QATAR UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF SHARIA AND ISLAMIC STUDIES

TRANSLATING QUR'ANIC STYLISTICS (AL-I'JĀZ AL-BALĀGHĪ): A STUDY OF SIX

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF SŪRAT ṬĀHĀ

BY

RIZWAN AHMAD

A Thesis Submitted to

the College of Sharia & Islamic Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in Exegesis and Qur'anic Studies

January 2022

COMMITTEE PAGE

The members of the Committee approve the Thesis of
Rizwan Ahmad, defended on November 25, 2021.

_____
Professor Abdallah Aburrahman El-Khatib
Thesis Supervisor

_____
Professor Mohammad Khazar Al-Majali
Committee Member

_____
Dr. Zakaryya Ahmed Abdel-Hady
Committee Member

_____
Dr. Yahya Ahmad Jalal
Committee Member

Approved:

_____
Professor Ibrahim Abdullah Al-Ansari, Dean, College of Sharia and Islamic Studies

ABSTRACT

RIZWAN AHMAD, Masters: January: 2022, Master of Arts in Exegesis and Qur'anic Studies

Title: Translating Qur'anic Stylistics (Al-I'jāz Al-Balāghī): A Study of Six English Translations of Sūrat Ṭāhā

Supervisor of Thesis: Professor Abdallah Abdurrahman El-Khatib.

Stylistic inimitability, *al-i'jāz al-balāghī,* is one of the cornerstones of the Qur'anic textual structure. Based on the inability of the Arabs of the time to compose even one verse like that of the Qur'an, Muslim scholars believe that the stylistic structure of the Qur'an is unique in that no human being can produce anything like it. Based on an analysis of stylistic inimitability by six translators, my thesis shows that the translators understand the significance of the features and have generally tried to maintain it in English, except in cases where the structure of English doesn't allow that. An exception is the translation by Abdel Haleem, who chooses *not* to retain the Arabic structure order if it goes against the contemporary English features.

Unlike many critics of Qur'an translation who argue that such translations are incorrect, I argue that this is the result of the privileging of the audience. One key finding of this study is that dominant assessments of Qur'an translation are based on two unrealistic assumptions, namely (1) correctness means faithfulness to the source language, and (2) successful translation must render the totality of meanings.

Analyzing Abdel Haleem's translation, I also show that there is a real danger of translators diverging from the source language text to achieve communication for the target audience. I have shown that what's needed is the execution of the principle of *loyalty* rather than *faithfulness*. This study underlines the need to examine the prevalent

benchmarks of assessment through an engagement with recent translation theories, which will help understand factors other than the primacy of source language, allowing researchers to delve deeper in the factors such as the audience, the purpose, and the ideology.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my thesis to abbī, my father, and ammī, my mother (allāh yarḥamuhumā) whom I lost during my master's study. My father, whose book shelf had copies of Abul A'lā Mawdūdī's tafsīr in Urdu would have been happy to see my work on the Qur'an.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an, which was revealed in Arabic to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the early seventh century over a course of twenty-three years, continues to be the most important book for about 1.9 billion Muslims throughout the world. This is the book that not only shapes and guides the religious aspects of their rituals such as prayers, fasting, and pilgrimage but their entire gamut of social, cultural, political, and economic experiences and ideas.

1.1   Statement of the Problem

As the message of Islam contained in the Qur'an spread beyond the Arabic-speaking countries to the rest of the world, a need for its translation in different languages grew. Although Muslims initially had reservations about translating the Qur'an, fearing that people might consider a translation a replacement of the original Arabic Qur'an, they have now become aware of its need and in fact have now become active contributors to its translation. A major realization is that it is only through translation that non-Arabs can have access to an authentic Qur'an that doesn't contain errors and biases that many early translations by orientalist did.

While the translation of the Quran has flourished in the past one hundred years, a critical study of the translations is still lags far behind. This research will fulfil this gap by paving the way for a rigorous study of Qur'an translation and its assessment. It will not only be helpful as an object of critical study for scholars of Qur'an but also for general readers of translation. The research will show the challenges translators face when dealing with a divine text whose structure and meanings are unmatched by any

other text. Based on a comparative analysis, the research will show the accuracy with which translators have dealt with the linguistic inimitability.

1.2 Main Research Questions

Given the significance of the study of Qur'an translation, this thesis explores the following research questions:

1. To what extent are translators aware of the stylistic imimitibility of the Qur'an?

2. What strategies do they adopt in translating the stylistic features?

3. What constraints does the structure of English impose on translatability?

4. What factors should determine the efficacy of Qur'an translation, which will help develop criteria for translation assessment?

Qur'anic text in general is quite complex and is, therefore, challenging to render it into translation in any language. Its stylistic uniqueness, known as inimitability, *i'jāz*, is considered to be the most formidable element of the Qur'an. This thesis examines translation of the stylistic inimitability, *al-i'jāz al-balāghī,* by six translators, namely Marmaduke Pickthall (1875-1936), Yusuf Ali (1872-1953), Arthur J. Arberry (1905-1969) Muhammad Muhsin Khan (1927-2021) & Muhammad Taqiyuddin Al-Hilali (1893-1987), Abdel Haleem (1930-), and Seyyed H. Nasr et. Al (1933-). Their translations cover a major part of the twentieth and twenty first centuries:

1. Marmaduke Pickthall   1928

2. Yusuf Ali   1934

3. Arthur J Arberry   1954

4. Khan & Al-Hilali   1999

5. M. Abdel Haleem   2005

6. Nasr et al.   2015

To this end, I focus on Chapter-20, Sūrat Ṭāhā, of the Qur'an. Since the stylistic features used in the Qur'an are many, I zoom in on four features: namely, the word order, *al-taqdīm wa al-ta'khīr*, affirmation, *al-tawkīd*, verb-noun alternation, *al-fiʻl wa al-ism* and the object deletion *hadhf mafʻūl bihī*. The reason for choosing these features are that they are quite prominent in Chapter-20 and have also been widely discussed in relation to the inimitability in other parts of the Qur'an.

1.3   Limitations of the Research

Although the stylistic features I examine in this thesis are not limited to Sūrat Ṭāhā, my findings are limited to this chapter of the Qur'an. More studies of the same features in other chapters are needed to make broader generalizations about the startegies adopted by the translators.

1.4   Structure of the Thesis

In order to understand the translation of the unique stylistic features, Chapter-2 provides a detailed discussion of the theories of translation starting from the initial debates among the Roman scholars such as Cicero (106-43 BC), Horace (65-27 BC), and St. Jerome (347-420 AD) who translated the Bible and other literary works from Greek into Latin. The chapter traces the evolution of translation studies through the medieval period up to the contemporary times. The goal is not only to understand how practitioners of translation have dealt with the challenges they faced but also to get a perspective on how certain themes and ideas about translation have evolved. This chapter also discusses the recent shift in translation theory from the binary opposition between word for word and sense for sense translation to incorporation of other factors such as the type and the purpose of text, the audience, the choice of language and so on in communicative and functionalist theories. The Chapter closes with a discussion of

the notion of correctness in translation. I show that the assessment of translation is intricately linked to theories of translation and, therefore, a believer in the theory of word for word translation will find a sense for sense translation incorrect. I point out the complexity in the assessment of translation linked to factors such as genre, audience, and purpose.

Chapter-3 gives a historical overview of the translation of the Qur'an with a focus on the English language, although its translation into other Islamic languages such as Farsi, Urdu, and Turkish do exist. I begin with early translations by European missionaries/orientalists and then move on to the twentieth century when Muslim translators entered the translation space. I also discuss the significance of translation into English within the globalized world where English is no longer confined to native-speaking countries of the UK and USA. It has instead become a language of the educated people beyond the native countries. I also discuss Qur'anic style and the challenges they pose for translation. The chapter closes with a discussion of four quintessential features of the Qur'anic stylistics that are examined in greater detail in Chapter-4.

To understand the use of stylistic features and their translations, Chapter-4 starts with a general overview of Sūrat Ṭāhā and its major themes. It delves into the study of the four stylistic features and their translations by the six translators. After showing variations in the translation of these features by translators, I explain the variation using translation theories. Here, I also examine some critical reviews of translations to show how their theoretical approach is quite limiting in that they don't look at translation beyond faithfulness to the source language. The goal is not really to pronounce judgment on a particular translation as more correct than others but to understand the

complexity of *skopos*, or factors, that inform the decisions translators make which impact the outcome. My study clearly shows that the translator is quite visible, *a la* Venuti, in their work through the choices they make about translation.

The Conclusion chapter presents a summary and conclusion of this research and some recommendations about the future lines of research on Qur'an translation.

A note on the transliteration of the Arabic material is in order. I have followed the Library of Congress transliteration scheme, which is widely used in social science studies in general and Qur'anic studies in particular.[1]

---

[1] The transliteration table is available on: https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/romanization/arabic.pdf

CHAPTER 2 : THEORIES, DATA, AND METHODS

2.1   Introduction

The main goal of this chapter is to lay out the theoretical aspects of translation so that translations of Qur'anic inimitability can be situated within a broader framework. It starts with a discussion of the different meanings of the English word "translation" with the aim of clarifying the meanings that are relevant to this research. The chapter then traces the historical development of theories of translation starting from early debates among the Romans about *word for word* versus *sense for sense* translation. The chapter also provides a discussion on the themes and concepts in translation that have persisted across times in the field of translation studies.

The communicative and functional theories of translation that take into account different text types and their functions, going beyond the limiting structural view of text as words and sentences as found in works of Nida & Taber, have also been discussed. These recent theories of translation are important to understand the motivations behind the differing strategies and choices made by different Qur'an translators depending on their goals and audiences. The section also discusses the links between the notion of correctness and translation theories so that the complexities surrounding the question, 'which translation of the Qur'an is the best?,' can be appreciated. Placing the notion of correctness within the larger theoretical framework doesn't mean that all translations are correct. As it is obvious, some translations could contain errors because of lack of comprehension of the Arabic language structure or culture on the part of the translator. These mistakes, however, only show individual aberrations and failing and say little about the translation as a process. Furthermore, a sound theoretical perspective is

needed because many critical studies have examined translations and offered alternative 'correct translation,' albeit without taking into account the whole gamut of issues that govern translation and inform the thorny issue of correctness.

2.2   Meanings of Translation

The English word 'translation' as used in the literature is ambiguous as it could refer to either the *product* or the *process* of translation. Hatim and Munday's comprehensive definition captures the two aspects and adds the cognitive dimension which inform translation. They define the ambit of translation as consisting of three elements: namely, 1] "the process of transferring a written text from SL [source language] to TL [target language]", 2] "the written product, or TT [target text], which results from that process", and 3] "The cognitive, linguistic, visual, cultural and ideological phenomena are an integral part of 1 and 2".[2] For example, when I mention Abdullah Yusuf Ali's English translation of the Qur'an, I refer to the product, which is the text in the English language he has rendered from the original Arabic.

The word translation, however, also refers to the process by which a translator changes the original text from the SL into the TL, i.e., the process by which Yusuf Ali's English translation of Arabic came into being. In this usage, the word refers to the methods and strategies the translator adopts and the decisions he/she makes in changing the text from one language to another. The word *translating* is sometimes used in the literature to refer to the *process* to distinguish it from the *product* of translation. Eugene Nida, a pioneer in translation theories, uses this word in his foundational book on

---

[2] B. Hatim and Jeremy Munday, *Translation: An Advanced Resource Book for Students*, Routledge Applied Linguistics, Second edition (London ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), p. 6.

translation.[3] It is, however, important to note that not all scholars adhere to the term *translating* in their work and that the term translation is still widely used to refer to either of the two meanings, which the context of use often disambiguates.

Furthermore, the word translation, in a more comprehensive way, is also used to refer to the spoken modes of text, which is now more precisely described by the term oral translation or interpretation. In this thesis, we are concerned with translation as a process as well as product but only applicable to written texts, for interpreting is beyond its scope. Since the late 1980's, following James Holmes, the term *translation studies* has gained currency, which refers to the study of translation.[4] This term will henceforth be used in addition to translation.

2.3   Functions of Translation

Translation as a practice has existed, formally and informally, for centuries among all cultures. Reiss argues that translation has existed as long as human civilization has, "…there has always been translation; there has always been criticism of translations; and there have always been clever heads to ponder the problems of translating…".[5] As a subject of systematic academic enquiry, however, it is relatively new.[6]

As a practice, translation has played a critical role in communicating social, economic, trade and business needs of the people as well as bridging linguistic and cultural boundaries between different civilizations. Archeological evidence of contact between Arabs and Indians going back to the Bronze age comes in the form of

---

[3] Eugene Albert Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 1964).
[4] Jeremy Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*, 2. ed (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 5.
[5] Katharina Reiss, 'Text Types, Translation Types and Translation Assessment', in *Readings in Translation Theory*, ed. & trans. by Andrew Chesterman (Helsinki: Oy Finn Lectura Ab, 1977), pp. 105–15 (p. 106).
[6] Munday, p. 4.

"countless Indian artifacts one finds in Bronze Age archaeological sites (from 2300 to 1000 BC) and modern-day museums in the GCC states, Iraq, and Iran".[7] It is unthinkable that trade in ancient and medieval times between communities speaking different languages such as the ones between the Indians and the Arabs took place without the presence of translators and interpreters.

At the time of the Revelation of the Qur'an in the seventh century, Makkah was already a thriving trade and business center where people from different parts of the world speaking different languages and dialects converged to do business.[8] Such a situation led to what sociolinguists call a language/dialect contact situation, modern examples of which are large cities such as Cairo, London, and New York City.[9] One of the many linguistic outcomes of a contact situation is linguistic change and innovation, including borrowing of words and other structural changes at the levels of phonology, morphology, and syntax. By contrast, languages of the people in the countryside, because of lack of contact with speakers of other languages and dialects, do not change as much and preserve the old linguistic forms better. This, in addition to other social factors, explains why Makkans would send their children to *bādīyah*, the countryside, so that they, in addition to other things, learn the old and pure form of the Arabic language, untouched by the impacts of contact with other languages and dialects.

The old Arab practice of sending children in their formative years to the countryside further attests to the presence of multiple languages and dialects in Makkah, which was a *ḥāḍirah*, a city, and a business center at that. This implies that Makkah

---

[7] James Onley, 'Indian Communities in the Persian Gulf, c. 1500–1947', in *The Persian Gulf in Modern Times*, ed. by Potter, Lawrence G. (Springer, 2014), pp. 231–66 (p. 232).
[8] RB Serjeant, 'Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam: Misconceptions and Flawed Polemics', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 110.3 (1990), 472–86.
[9] Sarah G Thomason, *Language Contact* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2001).

couldn't have thrived commercially without traders and businessmen understanding each other. There is no evidence that they spoke a lingua franca, a common language like English in the twenty-first century. What is a more likely scenario, then, is that there were some people who had learned commercially valuable languages and functioned as translators and interpreters between traders speaking mutually unintelligible languages. This is in harmony with Reiss's remarks above that translator have existed since the beginning of human civilization.

Although there is no documented evidence of the presence of translators in Makkah, there is one from Madinah, where Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) migrated to in 622 AD. In an authentic narration by Zaid Bin Thabit in which he was asked by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to learn the language of the Jews, he is reported to have said, "*Amaranī rasūl allāhi ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa 'allama fa ta'allamtu lahu kitāba yahūd, wa qāla: innī wa allāhi mā āmanu yahūda 'alā kitābī. fa ta'allamtuhā, fa lam yamurra bī illā niṣfu shahrin ḥattā ḥadhaqtuhu, fakuntu aktubu lahu idhā kataba, wa aqrā'u lahu idhā kutiba ilayhi*"

أَمَرني رَسولُ اللَّهِ صلَّى اللَّهُ عليه وسلَّمَ فَتَعلَّمتُ له كِتابَ يَهودَ، وقال: إِنِّي واللهِ ما آمَنُ يَهودَ على كِتابي. فَتَعلَّمتُه، فلم يَمُرَّ بي إلَّا نِصفُ شَهرٍ حتى حَذَقتُه، فكُنتُ أكتُبُ له إذا كَتَبَ، وأقرَأُ له إذا كُتِبَ إليه

"Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, asked me so I learned for him the book of the Jews. He said by God I do not trust the Jews on my book, so I learned it. So, not half a month had passed till I mastered it. I used to write for him and read for him if people wrote to him".[10] This narration has been judged as *ḥasan ṣaḥīh*. From this narrationalthough it is not known how much of proficiency Zaid acquired in two

---

[10] Sulaymān Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan Abī Da'ūd, Kitāb Al-'Ilm, Riwāyat Ḥadīth Ahl Al-Kitāb*, 4 vols (Ṣayda, Beirut: Al-Maktabah Al-'Asrīyyah, n.d.), pp. 18, Ḥadīth No. 3645.

weeks, what we do know is that translators and interpreters existed during the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and played an important role in facilitating communication between Arabic and Hebrew speakers.

