bah*, *Qiblah*, and *taqwa*. A translator must not create an equivalent for them. These words must be transliterated, since they are exclusive to the Qur'an and have been extracted from Qur'anic culture.

Expressions And Problematic Phrases

This group is the most troublesome and challenging phrases of the Qur'an for translators. We have chosen to study phrases because they are like expressions and proverbs, the literal meanings are usually completely meaningless because of culture and syntax differences between the source and target language.

Antum Sharr Makana

أَنْتُمْ أَشْرُّ مَا كُنْتُمْ

In Surah Yusuf, 12:7725

According to commentaries, the meaning of this phrase is: “you are the worst”26.

Let’s see how translators have dealt with it.

Translations:

Qara’i: He said," You are in a worse state!

Shakir: He (simply) said (to himself):" Ye are the worse situated;

Irving: He said:" You are in a worse plight!

Saffarzadeh: You are in the worst condition,

Pickthall: Ye are in worse case

Sarwar: You are in a worse position.

Yusuf Ali: Ye are the worse situated

Arberry: You are in a worse case.

Analysis:

أَنْتُمْ أَشْرُّ مَا كُنْتُمْ has not been literally mentioned in the commentaries and the commentators translated أَشْرُّ مَا كُنْتُمْ as a phrase (i.e. The worse). They have refrained from translating each word of the phrase literally. However, the translators have preferred the literal translation of this expression using various words such as state, plight, condition, situated, position, and case. Although these translations are not incorrect, but they still have room for improvement.

Qal Ya 'Asafa

قَالَ يَا أَسَفًا

In Surah Yusuf, 12:8427

In his valuable book (al- Mufradat), Raghib al- Isfahani states that اسف means grief that comes along

with rage. Sometimes it can mean grief or rage, separately. The reality of اسف means desire for taking revenge. When confronted with someone stronger, one is left with the regret of not being able to take revenge, but when confronted with someone weaker, one's rage can erupt²⁸. The Qur'an says:

فَلَمَّا أَصَابْنَا نَتَقَمْنَا فَمَا مَنَعَنَا

it means, ***"We took revenge when they made us wrathful" (43:55)***

Translations:

Shakir: He said: O my sorrow for Yusuf!

Irving: How upset I feel over Joseph!

Saffarzadeh: Alas! My grief is great for Yusuf!

Qara'i: Alas for Joseph!"

Pickthall: Alas, my grief for Joseph!

Sarwar: Alas, Joseph is lost!"

Yusuf Ali: How great is my grief for Joseph

Arberry: Ah, woe is me for Joseph!

Analysis:

Commentaries and research show that this phrase displays Jacob's deep sympathy for Joseph and how he was overcome with grief. Jacob lost his sight because of how much he cried for Joseph²⁹. Therefore, some of the aforementioned translations, including Arberry, Sarwar, and others, although correct, can still be improved.

[Abyadhdhat A'ynah Min Al-Huzn](#)

أَبْيَضَتْ عَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْحُزْنِ فَكَرِهَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يَنْظُرُوا إِلَيْهِ

In Surah Yusuf, 12:84³⁰

This expression means he grieved so much that he lost sight out and his eyes turned white³¹.

Let's see how the translators dealt with this expression.

Translations:

Shakir: his eyes became white on account of the grief.

Irving: Both his eyes clouded over from sadness.

Qara'i: His eyes had turned white with grief.

Pickthall: And his eyes were whitened with the sorrow.

Sarwar: Alas, Joseph is lost!" He wept continuously in his grief.

Yusuf Ali: And his eyes became white with sorrow.

Arberry: And his eyes turned white because of the sorrow.

Analysis:

Instead of conveying the message of the expression, the translators preferred to write the literal meaning of **أَبْصَارُهُ بِيضٌ**. This leaves the readers in doubt, although a little bit of pondering by the reader reveals that any eye that turns white, is indeed blind.

Tadh-hab Ryhukum

تَذَكَّرُوا رَبَّكُمْ

In Surah Al-Anfal, 8:46³²

رَح literally means smell or wind, but in this phrase the literal meaning is not meant. Most classic commentators have stated the meaning of this phrase to be power and position³³.

Therefore, the expression (**تَذَكَّرُوا رَبَّكُمْ**) means you lose your unity, power, and strength. We shall study the translations to see how the translators did with this phrase.

Translations:

Shakir: And obey Allah and His Messenger and do not quarrel for then you will be weak in hearts and your power will depart.

Irving: Obey God and His messenger and do not argue with one another, so that you will falter and lose your courage.

Saffarzadeh: And obey Allah and Allah's Messenger and do not quarrel with One another, lest you may

get Weak-hearted and your spiritual power May go away.

Qara'i: And obey Allah and His Apostle, and do not dispute, or you will lose heart and your power will be gone.

Pickthall: And obey Allah and His messenger, and dispute not one with another lest ye falter and your strength depart from you; but be steadfast!

Sarwar: Obey God and His Messenger. Do not quarrel with each other lest you fail or lose honour.

Yusuf Ali And obey Allah and His Messenger. And fall into no disputes, lest ye lose heart and your power depart.

Arberry: And obey God, and His Messenger, and do not quarrel together, and so lose heart, and your power depart.

Analysis:

A literal translation of this expression makes no sense at all. All translators have provided the meaning of the expression; therefore, they have all partially conveyed the message correctly.

Dayiq Bih Sadruk

صَادِقًا لِّقَوْلِهِ مَا يَدْرُكُ

In Surah Hud, 11:12³⁴

According to Majma' al- bayan صَادِقًا لِّقَوْلِهِ مَا يَدْرُكُ comes along with صَادِقًا لِّقَوْلِهِ مَا يَدْرُكُ when someone is bored and under pressure³⁵.

Shakir: Then, it may be that you will give up part of what is revealed to you and your breast will become straitened by it.

Irving: Perhaps you are abandoning something that has been inspired in you, and your breast is feeling cramped because of it.

Saffarzadeh: So perhaps you O, Messenger be inclined to give up a part of what is Revealed to you and your heart Becomes straitened.

Qara'i: Look out lest you should disregard aught of what has been revealed to you, and be upset.

Pickthall: A likely thing, that thou wouldst forsake aught of that which hath been revealed unto thee, and that thy breast should be straightened for it.

Sarwar: Perhaps you, Muhammad, may by chance leave untold a part of that which is revealed to you and feel grieved.

Yusuf Ali: Perchance thou mayest feel the inclination (to give up a part of what is revealed unto thee, and thy heart feeleth straitened.

Arberry: Perchance thou art leaving part of what is revealed to thee, and thy breast is straitened by it.

Abtigha' Wajh Allah

﴿لِيَسْأَلُوا وَجْهَ اللَّهِ﴾

In Surah al-Baqara, 2:272³⁶

﴿لِيَسْأَلُوا وَجْهَ اللَّهِ﴾ has different meanings, including face, but in the verse above it means pleasure of God. The verse says that some people only spend in order to gain God's pleasure³⁷. We shall study the translations to see how this phrase in this verse has been translated:

Translations:

Shakir: And whatever good thing you spend, it is to your own good and you do not spend but to seek Allah's pleasure.

Irving: He wishes to. Any tax money you may spend is for your own good and whatever you spend is only through a craving to see God's face.

Saffarzadeh: And whatever good things you spend in charity it shall be for your own souls; but do not spend in Charity except for seeking the Pleasure of Allah.

Qara'i: And whatever wealth you spend, it is for your own benefit, as you do not spend but to seek Allah's pleasure.

Pickthall: And whatsoever good thing ye spend, it is for yourselves, when ye spend not save in search of Allah's Countenance.

Sarwar: Whatever you spend for the cause of God is for your own good, provided you do not spend anything but to please God.

Yusuf Ali: Whatever of good ye give benefits your own souls, and ye shall only do so seeking the "Face" of Allah.

Arberry: And whatever good you expend is for yourselves for then you are expending, being desirous only of God's Face.

Analysis:

We see that some of the translators such as Pickthall, Arberry, Yusuf Ali and Irving ignore the meaning of the phrase and choose the literal meaning instead. Therefore, an element of ambiguity exists in their translations.

Darba Fi 'l-Ard

ضرب الأرض

In Surah al-Baqara, 2:273³⁸

ضرب الأرض literally means hitting and the literal meaning of the phrase is hitting the earth, but the literal meaning of this phrase is not intended in this verse. ضرب الأرض here means traveling, in English it would be something like 'hitting the road'. Those who do not have adequate skills in Arabic may mistakenly use the literal translation instead.

Translations:

Shakir: Alms are (for the poor who are confined in the Way of Allah they cannot go about in the land.

Irving: Take care of the poor who, being totally absorbed in working for God's cause, cannot manage to travel.

Saffarzadeh: Charity is for those poor who are besieged in the Path of Allah and Thereby prevented from travelling.

Qara'i: The charities are [for the poor who are straitened in the way of Allah, not capable of moving about in the land for trade.

Pickthall: Alms are (for the poor who are straitened for the cause of Allah, who cannot travel in the land) for trade.

Sarwar: If the recipients of charity are (the poor whose poverty, because of their striving for the cause of God, has become an obstacle for them, and who do not have the ability to travel in the land.

Yusuf Ali: Charity is for those in need, who, in Allah's cause are restricted (from travel), and cannot move about in the land.

Arberry: freewill offerings being for the poor who are restrained in the Way of God, and are unable to journey in the land.

Analysis:

All translators, even those who are usually inclined to use literal translations, have instead translated the meaning of the phrase.

[Yakulun Ar-Riba](#)

يَكُلُونَ الرِّبَا

In Surah al-Baqara, 2:275³⁹

يَكُلُونَ الرِّبَا means they eat and الرِّبَا means usury. It's not common to 'eat usury' in English, rather, usury is 'exercise'; We suggest that the literal meaning of the phrase should be avoided and the English equivalent used instead.

Translations:

Shakir: Those who swallow down usury cannot arise except as one whom Shaitan has prostrated by his touch does rise.

Irving: Those who live off the interest on loans will never stand up, except in the way those whom Satan knocks down with a fit rise up again.

Saffarzadeh: Those who swallow usury will not stand] On the Day of Resurrection [except Like the standing of a person touched by Satan.

Qara'i: Those who exact usury will not stand but like one deranged by the Devil's touch.

Pickthall: Those who swallow usury cannot rise up save as he arises whom the devil hath prostrated by (his) touch.

Sarwar: Those who take unlawful interest will stand before God on the Day of Judgment as those who suffer from a mental imbalance.

Yusuf Ali: Those who devour usury will not stand except as stand one whom the Satan by his touch hath driven to madness.

Arberry: Those who devour usury shall not rise again except as he rises, whom Satan of the touch prostrates.

Analysis:

Some translators such as Shakir, Saffarzadeh, Pickthall, Yusuf Ali, and Arberry used the word 'swallow' instead of the proper collocation for usury. In English, it is the interest obtained through usury that is 'consumed' or 'eaten' not the usury itself, therefore, these translations have ambiguity.

Subhanah 'An Yakun La Walad

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَكَبِيرٌ وَلَدًا

In Surah An-Nisa', 4:171 [40](#)

'Walad' means child. This verse says that God is very glorious, so it is beyond Him to have a child.

Translations:

Shakir: it is better for you Allah is only One God Far be it from His glory that He should have a son.

Irving: God is only One God; glory be to Him, beyond His having any son!

Qara'i: That is better for you. Allah is but the One God. He is far too immaculate to have any son.

Saffarzadeh: Allah is The One and the only God; He is Exalted above having a son] as the disbelievers claim.

Pickthall: say not three it removed from His Transcendent Majesty that He should have a son.

Sarwar: There is only One God. He is too glorious to give birth to a son.

Yusuf Ali: Allah is One God. Glory be to Him: far exalted is He above having a son.

Arberry: God is only One God Glory be to Him that He should have a son!

Analysis:

All the translators understood the message of the phrase but they did not use a clearer way to convey the message. This verse says, 'God is too glorious to have a child.' Among the translators, Ali Quli Qara'i has used a better structure to convey such a meaning. Although other translators have not made a mistake, but there is room for improvement.

Turawid Fataha 'An Nafsihi; Qad Shaghafaha Hubban; Dalal Mubin

تُرَاوِدُ فَتَأْخُذُ عَنَّا نَفْسًا مِّنْهَا

فَدَلَّ شَقَقَهَا حُبًّا

The phrases above are all in verse [12:3041](#), but we will discuss them separately:

Translations:

Shakir: And women in the city said: The chief's wife seeks her slave to yield himself (to her). Surely, he has affected her deeply with (his) love. Most surely, we see her in manifest error.

Irving: Some women in the city said:" The official's wife wants to seduce her houseboy. He's set her madly in love! We see she has gone clear astray."

Saffarzadeh: And women in the city said:" The wife of Aziz is seeking from her slave-boy an Evil deed. Indeed, he has affected her Heart deeply with love; verily, we behold her in an obvious error."

Qara'i: Some of the townswomen said," The chieftain's wife has solicited her slave boy! He has captivated her love. Indeed, we see her to be in manifest error."

Pickthall: And women in the city said: The ruler's wife is asking of her slave-boy an ill- deed. Indeed, he has smitten her to the heart with love. We behold her in plain aberration.

Sarwar: Some of the women in the town started to gossip saying," The King's wife has tried to seduce her servant and has fallen madly in love with him. We think that she is in manifest error".

Yusuf Ali: Ladies said in the City:" The wife of the (great) Aziz is seeking to seduce her slave. Truly hath he inspired her with violent love: we see she is evidently going astray."

Arberry: Certain women that were in the city said, The Governor's wife has been soliciting her page he smote her heart with love we see her in manifest error.

Analysis:

Commentaries of the Qur'an define these phrases as such:

نُرَاوِدُ فَنَاهَا عَنْ أَنْ تَنَسُدَّ لَهُ

The wife of the governor of Egypt invited her young servant to herself in order to enjoy him and have intercourse with him.

فَدَا شَعَقَهَا > فَبَيَّنَّا

She felt a burning and profound love for him.

ضَالِلًا مَفِينًا

Glaring error.

The first phrase needs the most attention, because it creates the greatest challenge for those who are not skilful in Arabic, which is why some translators have produced strange translations. The literal meanings of the phrase is the following:

تُرَاوِدُ: she desires or insistently wants intercourse, etc.

فَتَاهَا: her young servant

مِنْ: from

نَفْسِهِ: himself

The literal translations of the last two words: (نَفْسِهِ مِنْ) makes the phrase ambiguous for the translators. Hence, translators like Shakir could have produced better results if they hadn't translated the phrase literally. The rest of the translators preferred to write the meaning of the phrase and avoid literal translating.

The third phrase ضَالِلًا مَفِينًا, if we accept ضَالِلًا means error, it seems that the best collocation for error is: glaring, i.e., the error which is very evident.

['Amalu 'Ala Mekanatikum](#)

إِنَّمَا لِلنَّارِ مَقَادِيرُ كَالنَّارِ كَالنَّارِ

In Surah Az-Zumar, 39:3942

This phrase is the reply of some of God's messengers to their enemies when they were despaired that they will not give up corruption. The messenger warns his enemy that if they want to disobey and oppose, they can do their best according to their position, power and facility and he will do his best to perform his duty and his enemy will soon come to know the result.

Translations:

Shakir: Say: O my people! Work in your place, surely, I am a worker so you will come to know.

Irving: Say:" My people, act according to your situation. I am so acting, and you shall know.

Saffarzadeh: Say O, Messenger!" O, my people! Exercise your power against me as much as you can; and I too will act According to my Mission, soon you will know.

Qara'i: Say," O my people! Act according to your ability. I too am acting. Soon you will know.

Pickthall: Say: O my people! Act in your manner. Lo! I (too) am acting. Thus, ye will come to know.

Sarwar: Say," My people, act as you wish. I shall do as I like and you will soon know.

Yusuf Ali Say:" O my People! Do whatever ye can: I will do my part: but soon will ye know

Arberry: Say: My people, act according to your station; I am acting and soon you will know)

Analysis:

We see that according to the meaning of the phrase some of the translators such as Shakir and Pickthall were not successful to convey the meaning and some of them such as Sarwar, Qara'i and Saffarzadeh has done it better. And the meaning of the phrase can be understood from their translations.

Bu'dan

بُدَانٌ

In Surah Hud, 11:95⁴³

بُدَانٌ even though has been used in the form of statement, it is a prayer, through which God curse the wrongdoers saying, ' May wrongdoers be away (from God's mercy)'⁴⁴.

Translations:

Shakir: As though they had never dwelt in them now surely perdition overtook Madyan as had perished Samood.

Irving: just as if they had never prospered there. Was it not away with Midian, just as Thamud was also sent away?

Saffarzadeh: It seemed as if they had not lived there any time; so away with the people of Madyan as away with the Thamud!

Qara'i: as if they had never lived there. Look! Away with Midian! Just as Thamoud was done away with!

Pickthall: As though they had not dwelt there. A far removal for Midian, even as Thamud had been removed afar!

Sarwar: as though they had never existed. How far from) the mercy of God (had the people of Midian gone, just as those of Thamud?

Yusuf Ali: As if they had never dwelt and flourished there! So away with Madyan as were Thamud!

Arberry: as if they had never dwelt there so away with Midian, even as Thamood was done away.

Analysis:

It seems that some translators such as Shakir translated the phrase as a statement and he neglected its meaning which is a prayer and some else such as Irving did not grasp the meaning nor structure and his translation cannot have considered as a correct one but some such as Qara'i seems successful in their translations.

Qala Rabbi Shrahli Sadri

قال رب اشرح لي صدري

In Surah Ta Ha, 20:25

The literal translations of this phrase: اشرح لي: expand for me صدري: my breast. What it means? It seems that its literal meaning seems meaningless and irrelevant for the English readers but this is the prayer of Moses to God who pray to him it means "Increase my capacity in order to shoulder the great responsibility of prophet hood."

Translations:

Shakir: He said: O my Lord! Expand my breast for me.

Irving: He said:" My Lord, ease my breast for me!

Saffarzadeh: Mussa said:" O, my Creator and Nurturer! Please expand the power of insight, Planning and endurance to my heart and my mind.

Qara'i: He said," My Lord! Open my breast for me.

Pickthall: Moses said: My Lord! relieve my mind.

Sarwar: Moses said," Lord, grant me courage.

Yusuf Ali: Moses said:" O my Lord! expand me breast.