In addition to the role of translation in facilitating the day-to-day needs of communication between people who do not share a common language, translation has also been significant for civilizational progress; it has played a crucial role in the preservation and spread of knowledge across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Bsoul demonstrates the effective role played by Bayt al-Ḥikmah, House of Wisdom, established by the Abbasid Caliphs, and many other similar translation institutions spread all over the Arab-ruled states, including Andalusia in Spain, in translating works from the classical languages such as Sanskrit and Greek into Arabic which led to the development and flourishing of mathematics and astronomy in the Medieval Muslim era.[11] Highlighting the role of translation during the Abbasid rule (750-1256), Baker writes, "Bayt al-Hikma…, in Baghdad, functioned as an academy, library and translation bureau, and produced translations from Greek, Syriac, Persian, Sanskrit and Nabatean".[12]

Bsoul argues that the translation of the classical Sanskrit masterpiece Sūryasiddhānta, which means 'the principles of the light', into Arabic had an impact on the leading Muslim scientists Al-Khwārizmī (d. 830) and Al-Birūnī (d. 1048). The impact of translation on the development of medicine is noteworthy too. Bsoul mentions that many Indian doctors were invited to work in the Abbasid palaces

[11] Labeeb Ahmed Bsoul, *Translation Movement and Acculturation in the Medieval Islamic World* (Berlin: Springer, 2019).

[12] Mona Baker, 'Arabic Tradition', in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. by Gabriela Saldanha and Mona Baker (London ; New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 328–37 (p. 331).

including the famous Ibn Duhan who was the head of the hospital, known as Bīmāristān, in Baghdad during the reign of Harūn Al-Rashīd (d. 809 AD). Concluding the role of translation and its larger impact, Bsoul remarks, "This rich Indian heritage and what the Arabs adapted from the written heritage of the Persians, Greeks, and Chinese influenced the medical renaissance of the Arab-Islamic civilization".[13]

Similarly, the role of translation of classical scientific and theoretical texts, from Latin and Greek into Arabic, such as Ptolemy's *Almagest*, Euclid's *Elements,* and Diophantus's *Arithmetica* with rich annotations not only preserved the Greek classical knowledge but expanded it and which later became a backbone of the emergence of European renaissance.[14] Bsoul's remarks sums up the role of translation in the rise of the European renaissance:

> It was this type of critical thought that facilitated the emergence of the Renaissance in Western Europe. The scientific renaissance began in the eighth century through translation, while in Europe, it began in the twelfth century, also through translation. The transfer was from Greek to Arabic through Syriac, from Sanskrit to Arabic through Persian, and then, from Arabic to Latin.[15]

2.4   Evolution of Translation Studies

Despite such a significant role played by translation in communication, preservation, dissemination, and refinement of knowledge, as evidenced through the examples discussed above, a rigorous academic study of translation as a science did not begin until the post-World War II years. It doesn't follow from this, however, that the

---

[13] Bsoul, p. 11.
[14] George Saliba, *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2007).
[15] Bsoul, p. 197.

translation as a process and the challenges it posed were never discussed by translators. In many works, translators have raised important issues they faced while translating the text. Some of those ideas have continued to occupy an important position in theoretical debates about translation even today. So, while the study of translation as a science is recent, its origins, in the western world and other traditions, go back to several centuries.

Although a historical account of any thought based on temporal division is fraught with risks because ideas rarely begin from and end at a specific time-period, George Steiner in his book on the history of translation divides the historical evolution of translation roughly into four major periods.[16] A look at the historical development will help understand some of the major themes that have dominated the debates.

2.4.1 First Phase of Translation Studies

Steiner's first period starts with the preliminary thoughts about translation attributed to Roman philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43BC) and the poet Quintus Horatius Flaccus, known in English as Horace (65-27 BC), who lived during the reign of the emperor Augustus. It ends with the publication of Alexander Fraser Tytler's Essay on the Principles of Translation in 1791, which covers a long time span of over 1800 years.[17] This period is characterized by translators grappling with practical issues related to translating including the thorny issue of whether to translate following the principle of *verbum verbo,* or *word for word*, also known as literal translation, observing *fidelity or faithfulness* to the source language text or *sensus senso* or *sense*

---

[16] George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, 2nd ed (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
[17] Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

for sense, also known as *free* translation. In free translation, translators privileged the target reader and culture more than the source text.

This period witnessed Roman scholars/translators such as Cicero, Horace, and Saint Jerome advocating for a sense for sense translation as a guiding principle for texts in general, although St. Jerome made an exception to religious scriptures about which he said "where even the order of the words is of God's doing".[18] Jerome, however, was quite unequivocal about sense for sense translation, "Now I not only admit but freely announce that in translating from the Greek – except of course in the case of the Holy Scripture, where even the syntax contains a mystery –I render *not word-for-word, but sense-for-sense*".[19] Jerome's exception is relevant to understanding different trends in Qur'anic translation to which I will return later. Another prominent figure who dealt with the tension between the word for word and sense for sense translation is Alexander Fraser Tytler, who published his famous Essay on the 'Principles of Translation' in 1791. He laid out a set of guidelines for translators in which he advised them that to be successful and effective they need to strike a balance between the two extremes of word for word and sense for sense.[20]

The tension between the literal and free translations was not confined to the European tradition but informed the Arab scholarship and practice during the Abbasid period (750-1256) too. Baker identifies the two main currents among Arab translators of the time. The school led by Yuhanna Ibn al-Bitrīq (796-806) and Ibn Nācima al-Himsi followed a word for word or literal translation approach and translated Greek

---

[18] Kevin Windle and Anthony Pym, 'European Thinking on Secular Translation', in *The Oxford Handbook of Translation Studies* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 1–16 (p. 2).
[19] Munday, p. Quoted in; 20.
[20] Windle and Pym, p. 3.

words with equivalent Arabic words and, where none existed, borrowed the Greek words into Arabic. The second school led by Hunayn Bin Ishaq (809-873), who was an outstanding translator whom the Abbasid caliph paid in gold currencies, adopted a sense for sense approach and was more successful.[21]

The reason why in free translation the target language reader and text were privileged, is related to the larger social and political contexts within which the European thoughts on translation, especially in France, developed. The 16th century is the beginning of the development of French as an official and national language and the weakening of Latin as the language of scholarship and literature. The main ideological thrust of the time was the nationalistic goal to enrich the French language and literature, which led to many works which were literal translations of classical works in Latin and Greek. But this changed soon. Starting with the 17th century, there emerged a movement for free translation with the goal of making available texts in French that are pleasant to read for *French readers* and follow the French literary norms and conventions.[22] The push for the translated work to meet French literary and linguistic standards was so great that translations that had drifted away from the source text were viewed quite positively by later scholars and were actually called *belles infidèles* (Unfaithful Beauties).[23] The idea was that a deviation from the original source text will help create texts that would be appreciated better by the French readers. During this movement, the target language French and its readers and culture were privileged

---

[21] Baker, pp. 332–33.

[22] Myriam Salama-Carr, 'The French Tradition', in *Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. by M Baker and G Saldanha (London ; New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 404–10 (pp. 406–7).

[23] Salama-Carr, p. 406.

over the source language Latin, its structure and culture, because of the nationalistic goals.

2.4.2 Second Phase of Translation Studies

Steiner's second period of translation start with the late 18th and early 19th century and ends with the publication of Larbaud's Sous l'invocation de Saint Jérome in 1946. This period is marked by attempts to theorize translation and develop its concepts and methods. This period of Romanticism which saw a rebellion against the school of Unfaithful Beauties that had previously celebrated departure from the source language text as essential for effective translation. It witnessed a swing back to faithfulness/fidelity to the source text and the word for word approach whereby the structure and style of the source text were privileged and preserved in the target language. Windel & Pym capture the intellectual orientation of translators of this period as follows: "Literal renderings became the preferred method, approved by many, including Goethe in his late period, and in France Chateaubriand upheld the calque as an ideal form of translation, applying it to Milton's Paradise Lost".[24] Calque refers to the process by which a source language word or expression is translated literally. The Arabic word *taghẕīyah rāji'ah* for the English word 'feedback' is an example of calque.

The first attempt to go beyond the binary of word-for-word and sense-for-sense, was undertaken by the English poet John Dryden who formulated some working principles of translation. He classified translation into three types: (i) metaphrase, which is word for word and line by line translation, (ii) paraphrase, which is translation with some freedom, similar to sense for sense, and (iii) imitation, which he defines as translation that abandons both the form and the meaning. He preferred paraphrase,

---

[24] Windle and Pym, p. 2.

rejecting thereby both metaphrase and imitation.[25] Unfaithful beauties of the previous era would fall within the last category of imitation.

Although the dyadic opposition of word for word and sense for sense dominated the western translation thought, it doesn't mean that European translators and scholars didn't deal with other aspects of translation. Leonardo Bruni (d. 1444), an Italian humanist, who translated many classical literary works was quite concerned with the style of the original author. He argued that only a few translators possess the literary knowledge and translation skills in both the source and the target languages to accomplish the goal. He remarked , "…such stylistic demands could only be met through the learnedness and literariness of the translator, who needed to possess excellent knowledge of the original language and considerable literary ability in his own language".[26]

Another important figure, who advocated for the centrality of the source text is the 19th German scholar Friedrich Schleiermacher who for the first time identified two different types of *translators*: (i) those who translate commercial texts, and (ii) those who translate scholarly texts. He contends that a true translator has two options: "Either the translator leaves the writer in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him, or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him".[27] He preferred the first strategy which can be achieved by adopting an 'alienating' approach which means orienting the reader to the source language text and content.[28] His concept of alienation has been developed by Venuti into foreignization

---

[25] Munday, p. 26.
[26] Munday, p. 23.
[27] Munday, p. 29.
[28] Munday, p. 29.

of text in contrast with its domestication to the target language reader.[29] For Schleiermacher, the source language text and its author have priority over the target text and culture, and the job of an effective translator is to take the reader of the target text to the source text rather than manipulate the source text to fit the taste and culture of the target text readers.

2.4.3   Third & Fourth Phase of Translation Studies

Steiner's third period, which by his own admission, overlaps and coexists with the fourth period, starts in 1940's when insights from the field of structural linguistics begin to inform translation studies. During this period, translation was seen as a branch of linguistics and comparative literature.[30] Many departments in universities in North American and Europe were engaged in translation to render literature produced in one language into another. Here the influence of linguistics, however, was more profound than literature. The fourth period, coexisting with the third one, starting in 1960's witnesses mushrooming of ideas about translation, a significant part of which was the result of developments in linguistics. Nida's work is seminal in this period. One of the defining characteristics of this period and the dominant approach was to find equivalence for source language words into the target language.[31] A detailed discussion of Nida is given below in Section 2.5.3.

Because of the focus on the source language, this approach to translation is known as retrospective, which is compared with the approach known as prospective, which developed in late 1970's and early 1980's. In the prospective approach, the focus

---

[29] Lawrence Venuti, 'The Translator's Invisibility', *Criticism*, 28.2 (1986), 179–212.
[30] Mary Snell-Hornby, 'The Turns of Translation Studies', in *Handbook of Translation Studies*, ed. by Yves Gambier and Luc Van Doorslser (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2010), pp. 366–70.
[31] Snell-Hornby, p. 366.

radically shifts from the source to target language. Snell-Hornby notes this radical departure, "…a clear swing from a source-text oriented, retrospective, 'scientific' approach to one that is prospective, functional and oriented towards the target-text recipient".[32] The message and its reception by the target language audience and their culture occupy the central position in this approach. A characteristic of the fourth period of translation studies can be described as a philosophical vision that places it within a broad theoretical framework, making it a truly inter-disciplinary area of study.

2.4.4 Digital Phase of Translation Studies

A final theoretical and methodological change in approaches to translation started in the 1990's with advancement in media and technology and globalization. This turn in translation studies capitalizes on the availability of large-scale electronic databases that are now easily accessible to translators. Modern technology has now made it possible for the creation and use of electronic databases of technical terms. The databases also allows translators working in different parts of the world to see and benefit from each other's work. This technological development has also made it possible for researchers to study linguistic concordances by searching for certain items in the database. An example of this is the volume on Arabic Corpus Linguistics.[33] With reference to the study of stylistics of the Qurʾan, Younis, using a Qurʾan corpus, examines the use of verb-preposition constructions such as ʿalā, 'on'; ʾilā, 'to'; and li-, 'for' in terms of their collocational patterns.[34] The availability of a corpus and its use employing scientific methods is critical for this study too as it is also based on a Qurʾan

[32] Snell-Hornby, p. 367.
[33] Tony McEnery, *Arabic Corpus Linguistics*, 2019.
[34] Nagwa Younis, 'Semantic Prosody as a Tool for Translating Prepositions in the Holy Qurʾan: A Corpus-Based Analysis', in *Arabic Corpus Linguistics*, ed. by Tony McEnery, Andrew Hardie, and Nagwa Younis (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), pp. 120–42.

translation database which has been used to compare different translations and the strategies adopted and the principles that guide them.

This phase is also marked by a very fluid nature of digital text which, contrary to the previous phases, is not something created and owned by the author but rather something that is jointly created and is in a state of continuous evolution. An example of this is the large amounts of Wikipedia texts in multiple languages, many of which are translations. The Qur'anic text and its English translations do not fall within this category as they are regulated by institutional authorities. Translations not receiving approvals seldom go beyond a limited range of readers.

2.5   Themes Across Times

As relevant as it is to discuss different periods in the evolution of translation theories, Bassnet, instead of periodization, attempts to trace certain concepts and themes that have persisted across time. She argues that looking at different periods erases the continuity of certain themes that have engaged both theorists and practitioners of translation for centuries. Bassnet, for example, demonstrates that some of the prominent features of Steiner's first period are still around and continue to shape translations produced today. She notes, "instead of trying to talk in what must inevitably be very general terms about a specifically 'Renaissance' or 'Classical' concept of translation, I have tried to follow lines of approach that may or may not be easily locatable in a temporal context. So, the *word for word v. sense for sense* lines can be seen emerging again and again with different degrees of emphasis".[35]

---

[35] Bassnett, p. 53 emphasis mine.

2.5.1 Word for Word versus Sense for Sense

The significance of the issue of primacy of form over meaning/content or meaning over form can be gleaned from the fact that it began over 2000 years ago among the Roman poets and writers who were engaged in translating literary works from Greek into Latin. Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43BC) and Horace (65-27 BC), mentioned above, are well-known scholars who grappled with the issue of whether to observe fidelity to the source language text and structure or be guided by the target language, its speakers, and culture. Cicero noted, "If I render word for word, the result will sound uncouth, and if compelled by necessity I alter anything in the order or wording, I shall seem to have departed from the function of a translator".[36] Although his remarks show the tension between choosing the two extremes, it is clear that he accords primacy to the target language structure and style. Cicero's position marks a departure from the established practice among the Romans of translating literally word for word because the Romans would read Latin side by side with the original Greek.[37] His successor Horace in his well-known book *Art of Poetry* reinforced Cicero's position and remarked beautifully about the tension between the source and target languages.