Arberry: Lord, open my breast, said Moses.

Analysis:

According to what we explained, only Saffarzadeh tried to convey the meaning of the phrase and other translators translated it literally so the meaning seems ambiguous and irrelevant to the readers.

Kay Taqarra 'Aynuha

كَي تَقَرَّرَا عَيْنُهَا

In Surah Ta Ha, 20:40⁴⁵ & Surah Al-Qasas 28:13⁴⁶

This phrase literally means: كَي: in order that تَقَرَّرَا: become bright. عَيْنُهَا: her eye. When some somebody get happy his/her eyes become bright and flash in happiness. This phrase says that (God returned Moses to his mother) in order that she become delightful. Thus, God brought joy to her.

Thus, the literal meaning of this verse is not completely clear to the readers in English contrary to the readers in Persian which the literal meanings is same with its meaning.

Translations of 28:13 -

Shakir: So We gave him back to his mother that her eye might be refreshed, and that she might not grieve.

Irving: Thus, We restored him to his mother so he might comfort her and she would not feel so sad.

Saffarzadeh: So We returned him back to his mother, to be the joy of her eyes; and that she should know that Allah's Promise is true.

Qara'i: Thus, We restored him to his mother so that she might be comforted and not grieve, and that she might know that Allah's promise is true.

Pickthall: So We restored him to his mother that she might be comforted and not grieve, and that she might know that the promise of Allah is true.

Sarwar: Thus, did We return Moses to his mother that We would delight her eyes, relieve her sorrows.

Yusuf Ali: Thus, did We restore him to his mother, that her eye might be comforted, that she might not grieve.

Arberry: So We returned him to his mother that she might be comforted and not sorrow.

Analysis:

All the translators avoided to give a literal translation, and they tried to convey the meaning even though their translations could have been clearer if they had fully avoided the literal translation.

Dhaqqat 'Alayhim Al-Ardh Bima Rahubat; Dhaqqat 'Alayhim 'Anfusuhum

صَافَتْ لَهُمْ أَرْضٌ بِيَمَانِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسُهُمْ أَضْفَانٌ . صَافَتْ لَهُمْ أَرْضٌ بِيَمَانِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسُهُمْ أَضْفَانٌ

In Surah At-Tawbah, 9:118⁴⁷

The literal translations of the words: صَافَتْ: became narrow, strait, أَضْفَانٌ: upon them, أَرْضٌ بِيَمَانِهِمْ: the earth: with all its expanse, spaciousness. This phrase means that they were so sorrowful so the spacious earth seems narrow as Sarwar translated Grief made them feel as though there was no place in the whole vast earth to hide them or in their souls to conceal their sorrow

Translations:

Shakir: And to the three who were left behind, until the earth became strait to them notwithstanding its spaciousness and their souls were also straitened to them; and they knew it for certain that there was no refuge from Allah but in Him.

Irving: As for the three who were left behind, until the earth seemed too cramped for them, spacious though it is, and even their souls seemed to strangle them and they thought there would be no refuge from God except through Himself.

Saffarzadeh: And also Allah turned in Mercy to The three of them who were left behind until when the earth, despite all its vastness became strait for them, and their own souls were straitened for them and they thought there was no Shelter against Allah's Wrath.

Qara'i: and to the three who were left behind. When the earth became narrow for them with (all) its expanse, and their own souls weighed heavily on them, and they knew that there was no refuge from Allah except in Him.

Pickthall: And to the three also did He turn in mercy who were left behind, when the earth, vast as it is, was straitened for them, and their own souls were straitened for them till they bethought them that there is no refuge from Allah save toward Him.

Sarwar: God also forgave the three people who lagged behind. Grief made them feel as though there was no place in the whole vast earth to hide them or in their souls to conceal their sorrow. They began to believe that no one could save them from (the wrath of God) except He Himself.

Yusuf Ali: He turned in mercy also (to the three who were left behind;) they felt guilty (to such a degree that the earth seemed constrained to them, for all its spaciousness, and their) very (souls seemed straitened to them, - and they perceived that there is no fleeing from Allah) and no refuge (but to Himself).

Arberry: And to the three who were left behind, until, when the earth became strait for them, for all its breadth, and their souls became strait for them, and they thought that there was no shelter from God except in Him.

Analysis:

The translations of Yusuf Ali and Sarwar are understandable and convey the meanings of the phrase because of their analysis but other translators translated literally and there is ambiguity in their literal translations in English and the meaning is not conveyed clearly.

Bima Qaddamat 'Aydyhim

بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ

In Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:95, and Surah Al-Jumu'a, 62:748

This phrase has also been used in many other verses49.

The literal translation of this phrase is: بما: because of what, قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ: sent before. أَيْدِيَهُمْ: their hands the whole phrase says because of what their hands sent ahead. We see that this phrase is ambiguous for the readers in English.

The meaning of this phrase is that what they done or committed. In general, a deed is done or a sin is committed with hands, so the deeds have been attributed to the hands instead of person. This verse says that the Jews will not long for death because of the evil deeds they have committed and sent ahead for their hereafter and they know that when they die, they will meet the outcome of their evil deeds.

Translations:

Shakir: And they will never invoke it on account of what their hands have sent before and Allah knows the unjust. Irving: They will never long for it because of what their hands have already prepared. God is Aware of wrongdoers!

Saffarzadeh: But they will never long for death, Because of what their hands have sent before them to the other world and Allah is Well-Aware of the deeds and Intentions of the wrongdoers.

Qara'i: But they will not long for it ever because of what their hands have sent ahead, and Allah knows

best the wrongdoers.

Pickthall: But they will never long for it, because of that which their own hands have sent before them. Allah is aware of evil-doers.

Sarwar: But they can never have a longing for death because of what they have done. God knows the unjust well

Yusuf Ali: But they will never seek for death, on account of the (sins) which their hands have sent on before them. And Allah is well-acquainted with the wrong-doers.

Arberry: But they will never long for it, because of that their hands have forwarded God knows the evildoers.

Analysis:

Some of the translators such as Shakir, Qara'i, Pickthall, and Arberry have translated the phrase literally and some of them such as Sarwar has wrote the meaning and some of them such as Yusuf Ali has tried to convey the meaning with adding Analysis to the literal translations of the words. However, what we can say is that literal translation of this phrase cannot completely convey the meaning and intention of the phrase.

Wa Akhfid Janahak

وَاخْفِدْ نَجْوَاهُ بِاللَّيْلِ

In Surah Ash-Shu'ara', 26:21550

Literally this phrase means: اخْفِدْ نَجْوَاهُ: lower. نَجْوَاهُ: your wings. This is act like the act of a hen which lower its wings and mercifully gather and protect its young chicken. thus, God commanded His Messenger to mercifully treat with believers who follow him.

Translations:

Shakir: And be kind to him who follows you of the believers.

Irving: lower your protecting wing over any believers who may follow you.

Saffarzadeh: And be humble to the believers who follow you.

Qara'i: and lower your wing to the faithful.

Pickthall: and lower thy wing) in tenderness (for the believers).

Sarwar: Be kind to the believers.

Yusuf Ali lower thy wing (in gentleness) to the believers.

Arberry: and lower thy wing unto the believers.

Analysis:

Qara'i and Arberry translated the phrase literally and the other translations has tried to write the meaning of the phrase. Those who translate it literally should take into consideration that this phrase is an Arabic phrase according to Arab culture, so the readers in English may not receive the message without analysis.

Fata'ala 'Amma Yushrikun

فَتَعَالَىٰ اللَّهُ مَا يَشْرِكُونَ

In Surah Al-Mu'minun, 23:9251

This says that God is above having any partners that they ascribe to Him in other words God is too exalted to have partners which they ascribe to Him.

Translations:

Shakir: The Knower of the unseen and the seen, so may He be exalted above what they associate (with Him).

Irving: Knower of the Unseen and the Visible: Exalted is He over anything they may associate with Him.

Saffarzadeh: Allah is the Knower of the Unseen and The Visible and He is above the idea of having partners.

Qara'i: The Knower of the sensible and the Unseen, He is above having any partners that they ascribe to Him.

Pickthall: Knower of the Invisible and the Visible! And Exalted be He over all that they ascribe as partners unto Him (!).

Sarwar: He has the knowledge of all seen and unseen things. He is too exalted to be considered equal to anything else.

Yusuf Ali: He knows what is hidden and what is open: too high is He for the partners they attribute to Him!

Arberry: who has knowledge of the Unseen and the Visible; high exalted be He, above that they associate!

Analysis:

This phrase is a statement, but the translation of Shakir is not in the form of statement. Saffarzadeh added "idea" to his translation while this verse does not discuss about idea of having partner rather it says He is too exalted to have a partner, so they cannot ascribe partner to Him. Sarwar omitted the subject i.e. (they) in his translation and it seems the translation of Qara'i is clearer than the other translations and is more successful in conveying the meaning.

[1.](#) Tabataba'i 1417 A.H., 19/20

[2.](#) Raghīb Isfahani 1412 A.H.

[3.](#) See: Ibn Manzur 1414, Mustafaw 1360 Sh, Raghīb Isfahani 1412 A.H, Qurashshi 1371 Sh

[4.](#) See Tabataba'i 1417A.H., Tusi, Al-Tibyan fi tafsir al-Qur'an 1405 A.H, Turayhi 1375 Sh, M. Zamakhshari, Al-Kashshaf 'an haqa'iq ghawamidh al-tanzil 1407 A.H, F.-D. Razi, Mafatih al-ghayb 1420 A.H, F. b. Tabrisi 1372 Sh.

[5.](#) a.S. Tabataba'i 1417 A.H..

[6.](#) See: Mustafaw 1360 Sh, 1:168, Qurashshi 1371 Sh, Turayhi 1375 Sh, Ibn Manzur 1414, Farahidi 1410 AH, Raghīb Isfahani 1412 A.H.

[7.](#) See: Tusi, Al-Tibyan fi tafsir al-Qur'an 1405 A.H, Tabataba'i 1417A.H., F. b. Tabrisi 1372 Sh, Qummi 1367 Sh.

[8.](#) See: F. b. Tabrisi 1372 Sh, 7:64

[9.](#) See: Suyuti 1404 A.H.

[10.](#) See: Qurashshi 1371 Sh, Qummi 1367 Sh.

[11.](#) See: Ibn Manzur 1414, Mustafaw 1360 Sh, Qummi 1367 Sh, Raghīb Isfahani 1412 A.H, Qurashshi 1371 Sh.

[12.](#) : The translation of the verses related to the story of Moses ('a) are provided below in order to shed light on the process of finding a good equivalent for it:

We recite to you from the account of Musa and Fir'awn with truth for people who believe (28:3)

Surely, Fir'awn exalted himself in the land and made its people into parties, weakening one party from among them; he slaughtered their sons and let their women live; surely, he was one of the mischiefmakers (28:4)

And We desired to bestow a favor upon those who were deemed weak in the land, and to make them the Imams, and to make them the heirs (28:5)

And to grant them power in the land, and to make Fir'awn and Haman and their hosts see from them what they feared (28:6)

And We revealed to Musa's mothers, saying: Give him suck, then when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear nor grieve; surely, We will bring him back to you and make him one of the messengers (28:7)

And Fir'awn's family took him up that he might be an enemy and a grief for them; surely, Fir'awn and Haman and their hosts were wrongdoers (28:8)

And Fir'awn's wife said: A refreshment of the eye to me and to you; do not slay him; maybe he will be useful to us, or we may take him for a son; and they did not perceive (28:9)

And the heart of Musa's mother was free (from anxiety) she would have almost disclosed it had We not strengthened her heart so, that she might be of the believers (28:10)

And she said to his sister: Follow him up. So, she watched him from a distance while they did not perceive (28:11)

And We ordained that he refused to suck any foster mother before, so, she said: Shall I point out to you the people of a house who will take care of him for you, and they will be benevolent to him? (28:12)

So, We gave him back to his mother that her eye might be refreshed, and that she might no grieve, and that she might know that the promise of Allah is true, but most of them do not know (28:13)

And when he attained his maturity and became full grown, We granted him wisdom and knowledge; and thus, do We

reward those who do good (to others) (28:14)

And he went into the city at a time of unvigilance on the part of its people, so, he found therein two men fighting, one being of his party and the other of his foes, and he who was of his party cried out to him for help against him who was of his enemies, so, Musa struck him with his fist and killed him. He said: This is on account of the Shaitan's doing; surely, he is an enemy, openly leading astray (28:15)

He said: My Lord! surely, I have done harm to myself, so, do Thou protect me. So, He protected him; surely, He is the Forgiving, the Merciful (28:16)

He said: My Lord! because Thou hast bestowed a favor on me, I shall never be a backer of the guilty (28:17)

And he was in the city, eering, awaiting, when lo! he who had asked his assistance the day before was crying out to him for aid. Musa said to him: You are most surely, one erring manifestly (28:18)

So, when he desired to seize him who was an enemy to them both, he said: O Musa! do you intend to kill me as you killed a person yesterday? You desire nothing but that you should be a tyrant in the land, and you do not desire to be of those who act aright (28:19)

And a man came running from the remotest part of the city. He said: O Musa! surely, the chiefs are consulting together to slay you, therefore depart (at once); surely, I am of those who wish well to you (28:20)

So, he went forth therefrom, fearing, awaiting, (and) he said: My Lord! deliver me from the unjust people (28:21)

And when he turned his face towards Madyan, he said: Maybe my Lord will guide me in the right path (28:22)

And when he came to the water of Madyan, he found on it a group of men watering, and he found besides them two women keeping back (their flocks). He said: What is the matter with you? They said: We cannot water until the shepherds take away (their sheep) from the water, and our father is a very old man (28:23)

So, he watered (their sheep) for them, then went back to the shade and said: My Lord! surely, I stand in need of whatever good Thou mayest send down to me (28:24)

Then one of the two women came to him walking bashfully. She said: My father invites you that he may give you the reward of your having watered for us. So, when he came to him and gave to him the account, he said: Fear not, you are secure from the unjust people (28:25)

Said one of them: O my father! Employ him, surely, the best of those that you can employ is the strong man, the faithful one (28:26)

He said: I desire to marry one of these two daughters of mine to you on condition that you should serve me for eight years; but if you complete ten, it will be of your own free will, and I do not wish to be hard to you; if Allah please, you will find me one of the good (28:27)

He said: This shall be (an agreement) between me and you; whichever of the two terms I fulfill, there shall be no wrongdoing to me; and Allah is a witness of what we say (28:28)

So, when Musa had fulfilled the term, and he journeyed with his family, he perceived on this side of the mountain a fire. He said to his family: Wait, I have seen a fire, maybe I will bring to you from it some news or a brand of fire, so, that you may warm yourselves (28:29)

And when he came to it, a voice was uttered from the right side of the valley in the blessed spot of the bush, saying: O Musa! surely, I am Allah, the Lord of the worlds (28:30)

And saying: Cast down your staff. So, when he saw it in motion as if it were a serpent, he turned back retreating, and did not return. O Musa! come forward and fear not; surely, you are of those who are secure (28:31)

Enter your hand into the opening of your bosom, it will come forth white without evil, and draw your hand to yourself to ward off fear: so, these two shall be two arguments from your Lord to Fir'awn and his chiefs, surely, they are a transgressing people (28:32)

He said: My Lord! surely, I killed one of them, so, I fear lest they should slay me (28:33)

And my brother, Haroun, he is more eloquent of tongue than I, therefore send him with me as an aider, verifying me: surely, I fear that they would reject me (28:34)

He said: We will strengthen your arm with your brother, and We will give you both an authority, so, that they shall not reach you; (go) with Our signs; you two and those who follow you shall be uppermost (28:35)

So, when Musa came to them with Our clear signs, they said: This is nothing but forged enchantment, and we never heard

of it amongst our fathers of old (28:36)

And Musa said: My Lord knows best who comes with guidance from Him, and whose shall be the good end of the abode; surely, the unjust shall not be successful (28:37)

And Fir'awn said: O chiefs! I do not know of any god for you besides myself; therefore, kindle a fire for me, O Haman, for brick, then prepare for me a lofty building so, that I may obtain knowledge of Musa's god, and most surely, I think him to be one of the liars (28:38)

And he was unjustly proud in the land, he and his hosts, and they deemed that they would not be brought back to Us (28:39)

So, We caught hold of him and his hosts, then We cast them into the sea, and see how was the end of the unjust (28:40)

And We made them Imams who call to the fire, and on the day of resurrection they shall not be assisted (28:41)

And We caused a curse to follow them in this world, and on the day of resurrection they shall be of those made to appear hideous (28:42)

And certainly, We gave Musa the Book after We had destroyed the former generations, clear arguments for men and a guidance and a mercy, that they may be mindful (28:43)

And you were not on the western side when We revealed to Musa the commandment, and you were not among the witnesses (28:44)

But We raised up generations, then life became prolonged to them; and you were not dwelling among the people of Madyan, reciting to them Our communications, but We were the senders (28:45)

And you were not on this side of the mountain when We called, but a mercy from your Lord that you may warn a people to whom no warner came before you, that they may be mindful (28:46)

And were it not that there should befall them a disaster for what their hands have sent before, then they should say: Our Lord! why didst Thou not send to us a messenger so, that we should have followed Thy communications and been of the believers! (28:47)

But (now) when the truth has come to them from Us, they say: Why is he not given the like of what was given to Musa? What! did they not disbelieve in what Musa was given before? They say: Two magicians backing up each other; and they say: Surely, we are unbelievers in all (28:48)

Say: Then bring some (other) book from Allah which is a better guide than both of them, (that) I may follow it, if you are truthful (28:49)

But if they do not answer you, then know that they only follow their low desires; and who is more erring than he who follows his low desires without any guidance from Allah? Surely, Allah does not guide the unjust people (28:50)

We only emphasize some of the information of the verses as follows:

Pharaoh ruled with tyranny and cruelty. His policy was to divide people into various sects and use their disunity to rule. He killed men and their sons, and took their women to his service. God promises in the verse five that He wills the oppressed believers to be the inheritors and rulers of the world, so one day will come that the oppressed believers and the righteous will be the leaders who govern the worlds when the oppressors will be weakened. After that the oppressors and wrongdoers will not be able to rule the worlds (Tusi 1405 A.H., 1:731).