"A theme that is familiar can be made your own property so long as you do not waste your time on a hackneyed treatment; nor should you try *to render your original word for word like a slavish translator*, or in imitating another writer plunge yourself into difficulties from which shame, or the rules you have laid down for yourself, prevent you from extricating yourself".[38]

---

[36] Quoted in Bassnett, p. 54.
[37] Munday, p. 20.
[38] Bassnett, p. 54 Quoted in Bassnett; Italics mine.

Both Cicero and Horace do not believe that word for word translation, i.e. fidelity to the source language is useful in their translation from Greek to Latin. They both advocate for free translation, which treats the target language and its speakers as more significant than the source language. This dictum continued to rule the field of translation studies for centuries. It finds a robust and express articulation in the works of St. Jerome, a Roman priest, theologian, and, above all, a translator of the New Testament. With the spread of Christianity, translation assumed the new role of dissemination of the word of God. St. Jerome (347-420 AD) was tasked by Pope Damasus in 384 A.D. to translate the New Testament. About his translation, he boldly announced that he has translated sense for sense and not word for word, which was in fact a reiteration of the position advocated by his predecessors Horace and Cicero. This theoretical position has continued to hold a sway in translation studies in general and Biblical translation in particular and continues to be debated in modern theories.

2.5.2   Ideological Foundation of Sense for Sense Approach

It is important, however, to note that the sense for sense theoretical position advocated by the Romans did not come out of nowhere; it had an ideological foundation like the French case discussed above. The main goal of the Roman project of translation from Greek to Latin was to employ Greek literature to enrich literature in Latin, which was still in a fledgling stage. Both Horace and Cicero's advocacy of sense for sense translation, which became established later with St. Jerome's translation of the New Testament, was undertaken with the expressed goal to serve the Roman nationalistic project of creating literature and literary cannons in Latin. It is, therefore, not surprising that the target language Latin, received the focus and the source language Greek was treated as secondary.

Recent works on translation argue that no translation is free of ideologies as it shapes and is shaped by the culture and ideologies within with it is produced and practiced. This move to take translation as text to translation as culture and politics is referred to in the literature as the 'cultural turn'.[39] Lawrence discusses in detail the politics of culture and how it has impacted English translation of the Qur'an. He cites the textual insertion of the phrase "(such as the Jews), nor of those who went astray (such as the Christians)" in the translation of the opening Chapter by Khan and Al-Hilali, which Saudi government has been promoting in place of the Yusuf Ali's translation, which was in official circulation for years.[40] Another contentious issue that explains the ideological underpinnings is the translation of the Arabic word *islām* in the Qur'an. Islam is both a common noun, meaning submission to God, and the proper noun referring to the *dīn*, religion, written with the capital letter as Islam, brought by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In addition to other factors, Al-Johany & Peachy's translation entitled *The Qur'an: The Final Book of God - A Clear English Translation of The Glorious Qur'an* ran into controversy and ended up not being approved by the Saudi Ministry of Religious Affairs because of the choice they made regarding the translation of the word *islām*.[41] Peachy, an American convert, explained that he and his Saudi co-translator Al-Johani insisted on translating *islām* as submission, in all its occurrences, rather than Islam, with the capital letter. Newer translation such as the ones by the noted Islamic scholars and translators Abdel Haleem and Syed Hossein Nasr et al. have used the common noun 'submission' on the grounds that its translation as Islam is not in congruity with many verses. Abdel Haleem explains:

---

[39] Snell-Hornby, p. 366.
[40] Bruce B Lawrence, *The Koran in English: A Biography* (Princeton University Press, 2017).
[41] Lawrence, p. 129.

"It has to be borne in mind that the word islam in the Arabic of the Qur'an means complete devotion/submission to God, unmixed with worship of any other. All earlier prophets are thus described by the Qur'an as muslim. Those who read this word islam in the sense of the religion of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) will set up a barrier, illegitimately based on this verse, between Islam and other monotheistic religions".[42]

Nasr et al. clarifies their choice of the word 'submission' in their introduction, "The message of the Quran concerning religion is universal. Even when it speaks of *islām*, it refers not only to the religion revealed through the Prophet of Islam, but to *submission to God* in general. Therefore, in the Quran Abraham and Jesus are also called muslim in the sense of "submitter.".[43] Following this principle, Nasr et al. translate the word Islam in Q-3:85 as submission:

wa man yabtaghi ghayra al-islāmi dīnan fa-lan

yuqbala minhu wa huwa fī al-ākhirati min al-khāsirīn

"Whosoever seeks a religion other than *submission*, it shall not be

accepted of him, and in the Hereafter he shall be among the losers".[44]

Worth noting in the above quotation is also how Abdel Haleem has chosen to write islam and muslim with small letters 'i' and 'm', indicating that these words refer to the generic meaning of Islam and not exclusively the faith brought by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In this sense, muslim is one who follows any of the Abrahamic

---

[42] M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an: A New Translation* (OUP Oxford, 2005), p. xxiv.
[43] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 'General Introduction', in *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, ed. by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York, USA: HarperOne, an imprint of Collins Publishers, 2015), pp. xvii–xxxviii (p. xxii) emphasis mine.
[44] *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, ed. by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, First edition (New York, NY: HarperOne, an imprint of Collins Publishers, 2015), pp. 393, Kinlde Location 8460.

religions, but Muslim is the one who follows the religion brought by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The choice, as it is clear, is heavily ideological.

Translation of the Bible in later centuries with the ideological goal of missionaries to spread its message to the lay people, with basic literacy levels, further solidified the theoretical position of free translation. The political ideology of the Bible translation project is expressed by John Purvey, who revised Wycliffe's English translation in 1408, "Purvey's Preface states clearly that the translator shall translate 'after the sentence' (meaning) and not only after the words, 'so that the sentence be as open [plain] or opener, in English as in Latin and go not far from the letter".[45] This ideology of prioritizing target language and its speakers and cultures by rebelling against the notion of fidelity and pushing the source text to the margins finds it strongest expression in the works of Nida and Nida & Taber. Their work is pioneering and foundational in understanding translation theories in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Nida's position therefore calls for a detailed discussion.

2.5.3 Nida's Formal and Dynamic Equivalence

As mentioned earlier, the post-world war phase in translation studies is heavily influenced by developments in linguistics. This is largely attributed to the rise of generative linguistics led by Noam Chomsky with the publication of his pioneering book *Syntactic Structure*, which continues to shape linguistic studies until today.[46] Nida believed that translation theories cannot be developed without drawing upon the insights and advances in structural linguistics. He articulated this bold theoretical

---

[45] Bassnett, p. 57.
[46] Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2009).

position in a series of articles and books.[47] In his early work, he emphatically stated, "But the scientific study of translating can and should be regarded as a branch of comparative Linguistics with a dynamic dimension and a focus upon semantics".[48] The reliance of translation on structural linguistics influenced a key aspect of the theory of translation, which is to give primacy to spoken language over writing. The father of structural linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure, in his foundational book a *Course in General Linguistics*, clearly argued that writing is secondary, and the real language is the spoken form. He made his powerful statement prioritizing the spoken over the written, "Language and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second exists for the *sole purpose of representing the first*. The linguistic object is not both the written and the spoken forms of words; *the spoken forms alone constitute the object*.[49]

The treatment of the written form of the language as secondary to speech is characteristics of the whole structural linguistic paradigm of which Chomsky was the leading figure. This ideology influenced translation theories in that it aimed at reaching out to the common lay people who may or may not be educated. Structural linguists and many other newer branches of linguistics such as sociolinguistics have taken this position as an article of faith. This is another pertinent example of how ideologies have shaped translation theories and practices.

Nida & Taber openly advocate for a departure from previous translation theories and practices in which the form, despite a preference for the target language, continued

---

[47] Eugene A Nida, 'Science of Translation', *Language*, 45.3 (1969), 483–98; Eugene Albert Nida; Eugene Albert Nida and Charles Russell Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), VIII.
[48] Eugene Albert Nida, p. 495.
[49] Ferdinand De Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. by Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), pp. 23–24 emphasis mine.

to have some significance. They describe translation that gives primacy to the form of the source language as old focus and calls for a new focus that accords primacy to message and the target language. They note,

"The older focus in translating was the *form of the message*, and translators took particular delight in being able to reproduce stylistic specialties, e.g., rhythms, rhymes, plays on words, chiasmus, parallelism, and unusual grammatical structures. The new focus, however, has *shifted from the form of the message to the response of the receptor*. Therefore, what one must determine is the *response of the receptor* to the translated message".[50]

Nida and Taber reject terms such as literal, free translation, and faithfulness to the source languages arguing that identical equivalence between the source and the target language does not exist and argues that the goal of the translator is to find closest equivalent. Then he makes a distinction between formal and dynamic equivalence. In the former, "One is concerned that the message in the receptor language should match as closely as possible the different elements in the source language".[51] This approach is oriented towards the source language forms and contents, which they argued against for an effective translation. By contrast, dynamic or functional equivalence is based on 'the principle of equivalent effect', where "the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message".[52] He gives an example from the Bible. "One of the modern English translations, which perhaps more than any other, seeks for equivalent effect is

---

[50] Eugene Albert Nida and Charles Russell Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 1982), p. 1 emphasis mine.
[51] Eugene Albert Nida, p. 159.
[52] Eugene Albert Nida, p. 159.

J B Phillips' rendering of the New Testament. In Romans 16:16, he quite naturally translates "greet one another with a holy kiss" as 'give one another a hearty handshake all around'".[53] It is clear how much of freedom he has used in departing from the text of the Bible.

The dynamic equivalence thus is geared towards target language structure and receptors in which adaptations of grammar, lexicon, and cultural references are essential.[54] As Nida advocates for this, he is fully aware of the tension between the form and the content and the formal and dynamic equivalence and admits that there are various levels in between the two extremes. He, however, highlights the importance of meaning over form saying, "correspondence in meaning must have priority over correspondence in style' if equivalent effect is to be achieved".[55] In 1981, Newmark introduced semantic translation and communicative translation which are similar to formal and dynamic equivalence of Nida.

2.5.4 Beyond Nida: Functionalist and Communicative Approaches

Nida's structural approach was criticized by later scholars on many grounds, including the fact that equivalence was largely confined to the word level and that his equivalence effects were vague and subjective and thus impossible to examine objectively. Many scholars also pointed out that it was impossible to achieve Nida's equivalent effect.[56] Raof, a translator and scholar of the Qur'an, describes Nida's sought-after notion of equivalence as mirage, which becomes especially more elusive if the source and target language are linguistically and culturally as incongruous as

---

[53] Eugene Albert Nida, pp. 159–60.
[54] Munday, p. 42.
[55] Munday, p. 43.
[56] Munday, p. 44.

Arabic and English.[57] Raof argues, "A translator who aspires to achieve total lexical and/ or textual equivalence is chasing a mirage: total equivalence at any level of language is impossible, relative equivalence at any level is possible".[58] The best, he argues, one can achieve is what Hatim & Mason call approximation to the source text meaning. Nida's search for dynamic equivalence received a scathing criticism from Venuti. He argues that the modern theories of translation have privileged the audience and its language and culture so much that the translator has become invisible despite their active intervention in the process of translation. He calls translation acts "…interpretations which resist description according to *facile notions of linguistic equivalence or sameness between original and translation*".[59] Venuti advocates for an approach that dislodges the target language reader as the main stakeholder, nay arbiter, in the process of translation. He, therefore, opposes the concept of fluency as conceptualized and determined by the target language reader and instead calls for foreignization, which "…highlights the fact that the text produced in the target culture is a translation".[60] Venuti's approach of foreignization instead of erasing the cultural and linguistic specificity of the source text seeks to rehabilitate it which "…makes visible its condition as a translation and thereby counteracts the violent erasure of cultural difference at the core of any translating process".[61]

Interestingly, Nida's work was not only criticized by scholars of translation; He was equally fiercely criticized by religious groups for advocating dynamic equivalence,

---

[57] Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture and Exegesis* (Routledge, 2013), p. 5.
[58] Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture and Exegesis*, p. 7.
[59] Venuti, p. 182 emphasis mine.
[60] Silvia Kadiu, *Reflexive Translation Studies: Translation as Critical Reflection* (London: UCL Press, 2019), p. 21.
[61] Silvia Kadiu, p. 22.

which requires changing and adapting source language words which, along with the message, are considered sacred by many Christians. This dissatisfaction led to an exploration of new areas in 1970's and 80's which saw translation studies charting unexplored territories. Functionalist and Communicative theories were two important outcomes of this exploration.

Katharine Reiss's work is quite path breaking. Unlike Nida and his followers, Reiss's unit of analysis in translation is not a word or phrase or sentence but text because she argues that communication is achieved at the larger level of text and, therefore, equivalence must be examined at this level.[62] She argues that different text types or genres are used to achieve different communicative functions, also known by the Greek word *skopos*. For example, the purpose of references at the end of a research paper is *informative* in that its goal is to simply communicate information about the resources used in the paper. Other texts such as poetry is *form-focused* and its function is expressive, and finally, texts of a sermon is to appeal and persuade the reader/audience to act in a particular way. While the informative-type of text is content-focused, the expressive-type text is form-focused, and therefore the translation of an informative text into a target language must transfer referential *content* using a plain prose; by contrast, translation of an expressive text must transmit aesthetic *form* as well. In dealing with the expressive content, the translator adopts the perspective of the source language author.[63] So in this view the form contributes to meaning in expressive texts. This view of language aligns with Muslims' view of the Qur'anic text in which the meanings is not divorced from the form, and one feeds into the other. Raof highlights

---

[62] Reiss, pp. 106–9.
[63] Reiss, p. 109.

this position, "For Muslims, the divine Word assumed a specific, Arabic form, *and that form is as essential as the meaning that the words convey"*.[64]

From this perspective, to judge the effectiveness of a translation it is critical to know what type of text it belongs to. Reiss declares, "the transmission of the predominant function of the ST [source text] is the determining factor by which the TT[target text] is judged".[65] Her position is that there is no *one* criterion to judge all translations. This theory has forced translators to think about the position of the source language in the process of translation. A translator as an expert will decide in advance what the *skopos* of the text under translations is. Based on that, they may decide whether the text should be adapted to the target language and culture, or the reader should be brought to the text. Schäffner clarifies, "Fidelity to the source text is thus one possible or legitimate *skopos*. *Skopos* theory should not, therefore, be understood as promoting (extremely) free translation in all or even majority of cases".[66]

Although Reiss's work was quite influential, it also faced criticism on the grounds that no text is homogenous, and that one single text can contain a mixture of all types of text identified by her. The question, then, is how translation of such mixed genre texts will be evaluated. Regardless of the criticism, her contribution does help us move from a rigid low-level unit of words and sentences to a more dynamic and higher-level units such as text types. The functional approach allows us to see the structure and function of the Qur'anic text as different from that of a book on geography, and this difference will play a critical role in their translations.

---

[64] Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture and Exegesis*, p. 19 emphasis mine.
[65] Reiss, p. 109.
[66] Christina Schäffner, 'Functionalist Approaches', ed. by Baker, Mona and Gabriela Saldanha, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2009), 115–21 (p. 117).

2.6 Notion of Correctness in Translation

While discussing translations of the Qur'an, the question of "which is the most correct translation?" often comes up, and therefore it is important to discuss it. The notion of correctness of translation is not an independent concept but intricately connected with theories of translation. A believer in word for word translation theory will find any deviation from the source text in terms for structure and style as incorrect. The proponents of the sense for sense or dynamic equivalence such as Nida and Taber would, however, consider a translation based on word for word as incorrect. Steiner beautifully puts it:

> "Should a good translation edge its own language towards that of the original, thus creating a deliberate aura of strangeness, of peripheral or opaqueness? Those who privilege the original text would answer in the affirmative. Or should a good translation naturalize the character of the Linguistic import so as to make it at home in the speech of the translator and readers? Those of privileging the target audience would answer 'yes'".[67]

The realization that the notion of correctness is an element of the theoretical position of the translator has led to the view that there is no *one* correct translation. The correctness of translation is replaced with effectiveness of translation depending on many factors. House clearly puts it, "…in trying to assess the quality of a translation one also addresses the heart of any theory of translation, i.e., the crucial question of the nature

---

[67] quoted in Lawrence, p. 29.

of translation or, more specifically, the nature of the relationship between a source text and its translation text".[68]

Given the link between the theory and assessment of translation, it is not surprising that Nida & Taber, because of their belief in the primacy of the target language and its readers, had long argued that it is the response of the target text reader that determines the success of a translation. They argue, "The old question: Is this a correct translation? must be answered in terms of another question, namely: for whom? Correctness must be determined by the extent to which the average reader for which a translation is intended will be likely to understand it correctly".[69] In their treatment of assessment of effectiveness of translation, they are very explicit about their primacy of the receptor/audience at the cost of the source text.