In verse five, God's promise is revealed. There may be a time when oppressors and tyrants rule over the world, but it is God's will that they will be weakened, and removed and replaced by believers and righteous people. After Moses reached a stage of physical, spiritual, and intellectual maturity God provided him with knowledge and wisdom to rule a nation. God emphasizes that he was a righteous and qualified person, which is why he was given the knowledge, wisdom, and position. Indeed, God knows who can perform such a duty (Tabataba'i 1417 A.H., 16:14).

A man who was oppressed asked Moses for help. In the process of helping him the oppressor was killed. Although Moses had the duty to help the oppressed, but one must always consider the conditions. Given the conditions the oppressed were already going through such a mistake was trouble. The man was oppressed once again, and without considering the situation complained to Moses again. This angered Moses for they were not in the right position to defend the oppressed just then.

Moses said to God that he wronged himself because even though helping the oppressed was his duty but it was not properly done, for the time was not right. He protected an oppressed person, but too much trouble ensued. God forgave

Chapter 3: A Study Of Problematic Structures In The English Translations Of The Qur'an

Structure

In every language, structures are used to convey meanings. Structures are unique to each language, therefore, the same structure cannot be used for translating text from source to target language, for it may produce wrong results or ones that are unpleasant to the reader.

In English language, structures usually look like this:

Subject + verb; e.g. Jonah came.

Gerund + verb or to be; e.g. Working hard is important.

To + verb + to be; e.g. To be silent is important.

Whereas in the Arabic language they look like this:

Verb+ subject; e.g. جاء زيد

Mubtada + khabar; e.g. زيد طبيب

Khabari muqaddam + Mubtada mu'akhkhar;

e.g.

لَهُمُ الْمَقَاتِلُ الْمُجَادِدُ وَالَّذِينَ يَدِينُونَ دِينَ الْحَبَشَةِ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ

And Allah's are the hosts of the heavens and the earth (48:7).

When translating text from Arabic to English, the difference in structures of each language must be considered, including:

- The style of text
- The differences between syntaxes and forms

In the example below, sentence A should be translated as demonstrated in b:

Verb + subject. E.g. يأكلون

Subject+ verb. E.g. They eat

Had we remained loyal to the Arabic structure the result would have been: eat them. This is what some Qur'an translators have sometimes done; fearing to change the structures used by the Qur'an, they used Arabic structures for the English language.

Why does that occur?

One must realize that Muslims are very sensitive about the Qur'an. In addition to the fact that the Qur'an is holy and it is a miracle, some translators also consider the style used in the Qur'an to also be holy and a miracle. As a result, betraying that style would be a betrayal of the sacredness and holiness of the Qur'an. However, what they miss is that the product of this approach may complicate the translation.

They have ignored what the Qur'an says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا نَزَّلْنَاهُ بِعِلْمِنَا وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَنُحِشُّهُ إِذْ يَتَمَطَّى لَعَلَّ نَافِلَةٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ لَمْ يُبْحَثْ فِي أَهْلِ قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا لِنُرَاهُمْ وَلَقَدْ وَصَّيْنَا الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِذْ يَقُولُ لِغُفَّارٍ فُتُونَهُمْ فُتِنُوا لَهُمْ فَأَسْلَمُوا خَرَضُوا كَأَنَّهُمْ قُرْطُبٌ عُشْبٌ

“And all the messengers that We send were (speaking) with the language of their people in order to clarify (God’s message) to them” (14:4).

The Qur'an clearly says that Godly messages are sent in the language of the people that are its recipients. God speaks with plain styles, structures, and forms because, as He says here, he wants to clarify His message to the people so that they become aware of their duties¹.

Therefore, a translation of the Qur'an must also be in a clear form. In conclusion, translators should be loyal to the target language and they should not use the structures and syntax of the source language in the target language.

We mention some examples and their translations to clarify what we have said.

وَاللَّهُ يَتَعَالَى عَنِ السُّجُودِ وَإِنَّ أَوْلَى الْأَشْيَاءِ بِالذِّكْرِ لَلْأَرْضُ

In Surah Aali Imran, 3:189 -

Qara'i: To Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth.

Pickthall: Unto Allah belonged the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth.

Arberry: To God belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and of the earth.

Sarwar: To God belongs all that is in the heavens.

The aforementioned verse is in standard Arabic, that is:

خير مقدم (جارو مجرور) + مبتدای موخر

« J: to God [belong]

ملء السموات و الارض

the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth.

It was said that the aforementioned verse is in standard Arabic, so it should be translated into Standard English. However, all the translators have used the structure of the Arabic language or used classic English.

We suggest two translations instead:

The kingdom of the heavens and the earth belongs to God.

The kingdom of the heavens and the earth is for God.

A standard sentence in English is: subject + verb, not: to+ noun + verb.

We mention difficult structures of the Qur'an, i.e., exclusive structures in Arabic, in order to find appropriate ways to convey Qur'an's message as complete as possible in English:

Mubtada And Khabar

Mubtada + Khabar constitutes a standard sentence in Arabic. Mubtada is a noun and usually comes at the beginning of the sentence and Khabar is a noun or phrase which is attributed to Mubtada.

They are applied in two ways as follows:

A) Mubtada + Khabar

e.g.

زيد حبيب

Translation: Zayd is my friend

In the aforementioned sentence زيد is Mubtada and حبيبي is Khabar.

B) Khabar, being Jarr u majrur, precedes Mubtada. In this case, Mubtada is called Mubtadayi Mu'akhar and khabar is called Khabari Muqaddam.

Mubtadayi Mu'akhar + Khabari Muqaddam

e.g.

لله، لله، لله، جُ تُؤدُّ السُّهُمَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ

In Surah Al-Fath,48:7.

جُ تُؤدُّ السُّهُمَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ

(The armies of the heaven and the earth) is Mubtadayi Mu'akhar and لله لله لله (: for God) is Khabari Muqaddam.

Both these structures are considered standard plain Arabic, so they should be translated using standard Arabic too.

Suggested translation:

Correct: The armies of the heaven and the earth belong to God.

Incorrect: To God belong the armies of the heaven and the earth.

Now we study this standard Arabic structure in the translations of the Qur'an:

Shakir: And Allah's are the hosts of the heavens and the earth.

Irving: God (commands) the armies of Heaven and Earth.

Saffarzadeh: To Allah belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth.

Qara'i: To Allah belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth

Pickthall: Allah's are the hosts of the heavens and the earth.

Sarwar: To God belong the armies of the heavens and the earth. Yusuf Ali Allah belong the Forces of

the heavens and the earth.

Arberry: To God belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth.

Analysis:

As we see, some translators such as Qara'i, Arberry, Sarwar, and Saffarzadeh have used Arabic structures instead of Standard English structures. They have written (to God: Khabari Muqaddam) first, similar to the Arabic structure, whereas in English, the subject comes first.

Mubtadayi wasfi

اقانم زيد

اقانم is Khabar and precedes Mubtada, i.e. زيد. This form of Mubtada is called Mubtada wasfī and is a structure of the standard language of Arabic. The translator is not allowed to bring the verb (Khabar) before the subject (Mubtada), because, this is this feature belongs to standard Arabic, not Standard English.

e.g.

قال يا ابراهيم انك انت الذي اتيتك من قبل
قال يا ابراهيم انك انت الذي اتيتك من قبل

In Surah Mariyam, 19:46 -

Arberry: Said he, what, art thou shrinking from my gods, Abraham?

Yusuf Ali: The father (replied:" Art thou shrinking from my gods, O Abraham?

Shakir: He said: Do you dislike my gods, O Ibraheem?

Irving: He said:" Do you dislike my gods, Abraham?

Saffarzadeh: His father said:" O, Ibrahim! Do you detest my gods?

Qara'i: He said," Abraham! Are you renouncing my gods.

Pickthall: He said: Reject thou my gods, O Abraham?

Sarwar: His father replied," Abraham, are you telling me to give-up my gods?

Analysis:

Even though the Khabar: (أرأيت) precedes the Mubtada: (الذين), the translators were careful and used Standard English. They have not put the verb before the subject and did not imitate the Arabic structure.

Sighah Al- Ta`Ajjub

Arabs use the forms ما افعل or افعل ب when they want to show they are surprised at something, both of which are standard Arabic. Words that mean 'surprise' or 'astonishment' are not explicitly mentioned in this structure, which is exclusive to Arabic. In the Arabic syntax, this form is known as Sighah al- ta'ajjub (form of a word for showing surprise).

فهم يا اهل النار انهم لا يملكون النار

In Surah Al-Baqara, 2:175.

In this example, the Qur'an gives information about those who ignore divine signs and shows astonishment using the form ما اهل النار: how will they endure hell, their patience and endurance in the fire of the Hell, where they are eager to go, is surprising².

We shall analyse how this verse has been translated by other translators:

Shakir: How bold they are to encounter fire!

Irving: Why do they insist on facing the Fire?

Saffarzadeh: how daring they are in bearing the Fire!

Qara'i: how patient of them to face the Fire!

Pickthall: How constant are they in their strife to reach the Fire!

Yusuf Ali: what boldness they show for the Fire!

Arberry: how patiently they shall endure the Fire!

Analysis:

Some translators, such as Irving, have failed to successfully convey the meaning of this structure, whereas the rest, such Saffarzadeh and Yusuf Ali, have conveyed the meaning successfully.

Suggested translation:

What an endurance they have against the fire!

Tamyiz

In Arabic syntax, Tamyiz is a noun which clarifies the preceding ambiguity.

e.g.

عندي رطل ماء

ماء is a noun and means water. It is the Tamyiz of this sentence. The literal translation of the sentence is: before me is a bowl, water. You see that the literal translation is ambiguous. To have a clear translation, we explain the meaning of the sentence and the role of Tamyiz:

According to the aforementioned sentence there is a bowl with unknown content. Tamyiz clarifies the content; water. Therefore, we have a bowl of water. As it is clear from the example, translating such phrases literally and ignoring the differences between two languages fails to produce an acceptable translation. The meaning will become confusing.

The following translations is suggested:

I have a bowl of water.

Or

There is a bowl of water with me.

We shall study this structure (Tamyiz) in some of Qur'anic verses.

وَكُنْزٌ بَالٍ هُوَ أَكْثَرُ نَسْبٍ قَبِيْرٌ هَآءِ...

In Surah an-Nisa', 4:6. [3](#)

هَآءِ is tamyiz. The verse says that God is enough, but enough for what? He is enough as a reckoner. We suggest the verse to be translated, "As a reckoner, God is enough" or "God's reckoning is sufficient."

Translations:

Sarwar: God is Sufficient in keeping the account.

Shakir: Allah is sufficient to take account.

Irving: God suffices as a Reckoner

Saffarzadeh: Allah's Taking account is only what matters.

Qara'i: Allah suffices as reckoner.

Pickthall: Allah keeps good account.

Yusuf Ali: And enough is Allah to call) men (to account).

Arberry: God suffices as a reckoner.

Analysis:

According to what we mentioned, the translations of Arberry, Qara'i, and Irving are better than the rest. The rest have room for improvement, that is, Arabic syntax has influenced their translation.

Another example:

إِنَّمَا جَدَدُ اللَّهِ عَلَى مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةٌ لَهَا لِيُقَالُ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ لَكُمْ مَكِينًا أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ لَكُمْ مَكِينًا أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ لَكُمْ مَكِينًا

In Surah Al-Kahf, 18:7.

Translations:

Shakir: Surely, We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try them as to which of them is best in works.

Irving: We have placed whatever is on earth as an ornament for it so We may test them as to which one is best in action.

Saffarzadeh: Verily, all that We have created on the earth is but attractive decorations For it; in order that We may test men How they choose the spiritual values Over those materialistic attractions; and How they race the line of good conduct.

Qara'i: Indeed, We have made whatever is on the earth an adornment for it that We may test them to see which of them is best in conduct

Pickthall: Lo! We have placed all that is on the earth as an ornament thereof that We may try them: which of them is best in conduct

Sarwar: We have caused earthly things to seem attractive so that We can see who will excel in good deeds.

Yusuf Ali: That which is on earth we have made but as a glittering show for it, in order that We may test them - - as to which of them are best in conduct. Arberry: We have appointed all that is on the earth for

Translations:

Shakir: We relate to you their story with the truth surely they were youths who believed in their Lord and We increased them in guidance.

Qara'i, Yusuf Ali: and We had enhanced them in guidance.

Pickthall: ... and We increased them in guidance.

Arberry: and We increased them in guidance.

Sarwar: ... and We gave them further guidance.

Irving: ... and We gave them extra guidance.

Saffarzadeh: ...We increased the Guidance for them.

Analysis:

This verse says that the young who had believed in God and had left the polytheists were rewarded by God by increased guidance.

The translations do not seem wrong. In English, 'guidance' is used with the following collocations:

- Additional guidance
- Further guidance

And with the following words:

- Provide with
- Offer
- Give

So we can translate the aforementioned verse as follows:

- We increased their guidance.
- We provided them with further guidance

Example:

كَالَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ كَانُوا اقْتَدَاءً فَتَوَصَّيْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَكْثَرًا مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَكُنْتُمْ خَيْرًا مِّنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَذَلِكَ نُبَيِّنُ الْقُرْآنَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ
 الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ يَدْعُونَ بِتُحْمٍ وَأَكْثَرٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِهِمْ لِيَبْغُوا فَيُدْخِلُوا أَسْمَاءَهُمْ فِي مَقَامِنَا الَّتِي هِيَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الْحُسْنَىٰ الَّتِي بَدَأْنَا خَلْقًا مِّثْلَهَا وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا جَارِينَ مُّبِينِينَ
 الخاسر عَرَبُونَ

In Surah At-Tawba, 9:69.

Three words, i.e. **أَكْثَرًا** ، **أَقْدَاءًا** ، **أَقْدَاءًا** ، are Tamyiz and clarify how the predecessors were greater.

Translations:

Qara’i: Hypocrites! Your case is [similar to those who were before you], who were more powerful than you and more abounding in wealth and children: they enjoyed their share [of worldly existence]; you too enjoy your share, just like those who were before you enjoyed their share, and you have gossiped [impiously] as they gossiped. They are the ones whose works have failed in this world and the Hereafter; and it is they who are the losers

Shakir: Like those before you; they were stronger than you in power and more abundant in wealth and children...

Irving: Just as those before them were firmer than you are in strength, and possessed more wealth and children, and they exploited their advantage...

Saffarzadeh: Those disbelievers and hypocrites who lived before you were even stronger than you in might and more affluent than you in wealth and they had more Children....

Pickthall: Even as those before you who were mightier than you in strength, and more affluent than you in wealth and children...

Sarwar: like that of those who lived before you, whose power, wealth, and children were much greater than yours.

Yusuf Ali: As in the case of those before you: they were mightier than you in power, and more flourishing in wealth and children...

Arberry: Like those before you, who were stronger than you in might, and more abundant in wealth and children.

Analysis:

Even though all the translations are correct, but most of them have used the preposition of (in), i.e. in wealth, in children, and in power, to convey the meaning of the phrase, which has been applied in the form of Tamyiz. It seems the translations have been influenced by the Arabic structure and could have been clearer if it had been within the syntax of Standard English, similar to Sarwar.

Suggested translation:

...those who were more powerful and wealthier than you with more children than you.

Example:

قُلْ أَيُّ شَيْءٍ أَكْبَرُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ شَهَادَةُ اللَّهِ أَمْ وَاللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَرِثَةُ اللَّهِ أَمْ وَاللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ

In Surah Al-Anam, 6:194

Translations:

Shakir: Say: What thing is the weightiest in testimony? Say: Allah He is witness between you and me.

Irving: Say:" What thing is most important as evidence?" SAY:" God is a Witness for both me and you.

Saffarzadeh: Say [O, Messenger!]:" What is greatest As an evidence?" Say:" Allah's and Allah is Witness between me and you.

Qara'i: Say," What thing is greatest as witness?" Say," Allah! He is witness between me and you.

Pickthall: Say (O Muhammad): What thing is of most weight in testimony? Say: Allah is Witness between me and you.

Sarwar: (Muhammad), ask them," What is the greatest testimony? God testifies of my truthfulness to you.

Yusuf Ali: Say:" What thing is most weighty in evidence?" Say:" Allah is witness between me and you

Arberry: Say: What thing is greatest in testimony? Say: God He is witness between me and you.

Analysis:

Here Tamyiz shows the quality or importance of testimony, asking whose testimony is greater: God or

others? All the translations could have been clearer, because the translations have been influenced by the Arabic structure.

Suggested translations:

What thing gives greater testimony?

What thing gives better testimony?

What testimony is greater?

What thing testifies better?

Who testifies better?

Jarr -u- Majrur

In standard Arabic, when Jarr-u-majrur (Harf al-jarr and Ism al-majrur) is Khabar it precedes Muftada, but when translated, the Arabic structure must not be imitated, because sentences do not tend to begin with preposition + noun in standard English:

جار و مجرور (خبر مقدم) + مبتدای موخر

e.g.

لسليمان جمل

Literal translation: to Solomon is a camel.

Suggested translation: Solomon has a camel.

e.g.

للمرأة الرجل نصيب مما كسبت له زوجها والرجل نصيب مما كسبت له امرأته

In Surah An-Nisa', 4:32⁵

Translations:

Shakir: Men shall have the benefit of what they earn and women shall have the benefit of what they earn.

The verb (تُوبُوا) commands the believers to repent and the Maf'ul Mutlaqi Nu'i (i.e. تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا) shows the quality of repentance.

Translations:

Shakir: O you who believe! Turn to Allah a sincere turning; maybe your Lord will remove from you your evil and cause you to enter gardens beneath which rivers flow.

Qara'i: O you who have faith! Repent to Allah with sincere repentance!

Irving: You who believe, turn to God in frank repentance.

Saffarzadeh: [O, you who believe!] If you desire to be Immune from the bad end, then avoid Wrongdoing while you are in this world [Submit your repentance to Allah with a Sincere Repentance]

Pickthall: O ye who believe! Turn unto Allah in sincere repentance!

Sarwar: Believers, turn to God in repentance with the intention of never repeating the same sin.

Yusuf Ali: O ye who believe! Turn to Allah with sincere repentance:

Arberry: Believers, turn to God in sincere repentance.

Analysis:

All the translators paid attention to the meaning of the aforementioned structure, i.e. Maf'ul Mutlaqi Nu'i, and it seems all the translations are acceptable.