An unfortunate consequence of their theoretical position was also the undermining of the respect and reverence that many people had, and continue to have, of classical and literary languages such as Greek and Arabic. So, Nida & Taber call for a change in the attitudes and ideologies towards both source and target languages. They argue, "…translators often need to change their view of the languages in which they are working. This includes not merely a shift in some of the attitudes which tend to place the source languages on a theological pedestal and to bow down before them in blind submission, but it often requires quite a radical rethinking of one's attitude toward the receptor language, even when it is one's own mother tongue"[70]

---

[68] Juliane House, 'Translation Quality Assessment: Linguistic Description versus Social Evaluation', *Meta*, 46.2 (2002), 243–57 (p. 2) <https://doi.org/10.7202/003141ar>.
[69] Nida and Taber, VIII, p. 1.
[70] Nida and Taber, p. 3.

The above quotation shows that for Nida & Taber, for translators to be effective, they must, simultaneously, stop bowing down in submission to source languages and at once treat target languages as fully capable of expressing the meanings of the original text. While their point that all languages are capable of expressing all thoughts and ideas is linguistically valid, their extreme position that dethrones classical source languages such as Arabic from its position of reverence is quite contrary to the respect Muslims accord to Arabic. Functional theories of translation do consider Muslims' belief that the *form* is as critical as the meaning, and, therefore, in translating the Qur'an meaning is not the only concern for the translator.

Despite their extreme position advocating for the primacy of meaning over form, Nida and Taber are, in fact, not completely oblivious of the significance of form, especially if form is an essential part of the meaning and contributes to it, which is a characteristic of many textual genres especially poetry. "… we cannot reproduce the rhythm of Hebrew poetry, the acrostic features of many poems, and the frequent intentional alliteration. At this point, languages just do not correspond, and so we must be prepared to sacrifice certain *formal niceties* for the sake of the content".[71] His call for the sacrifice of formal niceties for the sake of meaning may work fine for what Reiss calls informational texts but will fail in dealing with the Qur'an, which comprises of both informative and expressive elements.

Scholars who believe in the functional approaches to translation take a more comprehensive view of the assessment of translation by looking at the text type and its intended functions and the broader social environment within which it takes place.[72]

---

[71] Nida and Taber, p. 5.
[72] Reiss, pp. 107–10.

The translation of a news report of an incident in a newspaper, which is an informative text, will be evaluated differently from a poem or a religious text, because their forms, in addition to the content/meaning are equally important. Similarly, if a text is operative, such as advertisements, electoral speeches, religious sermons, the assessment criteria will accordingly differ. The translation of 'alcohol' as *'mashrūb rūḥī* , 'spirit drink' in some Arabic speaking countries is a good example of the cultural and ideological impacts on translation.

It doesn't follow from this view of the notion of correctness, however, that there is nothing incorrect in translation and that it is always a matter of the theoretical position of the translator. Translators have committed mistakes, and even blunders. Al-Mulaifi in his study of English translations of the Qur'an involving *I'rāb* shows how both E H Palmer and George Sale incorrectly translated the verse وَلَا تَكْفُرُوْنَ *wa lā takfurūni* (2:262) as '…and do not misbelieve' and '…and be not unbelievers' respectively ignoring the object 'نی' of the verb from which the ي has been dropped for stylistic reasons.[73] Similarly, Ghazalah has shown the error A J Arberry made in the translation of the word *aḥlām* as nightmare in Sūrat Yūsuf.[74] Well-known translators have committed errors by following a literal approach in understanding idiomatic expressions such as the one in Q 21:64 *farajʿū ilā anfusihim,* which means 'they did a self-appraisal of themselves' which has wrongly been translated by Arberry, and others as well, literally as 'So they returned one to another…'.[75] Al-Sāb examines A J

[73] Khālid b. Sulaymān b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Al-Mulayfī, *Taʿaddud Tarājim Maʿānī Al-Qurʾān Bil-Lughah Al-Injilīzīyah Fī Ḍawʾ al-Iʿrāb: Dirāsah Taḥlīlīyah Naqdīyah li Baʿḍ al-Namādhij*, Dirāsāt Naqdīyah, 5, al-Ṭabʿah al-ūlá (Riyadh: Markaz Tafsīr lil-Dirāsāt al-Qurʾānīyah, 2015), pp. 10–11.
[74] Hasan Saʾīd Ghazālah, 'Asālīb Al-Mustahriqīn Fī Tarjamat MaʿĀnī al-Qurʾān al-Karīm: Dirāsah Uslūbīyah Li Tarjamatay Sīl Wa Ārbarī Li MaʿĀnī al-Qurʾān al-Karīm Ila al-Injilīzīyah' (presented at the Tarjamat Maʿānī al-Qurʾān: Taqwīm lil Maḍī wa Takhṭīṭ lil Mustaqbal, Madinah, KSA: King Fahd Complex For Printing The Holy Quran, 2002), p. 17.
[75] Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Qurʾan Translation: Discourse, Texture and Exegesis*, p. 31.

Arberry's translation and similarly points out some true misunderstanding (or bias) displayed by some orientalist translators, including the translation of *wanḥar* in 108/2 as 'slay the victims' instead of 'sacrifice'.[76]

2.7   Data and Methods

This research is based on an analysis of English translations of Chapter 20, Sūrat Tāhā of the Qur'an, consisting of 135 verses, by six modern twentieth and twenty first century English translators: namely. M. Pickthall (1928), Yusuf Ali (1934)[77], Arberry (1955), Khan & Al-Hilali (1999), Muhammad Abdel Haleem (2008), and Study Qur'an (2015) by a group of scholars led by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. The goal is to study how the stylistic inimitability of the Qur'an has been rendered into English by these translators. The method adopted for the study is analytical and descriptive. A close reading and analysis of the translations has been done to identify the stylistic features and the processes by which they have been translated.

The translations under study are quite diverse in many ways. Firstly, historically they cover about a hundred-year period—from the beginning of the rise of English translation in the first half on the twentieth century to the latest in 2015. Secondly, linguistically translators come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of Urdu, Arabic, and native English speakers. Abdullah Yusuf Ali was born in Mumbai in India and spoke Urdu and English fluently. Muhsin Khan, the co-translator with Al-Hilali was born in the province of the Punjab in Pakistan and spoke Urdu and Punjabi. He received his degree in medicine from the UK.[78] He also translated the book of Hadith

---

[76] Haitham Sāb, 'Study of the translation of the meanings of the Qura'ān into English by the orientalist Arthur J. Arberry', *Islamhouse*, 2014, p. 10 <https://islamhouse.com/ar/books/459994>.
[77] This is the version revised by the Saudi government in 1985.
[78] https://dar-us-salam.com/authors/muhsin-khan.htm

Sahih Al-Bukhari. Taqi Uddin Al-Hilali was an Arabic-speaking Moroccan Islamic scholar.[79] Pickthall and Arberry are native speakers of British English. I have also included A J Arberry, who in terms of faith was not Muslim. Study Qur'an has been included because it is a collective work of translation.

Different translations were obtained from the www.IslamAwakened.com website, which gives all existing translations, including the now obsolete ones such as those by E H Palmer, N J Dawood, and George Sale. To the best of my knowledge. there is no other website that has as many translations as this one. The different translations of each *āyah* were copied into an Excel sheet and placed in rows for comparison. Although some typographic errors were found on the website, they do not affect the analysis as the thesis deals with units larger than letters. The data in the Excel sheet serves as a mini corpus, which allowed for search of a particular word or phrase used by different translators.

2.8   Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined different theoretical approaches to the study and practice of translation starting from the early Romans. Some of the critical debates in the field of translation studies. including the word for word and sense for sense translation, which have persisted for centuries, have been discussed at length. Going beyond this binary, the chapter also discussed the latest translation theories, including those that take much more nuanced approaches in integrating other factors such as the nature of the text, its intended function, and the audience and how they impact strategies translators adopt.

---

[79] Lawrence, p. 125.

The critical notion of correctness of translation has also been discussed. I have shown how a particular notion of correctness, on which a translation assessment is based, is a reflection of a theoretical approach and, therefore. has to be seen within this perspective. I have shown that the success of a translation will not only depend on whether it is word for word or sense for sense but on the type of text and its function. This approach allows us to use different criteria for the assessment of different texts.

The chapter also briefly discussed the data on which the research is based and the sources from which they were collected. I have shown that this research uses the corpus as a source of data and employs an analytical and descriptive approach in the analysis of the various translations. Next chapter discusses translation of the Qur'an and the complex issue of translating the stylistic inimitability of its stylistics into English.

CHAPTER 3 : TRANSLATING THE QUR'AN

3.1   Introduction

In this chapter, I give a brief history of translation of the Qur'an in general with a focus on the English translation. Of all translations in different languages, English translation occupies a distinct position because it is not only a language spoken in politically powerful English-speaking countries but also because it has emerged as a language of educated Muslims and non-Muslims in South Asia and South-East Asia; in fact, in many other parts of the world, including the Arabian Gulf.[80]

This is followed by a discussion on the challenges translators face in rendering Arabic Qur'an into English focusing on the linguistic dissonance between the two languages. I weave together the issues raised by Qur'an scholars and Arab rhetoricians into the accounts of the practical difficulties faced by translators as evidenced from their reflections in their translation work, if available. The section closes with a discussion on the challenging nature of translating the stylistic features of the Qur'an. I provide an overview of the theoretical understandings of the doctrine of inimitability of Qur'an with a view to situating the analysis of the translation of Sūrat Ṭāhā in the next chapter into a theoretical perspective. I also discuss the issue of the assessment of different translations and how the question of 'which English Qur'an translation is the best?' is impossible to answer.

---

[80] Sally Findlow, 'Higher Education and Linguistic Dualism in the Arab Gulf', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 27.1 (2006), 19–36.

3.2   Untranslatability of the Qur'an

While *tafsīr*, exegesis, and other branches of the study of the Qur'an, including grammar and stylistic, has a long and checkered history tracable to the early years of the Revelation, translation of the Qur'an as an activity did not start until several centuries later. There is, however, some evidence that selected Qur'anic verses were translated into different languages when Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) sent letters to political leaders around the Arabian Peninsula.[81] There is also a report that Salmān Al-Farisī, the Persian companion of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), translated the opening chapter of the Qur'an into Farsi.[82] Al-Sarkhasī (d.1090 AD) in the Chapter *Kitāb Al-Ṣalāh* of his book entitled *Al-Mabsūṭ Al-Mu'allaf*, deals with the use of languages other than Arabic in prayer, and mentions that Abu Ḥanīfā allows the use of Farsi in *takbīr* on the ground that *al-maqsūd huwa al-dhikr wa dhālika ḥāṣilun bikulli lisānin.*[83] Then he goes on discuss the contentious issue of the use of the reading of the Qur'an and mentioning that Abu Ḥanīfā allowed it whereas others didn't.[84]

There is, however, no full translation of the Qur'an from the early periods of Islamic rule, including the Muslim rule in European Andalusia, where there definitely was the need to make it accessible to Europeans. One of the reasons for the lack of scholarly attention to translation could be attributed to the strongly held belief among Muslims that translating the Qur'an is impossible or even blasphemous. The only

---

[81] Mustapha Hassan, 'Qur'ān (Koran)', ed. by Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), pp. 225–29 (p. 228).
[82] Sumaya Ali Najjar, 'Metaphors in Translation: An Investigation of a Sample of Quran Metaphors with Reference to Three English Versions of the Quran' (unpublished PhD Thesis, Liverpool John Moores University, 2012).
[83] Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Al-Sarkhasī, *Kitāb Al-Mabsūṭ*, 30 vols (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār Al-Ma'rifah, 1993), I, p. 36.
[84] Al-Sarkhasī, I, p. 37.

exception is the position espoused by Abu Ḥanīfā, the founder of the Ḥanafi school of thought, who argued that Qur'an could be translated into other languages and that the translation could even be read in prayers, a position which he is believed to have later retracted.[85] His position was based on his understanding that "the inimitability of the Qur'an lies in its meaning, not necessarily in its language".[86] To him, the form and content of language could be separated from each other—a position that is not entertained by a broad spectrum of Muslims scholarship. Fakhruddīn Rāzī (1149-1210), the author of the *Great Exegesis*, has strongly criticized Abu Ḥanīfā's position calling it "dubious".[87] Advancing a series of arguments, he issues his verdict quite emphatically, "… and it follows that anything which is non-Arabic is not Qur'an".[88] Rāzī challenges Abu Ḥanīfā's belief that meaning/content can be separated from the form. He argues that form and content/meaning *both*, and not merely the content/meaning, constitute the Qur'an. To him, a translation, no matter how great it is, is a human composition and, therefore, not appropriate for use in prayers. He gives a Farsi translation of a Qur'anic verse and comments on it: "Clearly, this [latter composition] is from the genus of human speech in both form and meaning. As such it could not be used in prayer as the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) said: 'in this prayer of ours nothing of people's speech is appropriate'.[89] Since Abu Ḥanīfā, no other Islamic scholar has argued for the translation of the Qur'an being the Qur'an itself.

---

[85] Hassan, pp. 225–29.

[86] Fazlur Rahman, 'Translating the Qur'an', *Religion & Literature*, 1988, 23–30 (p. 25).

[87] Fakhr al-Din Razi, *Great Exegesis: Al-Tafsir Al-Kabir-The Fatiha.*, trans. by Sohaib Saeed (Islamic Texts Society, 2018), p. 329.

[88] Razi, p. 331.

[89] Razi, p. 332.

The belief in the untranslatability of the Qur'an, based on theological grounds, springs from the fact that Qur'an, in what is referred to as *taḥaddī* or challenge verses, (2:23–4;10:38; 11:13;17:88; 52:33–4) challenged those who doubted its veracity, amongst whom were the best of Arab poets, to come up with anything similar to its verses, but they couldn't bring even one single verse.[90] For Muslims, the belief is that if the Arabs themselves couldn't produce one verse similar to it, then how could a translation do it. Abdul-Raof summarizes this position, "…when the best of Arab poets, rhetoricians, linguists, etc., of a linguistically homogenous community of the time failed, one wonders how a bilingual/bicultural individual can succeed in reproducing an equivalent 'Qur'an' in a language which is both culturally and linguistically incongruous to Arabic".[91] This leads Abdul-Raof to argue that translation is, in fact, an act of interpretation and retextualization.[92]

The belief can be evidenced in the fact that in many languages Qur'an was not translated until several centuries after Islam's arrival. Chinese Muslims didn't allow a translation until the nineteenth century.[93] This deeply entrenched view among the Muslim scholarship was codified in the form of a *fatwa,* a religious decree, in 1908 by Shaikh Mohammad Rashid Rida, banning the translation of the Qur'an in any language.[94] It was finally allowed in 1936.[95,96] The permission was granted provided the

[90] Ayman El-Desouky, 'Discussions of Qur'anic Inimitability: The Theological Nexus', in *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, ed. by Mustafa Shah and Muhammad Abdel Haleem (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 374–87 (p. 2).

[91] Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture and Exegesis*, p. 39.

[92] Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture and Exegesis*, p. 39.

[93] Nasr, 'General Introduction', p. xxvii.

[94] Basalamah Salah and Sadek Gaafar, 'Debates around the Translation of the Qur'an', in *The Routledge Handbook of Arabic Translation*, ed. by Sameh Hanna, Hanem El-Farahaty, and Abdel Wahab Khalifa (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), pp. 9–26 (p. 15).