Another example:

اَلَّذِيْنَ تَجِدُ اَللَّهُ جَزَاكَ بِمَا كُنْتَ تَعْمَلُ ۗ هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُوَفِّيكَ اَجْرَكَ بِمَا كُنْتَ تَعْمَلُ ۗ وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ يُوَفِّيكَ اَجْرَكَ بِمَا كُنْتَ تَعْمَلُ ۗ وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ يُوَفِّيكَ اَجْرَكَ بِمَا كُنْتَ تَعْمَلُ ۗ

In Surah An-Nisa', 4:31.

The word كُنْتَ تَعْمَلُ can either be a gerund (Masdar) or an adverb which showing a place (Qid al-makan)⁷. If it is a gerund then the role of كُنْتَ تَعْمَلُ in this verse would be Maf'ul Mutlaqi Nu'i:

Translations:

Shakir: If you shun the great sins which you are forbidden, We will do away with your small sins and cause you to enter an honourable place of entering.

Irving: If you will avoid the great [sins] you are forbidden [to commit], We will cancel out your [other] evil deeds for you, and send you into] Paradise through a noble entrance.

Saffarzadeh: If you avoid the grave sins which You are forbidden to do, We will remit From you, your small misdeeds and Admit you to the Glorious Gate.

Qara'i: If you avoid the major sins that you are forbidden, We will absolve you of your misdeeds, and admit you to a noble abode.

Pickthall: If ye avoid the great [things] which ye are forbidden, We will remit from you your evil deeds and make you enter at a noble gate.

Yusuf Ali: If ye but eschew the most heinous of the things which ye are forbidden to do, We shall remit your evil deeds, and admit you to a Gate of great honour

Sarwar: If you avoid violating that which has been prohibited, your lesser sins will be forgiven and you will be admitted into an exalted dwelling.

Arberry: If you avoid the heinous sins that are forbidden you, We will acquit you of your evil deeds, and admit you by the gate of honour.

Analysis:

Irving took مَفْعَلًا كَرِيمًا as Maf'ul Mutlaqi Nu'i and translated it correctly. Other translators took مَفْعَلًا as an adverb showing the position (i.e. Qid al-makan), and have accordingly given acceptable translations.

Maf'ul Mutlaqi 'Adadi

This category of Maf'ul Mutlaqi indicates the quantity or number of its 'Amil (e.g. verb).

وَوَدَّعَتْهُمُ اللَّيْلُ اِثْنًا اِثْنًا اَرْضًا وَالْجِبَالُ فَدَكَّتْهَا دَكًّا وَاحِدًا وَاِدَّعَتْهُمُ اللَّيْلُ اِثْنًا اِثْنًا اَرْضًا وَالْجِبَالُ فَدَكَّتْهَا دَكًّا وَاحِدًا

In Surah Al-Haqqa, 69:14.

Translations:

Shakir: And the earth and the mountains are borne away and crushed with a single crushing.

Irving: And the earth is lifted up along with the mountains and they are both flattened by a single blow.

Saffarzadeh: The earth and the mountains shall be Removed and crashed with a single Stroke of shake.

Qara'i: and the earth and the mountains are lifted and levelled with a single levelling.

Yusuf Ali: And the earth is moved, and its mountains, and they are crushed at one stroke.

Pickthall: And the earth with the mountains shall be lifted up and crushed with one crash.

Sarwar: The earth and mountains will be raised up high and crushed all together.

Arberry: and the earth and the mountains are lifted up and crushed with a single blow.

Analysis:

د كذبتا واد كذبتا is Maf'ul Mutlaqi 'Adadi and it indicates the number of د كذبتا (verb). According to what we have explained, all the translators have given acceptable translations, except Sarwar who has not translated it altogether.

Maf'ulun lah

Maf'ulun lah is a single noun in Arabic syntax which indicates the cause of the preceding statement. We study the translation of this structure in the following verse:

...وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ أَهْلَهُمْ مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

In Surah An-Nisa', 4:38

This verse states that they spend their wealth in order to show off.

Translations:

Shakir: And those who spend their property) in alms (to be seen of the people

Irving: who spend their wealth to be seen by other people.

Saffarzadeh: Those who spend their property in Charity to show off to people.

Qara'i: And those who spend their wealth to be seen by people.

Pickthall: And [also] those who spend their wealth in order to be seen of men.

Sarwar: those who spend their property out of a desire to show off.

Yusuf Ali: Not those who spend of their substance, to be seen of men.

Arberry: and such as expend of their substance to show off to men.

Analysis:

رِزْقَهُم is the reason of the previous statement, i.e. د كذبتا واد كذبتا, because رِزْقَهُم is Maf'ulun lah. All translators have translated this syntax correctly.

Translations:

Shakir: And test the orphans until they attain puberty; then if you find in them maturity of intellect, make over to them their property" And do not consume it extravagantly and hastily.

Irving: Test orphans as soon as they reach a marriageable age. If you are sure of their maturity, then turn their property over to them; do not use it up extravagantly, overanxious

Saffarzadeh: And test orphans, regarding their Intelligence and maturity until they Reach the age of marriage; then if you Find sound judgment in them, deliver Their heritage to them, but do not Consume it wastefully and hastily,

Qara'i: Test the orphans when they reach the age of marriage. Then if you discern in them maturity, deliver to them their property. And do not consume it lavishly and hastily

Sarwar: Before returning orphan's property to them, make sure that they have reached maturity. Do not consume their property wastefully until such a time.

Pickthall: Prove orphans till they reach the marriageable age; then, if ye find them of sound judgment, deliver over unto them their fortune; and devour it not by squandering and in haste.

Yusuf Ali Make trial of orphans until they reach the age of marriage; if then ye find sound judgment in them, release their property to them; but consume it not wastefully, nor in haste.

Arberry: Test well the orphans, until they reach the age of marrying; then, if you perceive in them right judgment, deliver to them their property consume it not wastefully and hastily.

Analysis:

Two words اسرافا و بدارا are Hal (adverb) and refer to Dhul Hal, which is لا تا ك لوها. The verse means: Do not consume it wastefully and hastily. Translators such as Arberry, Qara'i, Saffarzadeh, and Shakir have paid attention to this structure more than other translators, nevertheless, all the translations are correct.

Example:

وَسَلِّمْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ لَعَلَّ هُمْ يُذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

In Surah An-Nisa', 4:30.

سَلِّمْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ لَعَلَّ هُمْ يُذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ are Hal (adverb) which refer to هو (Dhul Hal) in سَلِّمْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ لَعَلَّ هُمْ يُذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

Translations:

Shakir: And whoever does this aggressively and unjustly, We will soon cast him into fire And this is easy to Allah.

Irving: we shall roast anyone in a Fire who does so out of enmity and wrongfully. That will be easy for God to do.

Saffarzadeh: And whoever does that, out of Aggression and injustice, We shall cast Him into the Hell Fire and that is An easy matter for Allah.

Qara'i: And whoever does that in aggression and injustice, We will soon make him enter the Fire, and that is easy for Allah

Pickthall: Whoso doeth that through aggression and injustice, we shall cast him into Fire, and that is ever easy for Allah.

Sarwar: Whoever commits murder out of animosity and injustice will be burnt in hell fire. This is a very easy thing for God to do.

Yusuf Ali: If any do that in rancor and injustice, soon shall We cast them into the Fire: And easy it is for Allah.

Arberry: But whosoever does that in transgression and wrongfully, him We shall certainly roast at a Fire and that for God is an easy matter.

Analysis:

The translations are not wrong, but the translation of Shakir seems to be more accurate.

Suggested translation:

Whoever does that aggressively and wrongfully, We will make him enter Fire.

Or

Whoever does that while he is aggressive and wrongful, We will make him enter fire.

Emphasis

In Arabic, different types of structures are used to emphasize on something. We shall study these structures with their translations.

Different types of emphasizing in Arabic:

A)

...+ لا + اسم + افعال

Example:

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ يَا عَزِيزٌ لَّنَا مَا عَالِمٌ إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا يَا رُبُّنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا بِمَا نَعْمُرُكَ أَجْهِلِينَ

In Surah Al-Baqara, 2:32.

Translations:

Shakir: They said: Glory be to Thee! We have no knowledge but that which Thou hast taught us;" Surely Thou art the Knowing, the Wise.

Qara'i: They said," Immaculate are You! We have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, You are the All-knowing, the All-wise.

Pickthall: They said: Be glorified! We have no knowledge saving that which Thou hast taught us. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Knower, the Wise.

Irving: They said:" Glory be to You; we have no knowledge except whatever You have taught us

Analysis:

Suggested translation:

... Our knowledge is only that which you have taught us...

The translations are not wrong but they have been affected by the Arabic structure. It would have been better if they had simply used English structures for emphasizing.

B)

اِفْعَالٌ + فعل + لام

Example:

وَأُولَئِكَ أَصْنَفٌ مِّمَّنْ سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ

In Surah Al-Baqara, 2:70¹¹.

Translations:

Shakir: and if Allah pleases we shall surely be guided aright.

Pickthall: and Lo! If Allah wills, we may be led aright.

Irving: and we should be guided properly, if God so wishes.

Saffarzadeh: and we shall then be guided, if Allah Wills.

Qara'i: and, if Allah wishes, we will surely be guided.

Sarwar: so that God willing, we shall have the right description

Yusuf Ali: We wish indeed for guidance, if Allah wills.

Arberry: and, if God will, we shall then be guided.

Analysis:

Two words have been used to as a way to emphasize in this verse: **إِنَّمَا** (indeed) and **لَهُمْ فِيهَا تَنْذُونَ لَام** (surely, definitely). However, none of the translators mention both these emphasizing. Some of the translators including Qara'i and Shakir mentioned the emphasis of **لَهُمْ فِيهَا تَنْذُونَ لَام** but not **إِنَّمَا**, while some translators have ignored both.

Suggested translation:

Indeed, we will be guided for sure, if God wills.

C)

ما + فعل + اِنَّمَا + اسم

E.g.

وَلَقَدْ اَنْزَلْنَا اِلَيْكَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ لِّيُبَيِّنَ لَكَ اٰيَاتِ الْاِنشَانِ ۗ وَهُنَّ اٰيَاتٍ لِّيُبَيِّنَ لَكَ اٰيَاتِ الْاِنشَانِ ۗ وَهُنَّ اٰيَاتٍ لِّيُبَيِّنَ لَكَ اٰيَاتِ الْاِنشَانِ ۗ

In Surah Al-Baqara, 2:99.

Translations:

Pickthall: Verily We have revealed unto thee clear tokens, and only miscreants will disbelieve in them.

Qara'i: We have certainly sent down manifest signs to you, and no one defies them except transgressors.

Shakir: And none disbelieve in them except the transgressors.

Irving: Only immoral people disbelieve in them.

Saffarzadeh: And none disbelieve in them but the wrongdoers.

Sarwar: Only the wicked sinners deny it.

Yusuf Ali: and none reject them but those who are perverse.

Arberry: and none disbelieves in them except the ungodly.

Analysis:

According to the aforementioned structure, the verse emphasizes that only transgressors (الفاسق المُنْفِرُونَ) disbelieve in the signs of God. The translations of Pickthall, Sarwar, and Irving are better and clearer than the rest.

D)

لنَّ + فعل + اِرْتِدَاءً

E.g.

وَلَن لَّا يَرْجِعَ الْكُفْرَ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِهِمْ لَئِن لَّا يَرَوْا آيَاتِنَا بِمَدَدِ مَلَكِنَا لَيَحْتَدِثْنَ بِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَلْوَالِيَهُمْ أَكْثَرَ مِنَّا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامِ بِالظَّالِمِينَ

In Surah Al-Baqara, 2:95.

Translations:

Shakir: And they will never invoke it on account of what their hands have sent before And Allah knows the unjust.

Irving: They will never long for it...

Qara'i: But they will not long for it ever...

Pickthall: But they will never long for it...

Saffarzadeh: But they will never long for death,

Sarwar: But they can never have a longing for death...

Yusuf Ali: But they will never seek for death...

Arberry: But they will never long for it.

Analysis:

لن means never and اكره دائماً means ever. لن indicates impossibility in the future, it seems the translations are clear and acceptable.

E)

ل + فعل + ن

ل + نَجِدَ + ن

ل and ن are attached to the verb and used separately in order to emphasize. It is important to note how the verb has been translated in the verse below:

والتجدهم لهم الا اكرهوا للناس على الله وانه باهتة

In Surah Al-Baqara, 2:96¹².

Translations:

Qara'i: Surely, you will find them the greediest for life,

Pickthall: And thou wilt find them greediest of mankind for life and greedier [than the idolaters].

Shakir: And you will most certainly find them the greediest of men for life) greedier (than even those who are polytheists...

Irving: You will find them the people most eager to live, even compared with those who associate others with God...

Saffarzadeh: And O, Messenger! Verily, you will find The Jews, the greediest for life and even greedier than the idolaters...

Sarwar: However, you will find them the greediest of all men, even more than the pagans, for life...

Yusuf Ali: Thou wilt indeed find them, of all people, most greedy of life...

This is an explanation for mankind (3:138).

This verse says that the Qur'an is explanation to all the mankind. Hence, the wordings and structures are clear and the meaning is understandable for mankind. The translation should be the same.

Some verses invite people to understand the message of the Qur'an, for instance:

انظروا كيف انازلنا آياتنا لكم بالبينات وانزلناها بالقرآن المبين

See how We explain the signs by various [symbols]; that they may understand. (6:65).

How is it possible to understand the messages of the Qur'an if the verses become complicated? Complication can become so extreme that understanding the text becomes impossible.

Another issue that must be solved is language of the Qur'an. Obviously, those who believe that the language of the Qur'an is mysterious will give a mysterious translation too. Similarly, those who believe that the language of the Qur'an is literary will present a literally translation. The examples apply to other approaches to.

The takeaway is that one's approach to the Qur'an will define how the holy text is translated. We believe that the language of the Qur'an is a special language very close to standard Arabic. Therefore, the Qur'an must be translated using Standard English too, in order to convey its message as complete as possible, because:

The text of the Qur'an is very close to the standard style of Saudi Arabian writing, even when compared to modern writings e.g., Al Arabiyah bayna Yadayk.

The Qur'an itself says that it uses a clear Arabic language:

بل انزلناها بالقرآن المبين

In a clear Arabic language (36:195).

The messengers of God spoke and taught in the language of their target society. Naturally, the language people used was the standard language that all understood. The teachings of religions were for all the people of the society, not for an exclusive class of people, so the translations should be in standard language too.

وما ارسلنا من قبلك الا بالقرآن المبين بل انزلناها بالقرآن المبين بل انزلناها بالقرآن المبين بل انزلناها بالقرآن المبين

And We did not send any messenger but with the language of his people, so that he might explain to them clearly. Then Allah leads astray whomever He wishes, and He guides whomsoever He wishes, and He is the All-mighty, the All-wise (14:4).

Accordingly, if we want to convey the message of the Qur'an as complete as possible, we should use structures of Standard English and refrain from complicating the translation by using non-standard structures. We must also consider whether the wordings used in the source have equivalents in the target language. If so, they can be used, otherwise, their meaning should be translated in the text or footnote. Words that are exclusive to the Qur'an, should be transliterated and their meaning clarified in the footnote in Standard English on the basis of commentaries. Thus, we classify our solution according to what we have said as follows:

Wordings of the Qur'an are constituted from two parts: words and expressions. The words are classified in three parts:

1) Have Equivalents

Have equivalents: such as pronouns e.g. **أنا** meaning "I"

It's easy to translate these words because an equivalent exists in Standard English.

Words with no equivalent in the target language due to being exclusive to the Qur'an, such as Qisas, K'abah, Qiblah, taqwa and so on. Translators must refrain from creating equivalents for this category because no word can adequately reflect their meaning. Instead, these words should be transliterated and their meaning clarified in the footnotes.

Words which have several meanings. They are called difficult words because most of the translators translated them literally and feared to write their meaning according to the context, thus, they have complicated the translation. We suggest that these words should be translated according to their meaning in the text and commentaries of the Qur'an without any fear, otherwise we will complicate the meaning and the message will not be conveyed.

E.g. تحت

The word (تَحَاتُّ: taht) literally means under, beneath, but literal translation of this word in some verses may cause ambiguity, such as verses: 2:25; 2:266; 3:15; 3:136; 3:195; 3:198; 4:13; 4:57; 4:122; 5:12; 5:85; 5:119; 9:72; 13:35.

The word (تَحَاتُّ: taht) literally means under, but translating it literally causes ambiguity in some verses, for instance, 2:25, 266-3:15,136, 195, 198- 4:13, 57,122; 5:12, 85, 119, 9:72, 13:35.

One example has been examined below:

وَالَّذِينَ يُدْعُونَ إِلَى الْفِتْنَةِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

In Surah Ta Ha, 20:76.

If (تَدْعُونَ: taht) is translated literally, the meaning of the verse will not be correct. For instance, ‘there are rivers under the gardens’ is wrong, the verse is actually saying ‘gardens through which rivers flow’. Therefore, in order to avoid complication in this category we should refrain from translating literally.

2) Expressions

This group consists of the most difficult phrases of the Qur’an. We have chosen these phrases because they are like expressions and proverb, therefore, the literal meaning of these phrases makes no sense. Therefore, this group must be translated either by using expressions with a similar meaning in the target language or to translate the meaning itself.

e.g.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

In Surah Al-Anfal, 8:46.

رَبِّحَ literally means smell or wind, but in this phrase the literal meaning is not intended. Most classic commentators believe this expression means: power and position¹, so this sentence, i.e. (لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ), means to lose your unity, power, and strength.

3) Difficult Structures

Structures that are exclusive to Arabic, such as Tamyiz and Maf’uli mutlaq. The difficulty is because they are exclusive to Arabic and we are not allowed to use these structures in Standard English. Rather, we should use structures that already exist in Standard English.

e.g. Surah Al-Fajr, 89:21:

يَوْمَ نَسْفَعُ بِالنِّفْثِ الْأَرْضَ وَاللَّاتِ وَالْعِزَّىٰ

Nay! When the earth is pounded to powder.

If we say that نَسْفَعُ is Maf’uli mutlaq takidi, it should not be repeated in the translation, instead another word must be used to show emphasis, such as strongly and severely, or a verb such as crush and pounder.

[1](#). See: Tabrisi 1372 Sh.

[1] [1]

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