[95] Hassan, p. 227.

[96] 'Abd Allāh Al-Khaṭīb, 'Al-Juhūd Al-Mabdhūlah Fī Tarjamat Maʿānī al-Qurʾān Al-Karīm ilā Al-Lughah al-Injilīzīyyah', *Journal of College of Sharia and Islamic Studies*, 29 (2011), 75–128.

translation was not called the Qur'an but 'translation of the meanings of the Qur'an[97].

This *fatwa* was given by Shaikh Muṣṭafā Al-Marāghī, rector of Al-Azhar University in Egypt in 1936. Rahman argues that the Muslims' belief in the untranslatability of the Qur'an is reflected in the titles such as the Arberry's translation "The Koran Interpreted" and Pickthall's "The meaning of the Glorious Qur'an".[98] The Muslims' insistence on making sure that the English translation of the Qur'an doesn't replace the original Arabic Qur'an is reflected in adding the word 'meaning' to the title of the original 1934 English translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali in the Saudi revised version in 1984, which now reads as The *Meaning of the Holy Qu'ran*. This orthodox view has, however, been rejected by modern Muslim scholars and jurists.

Modern Qur'an scholars and translators do not subscribe to Shaikh Al-Marāghī's position. M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, Director of Islamic Studies at School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London and himself a scholar and a translator of the Qur'an, argues that calling a translation 'translation of the meanings of the Qur'an' doesn't align with the structure and spirit of the English language, because, in English, no one says translation of the meaning of any book. He says, "Therefore I do not hesitate to say in the English translation that it is a 'translation of the Qur'an'; and I am an Arab Muslim and I have memorized the Qur'an and I teach it too".[99] He further clarifies that it is known that no translation is like its original. His own translation, *The Qur'an: A New Translation*, therefore, doesn't contain the word 'meaning' in its title.[100] Abdullatif considers the use of "meaning(s)" in translation

---

[97] Hassan; Al-Khaṭīb.
[98] Fazlur Rahman, p. 26.
[99] 'Abdulāī Likhlāfah, Tarjamat al-Qur'ān laisa Qur'ānan, 2008 <https://www.quranicthought.com/wp-content/uploads/post_attachments/5fe22f66311e5.pdf>.
[100] Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an: A New Translation*.

unnecessary and argues, "…these titles seem to be mere tautologies, or different circumventing descriptions of the same phenomenon we usually call translation. As a matter of fact, what else could a translation be other than the translation of meaning or the interpretation of the original text?".[101] He further argues that the insistence on the use of the word meaning in translations, "…does more harm to the preservation of the divinity of the Qurʾan than to call it a direct translation of the Qur'an. …If we understand that the Qurʾan is an immortal revelation that is fit for all times and all universes of discourse, then how can we claim to have deciphered its meanings?".[102]

Within less than a hundred years since Al-Azhar allowed its translation, over a hundred translations have appeared only in English, and there are hundreds in other languages. According to the Bibliogrpahy of Quran translation compiled by the Research Centre for Islamic History Art And Culture, there were 293 translations in 58 languages excluding, Urdu, Turkish, and Persian.[103] A marked feature of the new translations is the participation of Muslim Qur'an scholars and translators from around the world.

3.3   Early Translations of the Qur'an in English

With Islamic scholars allowing translation of the Qur'an, now "there is practically no language spoken by Muslims in which a translation of the Qur'an does not exist, and in many cases, there are numerous translations".[104] Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that the early attempts to translate the Qur'an was taken up by non-

---

[101] Mohammed Al-Abdullatif, 'The Qur'an Translatability: The Translation's Invisibility', *Babel*, 64.2 (2018), 205–24 (p. 219).
[102] Al-Abdullatif, p. 220.
[103] Nejat Sefercioğlu and Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, *World Bibliography of Translations of the Holy Qur'an in Manuscript Form*, Bibliography on the Holy Qur'an, 2, 3, 4 (Istanbul: Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture, IRCICA, 2000).
[104] Nasr, 'General Introduction', p. xxvii.

Muslims, especially with a view to refuting its credibility and stem the spread of Islam in Europe and beyond. The earliest systematic translation into Western languages by non-Muslim goes back to the 12th century when the Qur'an was translated into Latin by Robert of Ketton (d.1160), under the sponsorship of Peter the Venerable and with the goal of disproving the message of Islam. Not only this translation but others that took place in Toledo in Spain was also politically motivated as the goal was to vilify and defame Islam. Lawrence, a scholar of Islam and Qur'an, marks the hidden agenda of the translation project by noting that in 1142, when Peter asked Robert to do the translation, "'The goal was to produce the first Latin version of the Holy Qur'an. Well not exactly "Holy", since in the eyes of both Robert and his patron Peter, Muhammad was a charlatan rather than a true prophet, and the book produced less than a divine decree".[105] The title of Robert's Latin translation itself, *Law of the pseudo-Prophet Muhammad and the Arabic Koran,* speaks volumes of his intention. To underscore the significance of the political nature of the translation, Lawrence highlights the timing of the project which was between the first and the second crusade (1147-1149).[106] In 1543, Theodor Bibliander (1509-1564) published his Latin translation of the Qur'an for which Martin Luther wrote a preface. In it, King openly stated that translation of the Qur'an was needed to "refute the pernicious belief of Muhammad". "…[A]s I have written against the idols of the Jews and the papists…,", King wen ont, " so also I have begun to *refute the pernicious beliefs of Muhammad*, and I will continue to do so at more length. But in order to do this, it is also useful to study closely the writings of

---

[105] Lawrence, p. 32.
[106] Lawrence.

45

Muhammad themselves".[107] Clearly, these translations were prepared and deployed as part of the broader attack against Islam and Muslims. Lawrence notes that the impact of this translation was so widespread for several centuries in Europe that even Martin Luther may have read it four hundred years later.

A translation into English, however, did not appear until a few more centuries later when in 1649 Alexander Ross, a Chaplain to King Charles 1, translated it into English from French, instead of the original Arabic. It is known in translation studies as relay translation[108] The French translation was accomplished by Andre Du Ryer in 1647, a diplomat and traveler.[109] The attacking tone of the Latin translation continues into this English translation, which is quite explicit in the title which describes the Qur'an as "Turkish vanities', *The Alcoran of Mahomet, Translated out of Arabick into French. By sir Ryer, Lord of Malezair, and Resident for the French King, at ALEXANDRIA. And Newly Englished, for the satisfaction of all that desire to look into the Turkish Vanities.* Lawrence describes the tone of the translation as "combative".[110] Also worth noting in the title is the attribution of the Qur'an's authorship to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which aimed at diminishing its divine origin and thus dent its reverence and prestige among Muslims and non-Muslims.

The next landmark English translation is George Sale's 1734 entitled "The Koran, Commonly Called the Alkoran of Mohammed (translated with notes and commentary)", which is the first one from the original Arabic.[111] In the footsteps of his

---

[107] Sarah Henrich and James L Boyce, 'Martin Luther-Translations of Two Prefaces on Islam', *Word and World*, 16 (1996), 250–66 (p. 263) emphasis mine.
[108] Nan Jacques Zilberdik, 'Relay Translation in Subtitling', *Perspectives*, 12.1 (2004), 31–55 <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2004.9961489>.
[109] Lawrence.
[110] Lawrence, p. 37.
[111] Khaleel Mohammed, 'Assessing English Translations of the Qur'an', *Middle East Quarterly*, 2005, 58–71.

predecessors, in his introduction and without mincing words, Sale bluntly shows his aggressive tone against Islam and the Qur'an. He says "the protestants alone are able to attack the Koran with success and for them I trust providence has reserved the glory of its overthrow".[112] Naudé sums up the general ideological motivation of the early translations, "The adversarial stance towards Islam continued through the eighteenth and nineteenth century. In 1734 Sale, in the preface to his translation, opines that 'how criminal soever Muhammad may have been in imposing a false religion on mankind, the praises due to his real virtues ought not to be denied him".[113] Despite such declared animosity, in many places in the translation of the Qur'an, Sale appears so sympathetic that many Christians believed that he had secretly converted to Islam.[114]

Two more English translations are worth mentioning—*The Koran; Translated from the Arabic, and the surahs arranged in chronological order with notes* by Rev. J M Rodwell in 1861 and *The Qur'an Translated* in 1880. Rodwell, going completely against the organization of the original Qur'an in Arabic, takes the liberty to rearrange the chapters chronologically. Lawrence argues that although Rodwell's translation is not openly as attacking as the previous ones, the motivation is still to undermine Islam. Rodwell tries to show that Muhammad created the Qur'an by compiling different messages from the Christian and Jewish traditions. Palmer, a scholar of many languages, including Urdu, Persian, and Turkish at Cambridge contends, like Rodwell, that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) used to hallucinate.[115] The attempt to discredit the divine origin of the Qur'an by attributing it to Muhammad's hallucination or his

---

[112] Lawrence, p. 40.
[113] Jacobus A Naudé, 'The Qur'ān in English-an Analysis in Descriptive Transaltion Studies', *Journal for Semitics*, 15.2 (2006), 431–64 (p. 455).
[114] Lawrence, p. 40.
[115] Lawrence.

'plagiarism' from Jewish and Christian sources is one of the central tenets of the Orientalist discourse. In the introduction of his translation, while justifying the need for a new one, Abdullah Yusuf Ali mentions that the existing prejudiced translations by non-Muslims was one of the reasons why he embarked upon it. He unequivocally states "The amount of mischief done by these versions of non-Muslim and anti-Muslim writers has led Muslim writers to venture into the field of English translation".[116]

The first full translation of the Qur'an into Persian, a non-Western language, was done in the 1730's by the Indian Muslim theologian-philosopher Shah Waliyullah Dehlavi (d. 1762), often referred to as the Ghazali of Islam[117] in the Indian sub-continent[118]. Later this Persian version became the basis of its relay translation into Urdu by one of his sons. Since then, several Urdu translations have appeared in India and Pakistan, including the one by Syed Abul Ala Maududi's famous *Tafhīm Al-Qur'an* and Amin Islahi's *Tadabbur-e Qur'an*. An Urdu translation *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān* by the Indian freedom fighter and the first Minister of Education of the independent India, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958) is a monumental work, which he could only do till Sūrat *Al-Mu'minūn* before he passed away.[119]

3.4 Muslims Translating the Qur'an

The twentieth century saw an unprecedented growth in the translations of the Qur'an into English by Muslim scholars. One of the motivations for the spurt in

---

[116] Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an:Text, Translation and Commentary*, First Edition, 1934, p. xv <https://archive.org/stream/EnglsihTranslationOfQuranByAbdullahYusufAliWithCommentaryAndIndex/Englsih%20Translation%20of%20Quran%20by%20Abdullah%20Yusuf%20Ali%20with%20Commentary%20and%20Index_djvu.txt>.
[117] Marcia K Hermansen, 'Tension between the Universal and the Particular in an Eighteenth Century Theory of Religious Revelation: Shaah Wali Allah of Delhi's Hujjat Allah al Baligha', *Studia Islamica*, 63 (1986), 143–57.
[118] Fazlur Rahman, p. 25.
[119] *Turjumān Al-Qur'ān*, trans. by Abulkalām Āzād (Delhi, India: Asia Publishing House, 1962).

translation was the prejudiced approaches adopted by some non-Muslim translators like Ross, Sales, and Rodwell. Abdul-Raof notes, "The amount of damage done -wittingly or otherwise- by these non-Muslim translators to the image of Islam has led Muslim writers to take up the challenge and produce workable translations of the Qur'an in Western languages, especially English".[120] Nasr notes that "the number of translations in English has increased almost exponentially in recent decades".[121] Kidwai[122] lists a total of thirty-two English translations in his book, although his list is conspicuous by the absence of many recent translation, including Nasr's the Study Qur'an. In his bibliography, he lists a total of 47 complete translations in English.[123] El-Khatib in his review lists 61 translations and credits Abu Al-Fazl (1856-1956) as the first Muslim translator who published his book in 1912.[124] This was followed by Al-Ḥāj Ḥāfiẓ Ghulām Sarwar (1873-1954) who published his translation in 1920.

Some of the most famous ones in the twentieth century came out of South Asia, namely *The Holy Qur'an with English Translation* and *Commentary* by Mohammad Ali (1917), *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an* by Marmaduke Pickthall (1930), a British convert to Islam, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1934-1937), and *The Message of the Qur'an* (1980) by Mohammad Asad. Originally Leopold Weiss, Asad was an Austrian Jew who converted to Islam and spent most of his subsequent life first in undivided India and later in Pakistan. Noting the

---

[120] Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture and Exegesis*, p. 20.
[121] Nasr, 'General Introduction', p. xxxii.
[122] Abdur Raheem Kidwai, *Translating the Untranslatable: A Critical Guide to 60 English Translations of the Quran*, 1. ed (New Delhi: Sarup Book Publ, 2011).
[123] Abdur Raheem Kidwai, *Bibliography of the Translations of the Meanings of the Glorious Quran into English, 1649-2002: Acritical Study* (Madinah, KSA: King Fahd Complex For Printing The Holy Quran, 2007).
[124] Abdallah El-Khatib, *Translations of the Meanings of the Holy Qur'an into English Language (From 1649 till 2013)* (Sharjah, UAE: University of Sharjah, 2014), pp. 2, 174.

pioneering work of these Muslim translators, Lawrence remarks that these translations "have set the standard for all subsequent translation of the Koran into English".[125]

3.5   Rise of English as International Language

The rise in English translation can be attributed to many factors, two of which are quite salient. Firstly, the twentieth century witnessed waves of migration of Muslims from different parts of the world to English-speaking countries, especially North America and the UK. This resulted into the birth of a generation of Muslims who didn't know their mother tongue, in which their parents may have read the Qur'an. Since the last century, in the West, there are also many cases of conversion of many English-speaking people to Islam. Secondly, the emergence and spread of English as a lingua franca as well as the language of academic and intellectual scholarship in many former British colonies as well as elsewhere has also contributed to the needs for translation into English.[126] Crystal mentions that for every native speaker of English there are four non-native speakers with more than 350 million only in India, which is more than the combined population of all native English-speaking countries.[127]According to Crystal, the number of people who use English is over 1 billion.

The adoption of English as a medium of instruction in non-native countries of former British colonies and beyond has also led to its adaptation to local cultural and linguistic standard.[128] Oliver-Dee mentions that one third of all Muslims alive in 1900

---

[125] Lawrence, *The Koran in English: A Biography*, 80.

[126] El-Khatib, *Translations of the Meanings of the Holy Qur'an into English Language (From 1649 till 2013)*, p. 14.

[127] David Crystal, 'Two Thousand Million?', *English Today*, 24.1 (2008), 3–6 (p. 5) <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078408000023>.c

[128] Ahmar Mahboob, 'English as an Islamic Language: A Case Study of Pakistani English', *World Englishes*, 28.2 (2009), 175–89 (p. 187) <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-971X.2009.01583.x>.

lived under the British rule.[129] Many users of English in non-native countries do not necessarily see it as a colonial baggage but have started to use it for the expression of their own cultural identities. In fact, examining lexical and semantic features coupled with pragmatic and discourse aspects of language, Mahboob argues that Pakistani English is *no longer* used as the language of Muslim inferiority; it has in fact become an Islamic language. Based on an analysis of acknowledgements of M.A. and Ph.D. thesis written in English by Pakistani students, Mahboob shows how Islamic identity is foregrounded in the English used in these works.[130] Mahboob's statement about English becoming an Islamic language of the Muslims in South Asia echoes Yusuf Ali's point about English translations of the Qur'an. He argued that while translating the Qur'an, "I want to make English itself an Islamic language, if such as person as I can do it".[131] This argument was echoed again by Abdel Haleem in an interview, "Unfortunately we couldn't make English an Islamic language…in the same way as Arabic, Farsi, and Turkish are Islamic languages".[132]

English is no longer confined to the former British colonies such as India, Pakistan, and many African countries, it is now being adopted as a medium of higher education in many countries where until recently the local languages were the norms. The Arabian Gulf exemplifies this trend.[133] In the 21st century, English translations of the meanings of the Qur'an are not only read by Muslims in English speaking countries such as the UK, USA, and Canada but also by the young generations of educated

---

[129] Sean Oilver-Dee, 'Courting Islam: The Evolution of Perceptions of Islam within the British and American Governments from the European Colonial Period to the War on Terror', *Journal of College of Sharia & Islamic Studies*, 39.1 (2021), 171–91 (p. 180).
[130] Mahboob, p. 181.
[131] Lawrence, p. 79.
[132] Likhlāfah.
[133] Findlow.

Muslims in non-English speaking countries such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia. To the above factors can also be added the increased interest in Islam and the Qur'an following the attacks on America on 9/11 and the rise of Islamophobia in the West in general.[134] Another reason why the translation of the Qur'an should be done by Muslims comes from Al-Roomy who argues that new converts in western countries need authentic translations done by Muslims, in the absence of which they will have no choice but to read those translations that Muslims consider unsympathetic.[135]

It is, therefore, pertinent to assess English translations not only with a view to examining the accuracy of the translations but also to developing a theory of translation and assessment so that it is not dependent on and parasitic to the biblical tradition of translation theories.

3.6   Qur'anic Style: Challenges in Translating the Qur'an

Although translation of the Qur'an has now received approvals from Islamic scholars and institutions across the Muslim world and the movement to translate it into world languages has gathered momentum, translators of Qur'an still face some monumental intellectual challenges. Many early translators have confessed to the impossibility of its translation into English because of several reasons. Yusuf Ali in the preface to his translation points out that the grasp of the layered and nuanced meanings of the text doesn't depend on linguistic issue but on the educational and spiritual and devotional level of the reader. He expresses it beautifully using the metaphor of prism and its

---

[134] Sumaya Ali Najjar, "Metaphors in Translation: An Investigation of a Sample of Quran Metaphors with Reference to Three English Versions of the Quran" (PhD Thesis, Liverpool John Moores University, 2012).
[135] In Al-Abdullatif, p. 208.

ability to refract a spectrum of light out of which humans can only capture some based on how expansive their spiritual reach is.

> No human language can possibly be adequate for the expression of the highest spiritual thought. Such thought must be expressed symbolically in terse and comprehensive words, out of which people will perceive just as much light and colour as their spiritual eyes are capable of perceiving. It is possible that their prism will only show them a dark blue while a whole glorious symphony of colours is hidden from their eyes.[136]

Making a confession of the inherent limitations of human translation of a divine text, no matter how accurate and beautiful it is, Yusuf Ali compares himself with an artist who is trying to paint a portrait of a landscape and who succeeds, but only partially. "Greatly daring, I have made that attempt. We do not blame an artist who tries to catch in his picture *something of the glorious light* of a spring landscape".[137]

Marmaduke Pickthall, a Muslim convert, whose 1930 translation has enjoyed a great popularity, makes the same admission, "The Koran cannot be translated. That is the belief of old-fashioned Sheikhs and the view of the present writer. … every effort has been made to choose befitting language. But the result is not the Glorious Koran, that inimitable symphony, the very sound of which move men to tears and ecstasy. It is only an attempt to present the meaning of the Qur'an and per adventure something of its charm-in English. It can never take the place of the Qur'an in Arabic".[138]

---

[136] Ali, pp. xx–xxi.
[137] Ali, p. xv emphasis mine.
[138] Quoted in Arthur John Arberry, *The Holy Koran: An Introduction with Selections*, 1953rd edn (New York: Routledge Library Edition, 2013), p. 13.

Arberry, whose translation appeared in 1955 concurs with his predecessor Yusuf Ali: "The rhetoric and rhythm of the Arabic of the Koran are so characteristic, so powerful, so highly emotive, that any version whatsoever is bound in the nature of things to be but a poor copy of the glittering splendour of the original." As it is well known, Arberry was not a Muslim.[139] Joseph Lumbard, a scholar and translator of the Study Qur'an, which is a collaborative work, in their newest 2015 translation echoes the same feeling, "…translating the Qur'an into any language is a daunting task, for it entails conveying the absolute and infinite by means of the relative and finite".[140]

Notwithstanding the impossibility of capturing the ranges and levels of meanings of the Arabic texts into any human language, translators still labor hard to capture the meanings as much as it is humanly possible. Some of these challenges are primarily linguistic and cultural. Raof argues that the issue of untranslatability of the Qur'an traditionally has largely been approached from a theological perspective and works focusing on the linguistic issues have just begun to emerge. He makes a pertinent observation, "The problem of Qur'an untranslatability has always been dealt with from theological and historical points of view. …we need to explain the *linguistic and rhetorical limitations that shackle the Qur'an translator"*.[141] Although scholars and translators have identified several linguistic issues, some major ones focusing on translation into English are discussed below.

Firstly, the grammatical structure of Arabic is quite different from any European language, which makes it difficult to translate many aspects of the Arabic text. Abdul-

---

[139] Quoted in Joseph EB Lumbard, 'The Quran in Translation', in *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, ed. by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York: HarperOne, an imprint of Collins Publishers, 2015), pp. 1601–7 (p. 1601).

[140] Lumbard, 'The Quran in Translation', p. 1601.

[141] Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture and Exegesis*, p. 1 emphasis mine.

Raof argues that this often results into an English translation that not only fails to capture the beauty but also its overall stylistic force. He argues, "Due to the fact that Arabic and English are both linguistically and culturally incongruous languages, the translations of the examples provided may not mirror the underlying signification or the communicative function of the two structurally identical but stylistically distinct Qur'anic Arabic sentences".[142] An example will help explain this. In the *basmalah* there are two words al-*Raḥmān* and al-*Raḥīm*, referring to God's epithets, both of which are derived from the same triliteral root rḥm, meaning 'mercy'. In the Qur'an, the form al-*Raḥmān* always precedes the form *al-Raḥīm*. This is because the former is a morphological form that contains the element of hyperbole, which the latter lacks. Abdul Raof argues that the widely accepted English translations of the words as 'the most gracious' and 'the most merciful' do not capture the difference. The same can be said of the translation of *khā'in*, a traitor, and *khawwān*, a hyperbole form of the noun 'traitor', both of which have been translated as 'traitor' because English does not have this distinction that Arabic does, and it used rhetorically to make speech acts more effective.[143] The stylistic aspects of Qur'anic text, which can be translated, are discussed in greater detail in a separate section below.

Another issue is the lack of vocabulary for the expressions of concepts and themes specific to Islamic belief and culture. Lumbard gives a telling example of the Qur'anic word *tawbah*, a noun, which is roughly translated as 'repentance' and its verb forms *tāba/yatūbu*, 'to repent'. The word literally means 'to return,' indicating that 'to repent' is to return to God. The word is also used to refer to God doing *tawbah*, which

---

[142] H. Abdul-Raof, 'On the Stylistic Variation in the Quranic Genre', *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 52.1 (2007), 79–111 (p. 80) <https://doi.org/10.1093/jss/fgl039>.
[143] Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture and Exegesis*, p. 41.

the English word repentance doesn't express. There are other Arabic words for which there do exist word in English, but they do not capture the same semantic range and depth, or they give different theological meanings: for example the word *ḥajj, ṣawm* when translated into English as 'pilgrimage' or 'fasting'. So many scholars argue that these terms cannot be translated and should, therefore, be written in English as such. After discussing multiple meanings of words such as, *ḥaj, ṣawm, zakāt, and ṣalāt* used in the Qur'an, El-Khatib argues that the range cannot be captured in English, and, therefore, he argues against translating them. This strategy of foreignization approach has been advocated, among others, by Venuti.[144] For this reason, many Islamic languages such as Turkish, Urdu, and Persian have borrowed these conceptual words from Arabic. Abdel Haleem points out the difficulty of translating the meta language, the language used to talk about Qur'an, into English. The Arabic word *sūra* is translated as chapter, which is not entirely accurate because "This is an unhelpful designation, since a *sūra* might consist of no more than one line, such as *sūras* 108 and 112, whereas Sura 2, the longest in the Qur'an, consists of just under 40 pages".[145] Translating the Qur'an into English, therefore, poses a different challenge—a challenge of finding appropriate vocabulary in English which lexically is not fully prepared for the expression of Islamic concepts. Nasr points out, "The composition of The Study Qur'an in English therefore posed for us a much greater challenge than if we had produced this

---

[144] Abdallah El-Khatib, 'A Critical Study for the Proper Methodology of Translating Islamic Terms in the Holy Qur'an into English with Special Reference to Some Qur'anic Terms', *Dirasat*, 33.2 (2006), 523–44 (pp. 531–36).

[145] M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Style* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), p. 6.

work in Persian or Turkish, into the fabric of whose language the Qur'an is already woven".[146]

Moreover, the Qur'an was revealed in the Arabian Peninsula of the seventh century whose inhabitants has a different language and culture. Abdul-Raof shows how cultural incongruity between English and Arabic can create challenges in translation. He gives the examples of *qiṭmīr*, *naqīr*, and *fatīl* which are used in the Qur'an metaphorically to indicate a very small amount of something. These words are related to dates and their stones, and therefore the target reader in whose culture date is not culturally important will not be able to grasp the totality of the meaning.[147] Similarly, it is difficult to translate the Arabic word *ruṭab* in Sūrat Maryam because it is one of the six developmental stages of date in which date is half-ripe.[148]

Nasr, while comparing the translation of the Bible into English makes a pertinent point that publication of King James Bible was a factor in the formation of modern English in terms of vocabulary and metaphors. This clearly, argues Nasr, is not the case with English, "This situation also holds true for such Islamic languages as Persian and Turkish, which themselves already contain many Qur'anic words, phrases, and ideas. Such of course is not as yet the case for English as far as the Qur'an is concerned".[149] This process is what Yusuf Ali refers to as Islamization of English, which Nasr also hopes English will achieve one day. He, however, warns against an exclusivity of English as the language of Islam but similar to Bengali, in Bangladesh

---

[146] Nasr, 'General Introduction', p. xxxvi.
[147] Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture and Exegesis*, p. 26.
[148] Al-Abdullatif.
[149] Nasr, 'General Introduction', p. xxxvi.

and India, which is linguistically capable of expressing both Islamic and Hindu cultural ethos relying on Arabic and Sanskrit resources.

The challenges discussed above, however, pale when faced with what in Qur'anic literature has been referred to as *i'jāz*, 'inimitability', a style unique to the Qur'anic language, which Muslims believe is because of its divine provenance and which is impossible for any human being to produce.[150] In fact, the whole gamut of issues and debates surrounding the notion of translatability revolves around this.

3.7   *I'jāz al-Qur'an*: the Qur'anic inimitability

The Arabic word *i'jāz al-Qur'an* is Muslims' belief that the Qur'an in terms of its linguistics structure and meanings is unmatched and, therefore, is inimitable in that no human being is capable of producing a similar text. The Arabic word *i'jāz*, the verbal noun, *maṣdar*, or *mu'jizah*, the participle form of the verb, *ism fā'il* doesn't occur in the Qur'an itself. The word used in the Qur'anic equivalent of this is *al-āyah, al-sulṭān, al-burhān, al-bayyinah*, etc.[151] The concept is based on *āyāt al-taḥaddī* or challenge verses in in which the Qur'an defiantly asks its opponents and detractors to come up with even a single *sūrah,* **c**hapter, similar to it.[152] According to Rahman, it serves the basic purposes, "…of proving the divine source of the Muslim holy book, and the veracity of Muhammad's prophethood, to whom it was revealed".[153]

---

[150] Hussein Abdul-Raof, 'The Linguistic Architecture of the Qur'an', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 2.2 (2000), 37–51; M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, 'Grammatical Shift for Rhetorical Purposes: Iltifāt and Related Features in the Qur'ān', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 55.3 (1992), 407–32.
[151] Mustafā Muslim, *Mabāhith Fi Al-I'jāz Al-Qur'ān* (Riyadh: Dar Al Muslim, 1996), p. 13.
[152] For the social and political reasons that contributed to the growth of the doctrine of inimitability, See Sophia Vasalou, 'The Miraculous Eloquence of the Qur'an: General Trajectories and Individual Approaches', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 4.2 (2002), 23–53.
[153] Yusuf Rahman, 'The Miraculous Nature of Muslim Scripture: A Study of Abd Al-Jabbar's I'jāz Al-Quran', *Islamic Studies*, 35.4 (1996), 409–24 (p. 410).

The earliest existing documented works on the inimitability of the Qur'an goes back to the 10th century.[154] The first proper monographs dealing with the issue of the inimitability of the Qur'an were written by the famous rhetorician Abdul Qāhir Al-Jurjāni (d. 1078) and they were entitled *dalā'il al-i'jāz,* 'Signs of Inimitability,' and *asrār albalāghah,* 'Secrets of Eloquence'. However, Al-Naẓẓām, Al-Khattābī, and Al-Rummānī had laid the groundwork for this area of study.[155] These books are pioneering works of Arabic stylistics dealing with the issues of inimitability.[156] As the work on inimitability continues to grow and diversify, scholars have discovered the following major types, although some scholars have listed many more:[157] The first three are linguistic in nature and of which only the first one will be discussed here.

1. **Stylistic inimitability *al-i'jāz al-balāghī***: This refers to the linguistic/stylistic inimitability of the Qur'an. This is evidenced not only in the choice of appropriate words but also the arrangement of words, known as *naẓm*, in ways that convey the meanings in the best possible way.

2. **Imaginative inimitability *al-i'jāz al-taṣwīrī***. This refers to the remarkable use of words and metaphors that help readers and listeners imagine and visualize the scene in clear and vivid and powerful ways.[158]

3. **Phonetic inimitability *al-i'jāz al-ṣawtī***: This aspect of the Qur'an relates to sounds and their arrangements that are unique to the Qur'an.[159]

---

[154] *Thalātha Rasā'il Fī I'Jāz al-Qur'Ān Li Rummāni Wa al Khaṭṭābī Wa 'Abdul Qāhir al Jurjāni*, ed. by Aḥmad Khalafallāh and Zaghlūl Salām (Cairo: Dār al-Adab, 1976).
[155] See Khalafallāh and Salām.
[156] Raji M. Rammuny, 'Al-Jurjani: A Pioneer of Grammatical and Linguistic Studies', *Historiographia Linguistica*, 12.3 (1985), 351.
[157] Faḍl 'Abbās and Sanā 'Abbās, *I'jāz al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Amman, Jordan: Dār Al-Nafā'is, 1991), pp. 157–58.
[158] Sayyid Qutb, *Al-Taṣwīr Al-Fannī Fī Al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq).
[159] Maḥmūd Ghāzi, *Al-Madkhal al-Wajīz Ilā Dirāsat al I'jāz Fī al-Kitāb al 'Azīz* (Beirut: Dār al Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyyah, 2010).

4. **Inimitability related to the 'unknown' *al-i'jāz al-ghaybī*,:** This refers to information contained within the Qur'an which talks about the past and the future. There is no way Prophet Mohammed, an illiterate person, would have known it on his own. An example of this is the prediction of the defeat of the Persians by the Romans in Chapter 30, which indeed took place subsequently.

5. **Scientific inimitability *al-i'jāz al-'ilmī*:** This refers to some scientific facts that the mankind hadn't discovered at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an. For example, the description of the development of the embryo in the womb of the mother is quite accurate, something that modern science proved centuries later.[160]

6. **Legislative inimitability *al-i'jāz al-tashrī'ī*:** This refers to the Qur'anic verses that deal with legal issues such as the issue of *zakāt*, the prohibition of usury, *al-ribā* and the significance of liberating salves from the practice and institution of slavery. The wisdom behind it is considered miraculous.

7. **Numerical inimitability *al-i'jāz al-'adadī*:** This refers to some miraculous references in the Qur'an about numbers. For example, the word يوم yawm meaning 'day' occurs 365 times, which is the number of days in a calendar year. This is, however, a contentious claim.

8. **Affective Inimitability*: al-a'jāz al-ta'thīrī:*** This refers to the influence that listening to Qur'an leaves on people. Al-Khaṭṭābī describes this in his classic work as the impact the Qur'an leaves on people which includes a sense of sweetness among some a sense of fear among others.[161]

---

[160] Sabiha Saadat, 'Human Embryology and the Holy Quran: An Overview', *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 3.1 (2009), 103–9.
[161] Khalafallāh and Salām, p. 70.

While scholars have analyzed the Qur'an and shown examples of the above-mentioned aspects, the fact remains that the stylistic inimitability is the most pervasive one in the Qur'an. This is because other types of inimitability are confined to some specific verses, whereas the stylistic inimitability informs every single verse. For example, not all verses show scientific inimitability. Similarly, not all verses deal with the issue of legislation and reform. However, the stylistic inimitability of the Qur'an covers the whole of the Qur'an and includes all words and phrases. Leaman analyzes a small part of Q-2:3 *wa mimmā razaqnāhum yunfiqūn* 'they spend out of what we have given them' to show the richness of meanings, which is unmatched by human composition. He argues that it is the Qur'anic stylistic beauty that allows such a small sentence to contain several aspects of charity and its acceptability. For example, *wa mimmā razaqnāhum* tells Muslims that they are not doing a favor by giving out charity; they are giving out from what God has given them. So, it is "… essentially a transfer of property from God to someone who will make good use of it".[162] Secondly, the use of *mimmā* doesn't restrict the charity to money, and therefore, anything that God has given you, whether material things or otherwise, can be given in charity, which includes advice, knowledge, etc. Finally, the giver of the charity must give out of from what the giver has, meaning that he/she should not be in receipt of charity himself. All these meanings are layered using a language that is totally unmatched. Leaman goes on to assert that the Qur'an "…represent its uniqueness and beauty, not to mention its novelty and originality. That is why it has succeeded in convincing so many people of its truth. *It imitates nothing and no one, nor can it be imitated*.[163] Abdul-Raof summarizes this position, "…the

---

[162] Oliver Leaman, 'Miraculousness of the Qur'an', ed. by Oliver Leaman, *The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia* (Routledge, 2006), pp. 403–6 (p. 403).
[163] Leaman, p. 404 Emphasis mine.

beauty of Qur'an-specific language and style surpasses man's faculty to reproduce the Qur'an in a translated form. A crude approximation of the language, meanings and style of the Qur'an is possible to enable non-speakers of Arabic to understand the message of the Qur'an".[164]

Scholars have identified many aspects of stylistic inimitability. Al-Rāfiʻi (1973: 212 – 248) discusses extensively three possible areas where *naẓm* 'order system' can be studied. These are (i) Letters and their sounds, (ii) Words and their letters, and (iii) Sentences and their words.[165] Because of its limited scope, this research will focus only on the category of words and sentences. Abdul-Raof's work is quite comprehensive in showing different linguistic and textual aspects of the structure of the Qur'an that make it inimitable. I discuss below four stylistic features that distinguish Qur'anic text from others and makes its translation into any language impossible.

3.7.1   Word Order *al-Taqdīm wa al-Ta'khīr*

Word order is one of the linguistic parameters that sets one language or a group of languages apart from others. Dryer argues that when people discuss word order, they specifically refer "to the order of subject, object, and verb with respect to each other, but word order refers more generally to the order of any set of elements, either at the clause level or within phrases, such as the order of elements within a noun phrase".[166] This broad definition helps grasp ordering of any linguistic element at any level. With specific reference to the strategic use of word order in Qur'an, Al-Sāmarrā'ī divides it

---

[164] Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture and Exegesis*, p. 2.
[165] Muṣṭafā Ṣādiq Al-Rāfiʻī, *I'Jāz al-Qur'an Wa al-Balāghah al-Nabawīyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitāb al 'Arabī, 1973), pp. 212–48.
[166] Matthew S. Dryer, 'Word Order', in *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, ed. by Timothy Shopen, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 61–131 (p. 61) <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619427.002>.

into two broad types. In the first category, he puts elements that are related to another in a specific way by virtue of a governing word, for example, an object which is governed by the verb in the sentence. The unmarked order in Arabic involving a verb and its object is Verb followed by the object. However, this order is modified in marked sentence by the fronting, known as *al-Taqdīm,* of the object before the verb. He cites the sentence '*Khālidan aʿṭaytu* '(to) Khalid I gave', which involves fronting of the object *khalid*.[167] In the second type, he places words that are not arranged in a particular sequence by virtue of the presence of a grammatical element governing the sequence. A good example of this is the ordering of the words '*ād* and *thamūd.* In Q-69:4, *thamūd* is mentioned before '*ād* '*kadhdhabat thamūd wa ʿād bi al-Qāriʿah*' but in Q-9:70, '*a lam yāʾtihim naba-u al-ladhīna min qablihim qawmi nūḥin wa ʿādin wa thamūd.*

An important feature of the Qurʾanic stylistics is the strategic deployment of word order, called *al-taqdīm wa al-Taʾkhīr* in Arabic, to achieve rhetorical and communicative goals, which depend, among other factors, on the topic, the addresses, and their state of knowledge, etc. Abdul-Raof argues, "…word order is semantically motivated and there are communicative goals to be achieved out of a given marked order which involves foregrounding of a lexical item". Inflectional languages such as Greek, Latin, and Arabic mark syntactic functions of their constituents with case-endings, for example *marfūʿ*, nominative, *manṣūb*, accusative, and *majrūr*, genitive in Arabic, allow for a free word order. By contrast, languages such as English have a relatively fixed word-order. Abdul-Raof gives the English sentence 'Zaid wrote the letter in the library' as example to explain the point.[168]

---

[167] Fāḍil Ṣāliḥ Al-Sāmarrāʾī, *Al-Taʿbīr Al-Qurʾānī* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2016), p. 61.
[168] Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Arabic Rhetoric: A Pragmatic Analysis* (Routledge, 2006), pp. 121–22.

1. *kataba zayd-un al-risālata fī al-maktabat-i*

2. *al-risālata Kataba zayd-un fī al-maktabat-i*

3. *fī al-maktabat-i Kataba zayd-un al-risālata*

The first sentence is the unmarked word order in Arabic. The others have undergone what is referred to in stylistics as foregrounding, *al-taqdīm,* and backgrounding, *al-Ta'khīr*, to achieve pragmatic effects which are determined, among other things, by the context of use and the addressee. Arabic allows foregrounding of subject, object, and prepositional phrases. The purpose of foregrounding is to create a pragmatic effect to "highlighting the communicative value of the foregrounded element by placing it sentence-initially".[169] The second sentence foregrounds the object 'the letter' which can be translated as 'It is the letter Zaid wrote in the library (and not the poem)' would be pragmatically more effective when used to challenge someone who presented a proposition 'Zaid wrote the poem in the library'. The third sentence, similarly, has the prepositional phrase 'in the library' foregrounded which can be used to counter a proposition that the letter was written in the coffee house, for example.

The word order has been used strategically in Qur'an in many places to achieve certain rhetorical and communicative goals. Abdul-Raof argues that in Q-6:100, in the sentence *wa jaʿalū li allāhi shurakāʾa al-jinna* وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ الْجِنَّ the prepositional phrase 'li allāhi' 'for God' has been foregrounded from the unmarked word order is *wa jaʿalū shurakāʾ al-jinna li allāhi* وَجَعَلُوا شُرَكَاءَ الْجِنَّ لِلَّهِ to achieve many pragmatic goals, including "condemning the association of others with God" and "preserving the supreme status of God as Creator by foregrounding لِلَّهِ and placing it before *al-jinna* الْجِنَّ

---

[169] Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Arabic Rhetoric: A Pragmatic Analysis*, p. 122.

, which shows the ordinary status of the Jinns".[170] These pragmatics effects have been completely lost in the widely-respected translation of Yusuf Ali, who renders it as 'Yet they make the Jinns equals with Allah'. Attributing the loss to the difference in the structure of the English language, Abdul-Raof notes, "these communicative goals are realized by the marked exotic Qur'anic word order which has been relinquished because it cannot be captured by the target language whose stylistic and word order requirements are distinct from that of Qur'anic discourse".[171]

An important aspect of the stylistic use of word order for semantico-pragmatic reason is the fronting of the object, which in the unmarked word order comes at the end of sentence. This strategy which Arab rhetoricians call *ḥaṣr*, restriction, which limits the scope of the object.[172] The phenomenon, known as cleft, is used in English too and serves the purpose of exhaustiveness and exclusiveness.[173] Huddleston and Pullum show that while the sentence 'It is red wool sweater that I bought' with the object preposed, "implicate[s] that a red wool sweater constituted the sum total of my purchase—that I didn't (on the occasion in question) buy anything else" which is not implicated by the sentence with the unmarked word order 'I bought a red wool sweater', which is consistent with my having bought other things as well as the sweater.[174] This strategic use is at its best in Q-1: 5 of the Qur'an *thee we worship īyyāka na'budu* where the object *īyyāka* has been preposed/fronted from *na'budu-ka,* which is the unmarked position.

---

[170] Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture and Exegesis*, p. 45.
[171] Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture and Exegesis*, p. 45.
[172] M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, 'Qura'nic Arabic', in *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, ed. by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, First edition (New York, NY: HarperOne, an imprint of Collins Publishers, 2015).
[173] Rodney D Huddleston and Geoffrey K Pullum, *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 1416.
[174] Huddleston and Pullum, p. 1416.

While still challenging, the translation of the pragmatic effects of backgrounding and foregrounding is not as insurmountable as that of the translation of the Qur'anic conjunction and future tense particle in two verses in Chapter 9. Abdul-Raof analyzes Verses 94 *wa sayarā allāhū ʿamalakum wa rasūluhū thumma turaddūna ilā ʿālim al-ghaybi wa al-shahādati*

وَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ ثُمَّ تُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ

and 105 *fa sayarā allāhu ʿamalakum wa rasūluhu wa al-muʾminūn wa saturaddūna ilā ʿālim al-ghaybi wa al-shahādati*

فَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۖ وَسَتُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ

which have identical grammatical structures except the conjunction *thumma* and the enclitic *sa-* attached to the verb *yarā*, 'see'. He argues that the conjunction *thumma* has been used deliberately as a threat of punishment to the hypocrites, which is why it is not used in the second verse because the addressee of the latter verse is Muslims. Abdul-Raof further adds that the use of future marker *sa-* is deliberate to indicate a pledge of reward for Muslims. These two elements of style are thus sensitive to the context of the verses, including the addressee. After examining the translation of these two verses by Pickthall, Arberry, Yusuf Ali, Mohammad Asad, and Al-Hilali & Khan, Abdul-Raof concludes, "The important point here is that the target language cannot capture the underlying significations provided by the Qur'anic conjunction and the future tense particle".[175]

---

[175] Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture and Exegesis*, p. 51.

3.7.2 Affirmation of Reporting *al-Tawkīd*

Affirmation, *al-Tawkīd* in Arabic, is s strategy used to affirm or stress a particular statement or proposition, especially if the addressee is doubtful or skeptical of the statement. If the addressee is neutrally positioned to the statement of the speaker there is no need for it.[176] Arab grammarians divide affirmation into two types—lexical, *al-lafẓī* and semantic/discoursal, *al-maʿnawī*. The lexical affirmation in the Qur'an is achieved by the repetition of the word, e.g. in Q-78: 4-5 the verb has been repeated twice *kallā sayaʿlamūna. thumma kallā sayaʿlamūna*

كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ . ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ

Words of other categories such as nouns can also be repeated for affirmation e.g. in Q 56:10-11 *(10) wa al-sābiqūn al-sābiqūn (11) ulā'ika al-muqarrabūn*

وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ . أُولَٰئِكَ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ

The semantic affirmation, by contrast, is achieved using a number of grammatical strategies, including the use of the affirmation particle *inna*. The strategic use of the particle can be seen from the Qur'an itself wherein the same expression appears in one context with the particle and in another without it. In Q-2:199, the particle *inna* has been used before the nominal sentence *allāhu ghafūrun raḥīmun* اللَّه غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ while in Q-3: 129 the sentence is not preceded by it.

thumma afīḍū min ḥaythu afāḍ al-nās wastaghfirū allāha inna allāha ghafūrun raḥīm

ثُمَّ أَفِيضُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ أَفَاضَ النَّاسُ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّه إِنَّ اللَّه غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

wa lil allāhi mā fī al-samāwāti wa mā fī al-arḍi yaghfiru li man yashā' wa yuʿadhdhibu man yashā' wa allāhu ghafūrun raḥīmun

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْض يَغْفِرُ لِمَن يَشَاء وَيُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاء وَاللهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

---

[176] Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Arabic Rhetoric: A Pragmatic Analysis*, p. 108.

To understand the presence or absence of the particle, it is important to see the context of use. In Chapter-2, as God is addressing Muslims who have gone on the pilgrimage to Makkah asking for forgiveness, Allah is affirming them that He is indeed oft-Forgiving and Merciful. In Chapter-3, the context is of the people who have either committed sins or are disbelievers, and therefore, God doesn't need to affirm his power of forgiveness and mercy to them. It is up to Him to make the decision on the day of Judgment.

Another affirmation particle widely used in the Qur'an is the particle *lām*. The strategic use of this particle becomes clear by comparing verses in which it has been used with those where it hasn't been. The use of the particle *lām* in Chapter 16 is justified by the fact that the people described have exceeded in their disbelief compared to the people in Chapter 39.[177] Here again the choice of grammatical elements is motivated by the addressee.

1. *falabi'sa mathwā al-mutakabbirīn (Q-16:29)*

<div dir="rtl">

1. فَلَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرينَ

</div>

2. *fabi'sa mathwā al-mutakabbirīn (Q-39: 72)*   .2

<div dir="rtl">

3. فَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرينَ

</div>

An interesting feature of Qur'anic stylistics is the use of both *inna* and *lām* together within one sentence. Al-Sāmarrā'ī explains, "if each of the particle *inna* and *lām* is used for affirmation their combination undoubtedly signifies intensification of affirmation, which is [rhetorically] more powerful than affirmation with *inna* by itself or *lām* by itself".[178] He compares the verse *innā ilaykum la-mursalūn*, from Q-36: 16 in which

---

[177] Fāḍil Ṣāliḥ Al-Sāmarrā'ī, *Al-Taʿbīr Al-Qurʾānī*, p. 152.
[178] Muḥammad F. Ṣāliḥ Al-Sāmarrāʾī, *Al-Naḥw Al-ʿArabī: Aḥkāmun wa-Maʿānin;*, 1st edn (Beirut: Dār Ibn-Kathīr, 2014), p. 288.

both particles have been used together with the earlier verse *innā ilaykum mursalūn* Sūrat Q-36: 13 in which only *inna* has been used. Clearly the one with two particles has more communicative force than the one with single particle.

Another strategy of using affirmation is the addition of *al-nūn* to the verb, known as *nūn al-ta'kīd*. Al-Sāmarrā'i gives examples from Q-2:147 and Q-3:60 dealing with the use of *al-nūn* in the former but its absence from the latter. The verse in Q-2:147 *al-ḥaqqu min rabbika falā takūnanna min al-mumtarīn* الحق من ربك فلا تكوننَّ من الممترين contains the *al-nūn*-affirmation whereas the one in Q-3: 60 *al-ḥaqqu min rabbika falā takun min al-mumtarīn* الحق من ربك فلا تكن من الممترين doesn't. He explains that context of the revelation of the verse in Chpater-2 was following the change of *qiblah* that has shaken the belief of many Muslims, so the verse uses *al-nūn*-affirmation to place extra stress on the message of staying steadfast. The context of Chapter-3 doesn't need the extra affirmation and therefore the *al-nūn* particle was not used.[179]

3.7.3   Verb-Noun Alternation

Another major characteristic of the Qur'anic stylistics is the phenomenon known as *iltifāt*, grammatical shift which involves alternation involving number, person, pronoun, tense, etc. Qaḥṭān traces the early discussion on the issue of shift in the Qur'an to Zakarīyā Al-Farrā' (d. 822 AD) and mentions that although other scholars such as Al-Aṣma'ī (d. 828 AD) and others did try to explain the concept, it wasn't until Al-Zamakhsharī that the concept was defined in a precise way. Qaḥṭān quotes Al-Zamakhsharī's chareterization of *iltifāt* as a change from one style *uslūb* to another to keep the addressee's attention.[180] According to Abdel Haleem, Arab rhetoricians

---

[179] Fāḍil Ṣāliḥ Al-Sāmarrā'ī, *Al-Ta'bīr Al-Qur'ānī*, pp. 159–60.
[180] Ṭāhir 'Abd Al-Raḥmān Qaḥṭān, 'Al-Iltifāt Fī Al-Balāghah Al-'Arabīyyah Wa Namādhij Min Asrār Balāghatihī Fī Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm', *Majallat Al-Dirāsāt Al-Islāmīyyah*, 19 (2005), 163–86 (p. 166).

describe the shift as by *shaja'at al-'arabiyya*[181], the daring nature of the Arabic language, because on the surface level it violates the unmarked grammatical structure. Abdel Haleem identifies six different types of shifts which includes a shift from narration to address, from third person to second person, from singular to plural, etc. Qur'anic stylistics also includes a shift from the expected verbal form to a nominal form or the vice versa for rhetorical reasons. Abdul-Raof explains the significance of the shift for the speech act, "…the communicator chooses to produce a verb-initial speech act or a speech act with a main verb in order to highlight the semantic componential feature of continuity and progression (*al-ḥudūth wal-tajaddud*)".[182] He gives the example of this shift from Q-4:142 *inna al-munāfiqīna yukhādiʿūna allāha wa huwa hhādiʿuhum* إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَهُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ in which the first part is verbal whereas the second is nominal, although a verbal form was expected. The verbal structure highlights the continual deceiving of the hypocrites, whereas the nominal sentence underscores the omnipotence of God. Similar linguistic strategies have been used in the following four verses from Chapter-56 in which actions attributed to mankind have been expressed using verbal forms and those of God with nominal forms to highlight the spatial and temporal limitations of human action and the permanence of God's actions.[183]

Q-56: 59 'a *antum takhluqūnahu 'am naḥnu al-khāliqūn* أَأَنتُمْ تَخْلُقُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْخَالِقُونَ

Q-56: 64 'a *antum tazraʿūnahu 'am naḥnu al-zāriʿūn* أَأَنتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الزَّارِعُونَ

Q-56: 68 'a *antum anzaltumūhu min al-muzni 'am* أَأَنتُمْ أَنزَلْتُمُوهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنزِلُونَ

---

[181] Abdel Haleem, 'Grammatical Shift for Rhetorical Purposes: Iltifāt and Related Features in the Qur'ān', p. 408.

[182] Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Arabic Rhetoric: A Pragmatic Analysis*, pp. 11–12; Muḥammad Abū Mūsā, *Khaṣā'iṣ Al-Tarākīb* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 1996).

[183] Abdul Gabbar Al-Sharafi and Rizwan Ahmad, 'Translating the Inimitable: A Study of Agency in Translating Verb-Noun Alternation in the Qur'an'.

naḥnu al-munzilūn

Q-56:71 ’a *antum ’ansha’tum shajartahā ’am*   أَأَنْتُمْ أَنْشَأْتُمْ شَجَرَتَهَا أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنْشِئُونَ

naḥnu al-munshi’ūn

It is not the strategic choice of verbs and nouns alone that mark the effectiveness of language but also the use of active and passive voice known in Arabic as *mabnī lil maʿlūm* and *mabnī lil majhūl* respectively. In both Arab and Western grammatical traditions, verb is considered to be the core element that determines the structure of a sentence, including the presence or absence of object and adverbs. In active sentences the agent of a transitive verb functions as a subject, and it is mentioned, whereas in a passive sentence, the agent is not mentioned, and the object takes the grammatical position of the subject. The stylistic goal of not mentioning the subject in a passive sentence is to foreground/focus on the object or because the subject is well-known or unknown. Arabic scholars argue that the ellipsis/deletion of subject from a sentence is done to make the statement terse and highlight the object.[184] According to Ibn ʿĀshūr, In Q-78:18, *yawm yunfakhu fī al-ṣūri fatā’tūna afwājā* يوم ينفخ في الصور فتأتون أفواجا the passive form *yunfakhu* has been used to highlight what will happen on that Day rather than the agent of the action *al-nāfikh*.[185] In addition to knowledge of the agent, the authors mention many other stylistic goals, including lack of knowledge of the agent, *taʿẓīm*, 'respect' *taḥqīr*, derision, *ibhām*, lack of clarity, *al-tarkīz ʿalā al-ḥadath*, focus on the action rather than the doer of the action.

---

[184] Muḥammad Al-Hijrī and Mubārak Najmuddīn, 'Al-Fiʿl al-Mabnī Lil Maʿlūm Wa Fiʿl al-Mabnī Lil Majhūl: Naẓrah Dilālīyyah', *Journal of Islamic Science & Research*, 18.2 (2017), 1–14 (p. 8).
[185] quoted in Al-Hijrī and Najmuddīn, p. 8.

3.7.4 Object Deletion *Hadhf Mafʿūl Bihī*

Grammatically and semantically, different verbs have different requirements. Intransitive verbs known in Arabic as *lāzim*, for example 'sleep' or 'smile' require only a subject to complete its meaning, whereas transitive verbs, known in Arabic as *mutaʿaddī,* for example, 'read' and 'write' need objects to complete their meanings. These grammatical and syntactic properties of transitive verbs are manipulated for rhetorical and communicative reason. Although some scholars[186] have listed multiple stylistic reasons behind the deletion, Abdul-Raof and Abu Musa summarize them into two. Firstly, in situations where the object of the verb can be easily recovered from the context, it is dropped for the sake of brevity, which is stylistically better.[187] Abu Musa gives the example of *wa al-dhākirīna allāha kathīrā wa al-dhākirāti* وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ from Q-33: 35 in which the object of *wa al-dhākirāti* وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ, which is 'Allah' has been dropped because it is mentioned with the previous word *wa al-dhākirīna* وَالذَّاكِرِينَ and is, therefore, recoverable.[188]

Secondly, the object is also dropped in situations where the action of the verb is considered more important for the addressee than the action represented by the transitive verb. Abu Musa argues that this stylistic strategy is treating transitive verbs as if they were intransitive such that the reader/addressee doesn't even think about the possible objects of the verb and focuses on the action of verb itself as is the case with intransitive verbs. He cites *idh qāla ibrāhīmu rabbī al-ladhī yuḥyī wa yumītu* إِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّي الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَ يُمِيتُ

---

[186] ʾAbdul Hādī Karīm Al-Ḥarbī, 'Ḥadhf Al-Mafʿūl Bihī Fī al-Qurʾān al-Karīm Bayn al-Istiʿmāl al-Qurʾānī Wa al-Tanẓīr al-Naḥwī: Al-Juzʾ al-Thalāthūn Namūdhajan', *Majallat Al-Kullīyah al-Islāmīyyah*, 9.31 (2015), 165–87; Zakarīyā ʿAlī Maḥmūd Al-Khiḍr, 'Al-Asrār al-Bayānīyyah Fī Ḥadhf al-Mafʿūl Bihī Fī Sūrat Ṭāhāʾ, *Majallat Ittiḥād Al-Jāmiʿāt al-ʿArabīyah Lil Ādāb*, 11.1 (2014), 611–48.
[187] Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Arabic Rhetoric: A Pragmatic Analysis*, pp. 164–66; Abū Mūsā, pp. 341–63.
[188] Abū Mūsā.

رَبِّيَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ from Q-2: 258 to support his argument. Here both verbs *yuḥyī wa yumītu* يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ are transitive, yet they are not followed by their objects because the communicative goal of the verse is to affirm the power of God to grant life and death with no concerns about to whom or what He grants life and death. A subtype of this stylistic strategy is to drop the object when the verb is applicable to everyone. A good example of this is *allāhu yadʿū ilā dār al-salāmi* الله يدعو إلى دار السلام from Chapter 10/25 in which the object of the verb *yadʿū* يدعو is ellipted because it is not one individual or a specific group of people that God is inviting to the home of peace.

3.8   Conclusion

This chapter began with an historical overview of the translation of the Qur'an into English. I then discussed critical issues such as the challenges in translation the Qur'an into any language. This section dealt with many issues that are not possible to translate because of the cultural and linguistic incompatibility between the source and the target languages. The linguistic incompatibility results from the fact that morphological, syntactic, textual, and discourse properties of Arabic are significantly different from English.

The linguistic and cultural incongruity notwithstanding, translation of the Qur'an is also challenging because the property of inimitability or insuperability. Focusing on the linguistic and stylistic aspects of the inimitability, the section on Iʻjāz dealt with some prominent elements of Qur'anic stylistics. I discussed word order, use of affirmation particle, and ellipsis of certain grammatical constituents is utilized for rhetorical and communicative needs. Against this background, the next chapter takes up the analysis of Chapter 20 with a view to examining translation of the stylistic features discussed here.

CHAPTER 4 : ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF SŪRAT ṬĀHĀ

4.1   Introduction

In this chapter, my goal is to examine how the stylistic inimitability of the Qur'an has been handled by different English translators. Since studying the whole of the Qur'an is not possible within the scope of this thesis, I restrict myself to examining Chapter 20, Sūrat Ṭāhā. A thorough understanding of the strategies used by the translators in this one chapter will also enable us to understand the rest of the Qur'an since the stylistic features examined here permeate the whole of the Qur'an. In analyzing them, I have not followed verse by verse method to avoid repetition because a stylistic feature, for example, affirmation of reporting may occur more than once in the same chapter. I have, therefore, adopted a feature-based approach whereby I analyze four salient features that quintessentially define the stylistic and rhetorical inimitability of the Qur'an. I examine these properties and their treatment by six prominent translators whose works have been prominent in the English translation for over a century.

Before delving into the analysis of the translations, however, a brief discussion of the Chapter, its major themes and the context of its revelation is in order. This will help us understand how the deployment of these stylistic and rhetorical features give force to the communicative act within which these features are embedded. That is, the effectiveness and power of the stylistic features cannot be understood without understanding the broader context within which they are used.

4.2   General Introduction to *Sūrat Ṭāhā*

This Qur'anic name for this chapter is Ṭāhā, for which there are many possible explanations.[189] Some argue that the word is a combination of disconnected letters used at the beginning of some chapters in the Qur'an such as *alif lām rā'* in Chapters Yūsūf, Hūd, Yūnūs, etc. It has also been argued that Ṭāhā is an Arabic word, and not just letters, used as a term of address for Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In this sense, the word means 'O man'![190] Al-Ṭabarī also mentions a *ḥadīth* by Ibn 'Abbaas suggesting that the word Ṭāhā is one of the names of God, and here God swears *al-qasam* by his own name.[191] He supports the theory that treats it as a word meaning 'o man!'. The Chapter is also known as Sūrat *Kalīm* and *Sūrat* Mūsā because of the centrality of the story of Prophet Moses in it. As we will see below the Chapter details the life history of Prophet Moses from birth to leaving his homeland because of the oppression of the Pharoah. It goes on to narrate his encounter with the Pharoah himself and his team of magicians and Moses' eventual victory over them.[192]

According to Muslim, the Chapter consists of 135 verses. Unlike this standpoint of Kufā School, the Basrah School considers the number of verses to be 132.[193] Muslim mentions that the Chapter was revealed in the fifth year of Revelation. It is unanimously agreed that the Chapter is Makkan, with the possible exceptions of Verses 130-131, which are considered to be revealed in Madinah.[194] The Chapter is often mentioned in

---

[189] Muṣṭafā et al. Muslim, *Al-Tafsīr Al-Mawḍū'ī Li Suwar Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* (Sharjah, UAE: University of Sharjah, 2010), p. 485.
[190] Muṣṭafā et al. Muslim, p. 486; Muḥammad b. Jarīr Al-Ṭabarī, *Jami' Al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Ā'ī Al-Qur'ān*, 24 vols (Cairo, Egypt: Dār Al-Ma'ārif, 2000), XVIII, p. 266.
[191] Al-Ṭabarī, XVIII, p. 266.
[192] 'Abd Al-Raḥmān b. Abū Bakr Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'ān* (Cairo, Egypt: Al-Hayyah Al-Miṣrīyyah Al-'Āmmah Li Al-Kitāb, 1974), I, p. 157.
[193] Muṣṭafā et al. Muslim, pp. 492–93; Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn 'Āshūr, *Tafsīr Al-Taḥrīr Wa Al-Tanwīr* (Tunis: Al-Dār Al-Tūnīsīyah lil Nashr, 1984), XVI, p. 179.
[194] Nasr, *The Study Quran*, p. Kindle 2066.

the famous story of the conversion of the second caliph Umar Ibn al-Khattab. Before his conversion, Umar was a staunch enemy of Islam. Motivated by hatred for him, he set out to kill Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). On his way, he came across a companion, who, knowing his evil intention, told him to take care of his own sister and brother-in-law before going to the Prophet. So, Umar changed his course and instead of going to the Prophet he left for his sister's house. Upon reaching her house, he heard them reciting this chapter. Umar asked them to show him what they were reciting. First, they tried to hide the parchment from which they were reading the verses from Sūrat Ṭāhā, but later handed it over to him. Upon reading the verses, so influenced was Umar by its language and the message that he had an instant change of heart and decided to accept Islam. He, then, headed to the Prophet to announce his conversion.[195]

4.2.1   Major themes of *Sūrat Ṭāhā*

According to Muslim, the broad theme that binds different parts of the Chapter is God's support and patronage of those who were selected to deliver His message and the compassion for and care of the people for whom they brought His message.[196] Nasr breaks it down to four major thematic pillars.[197] It starts with a consolation from God to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), mentioning His knowledge and his beautiful names. The Chapter then transitions to a very long story of Prophet Moses (Verses 9-97) which details his life and mission. This precisely is the reason the Surah is also called Sūrat *Kalīm*. The Chapter then moves on to talk about the Day of Judgment and the story of

---

[195] 'Alī b.'Umar Al-Dārqutnī, *Sunan Al-Dārqutnī*, 3 vols (Riyadh, K.S.A.: Dār Al-Mu'ayyid, 2001), ɪ, pp. 303, Ḥadīth No. 434.
[196] Muṣṭafā et al. Muslim, p. 493.
[197] Nasr, *The Study Quran*.

Prophet Adam (verses 115-124). It closes with asking Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to remain steadfast in his message with the infidels of Makkah.

4.3   Stylistic Features in *Sūrat Ṭāhā*

In the section below I discuss four prominent stylistic features of Chapter-20 that are quite pervasive in terms of their frequency of occurrence. Introduced in Chapter-3, these features are quite widespread throughout the Qur'an. I discuss the following features: (1) Word Order or *al-Taqdīm wa al-Ta'khīr* , (2) Use of Affirmation/Emphasis, *al-Tawkīd* (3) Use of Verb and its nominal forms, *al-fi'l wa al-ism*, and (4) Object Deletion, *ḥadhf maf'ūl bihī*.

4.3.1   Word Order: *al-Taqdīm wa al-Ta'khīr*

Word order is a widely used stylistic feature of the Qur'an. As discussed in Chapter-3, Al-Sāmarrāī mentions two types of *al-Taqdīm wa al-Ta'khīr*, one in which there is an unmarked word order by virtue of the sentence having an element that governs the sequence of words.[198] For example, a transitive verb in a sentence determines the position of its object, which comes after the verb, and the sequence of prepositional and adverbial phrases. This type of word order further includes subject and complement in nominal sentences whereby the subject *mubtadā* comes before the complement, *khabar*. The second type of word order is not governed by any grammatical element such as the order in which two nouns appear in a conjoined form. For example, the mention of Prophet Moses before his brother Hārūn in the rest of the Qur'an but its reversed sequence in Sūrat Ṭāhā '*fa-'ulqiya al-saḥaratu sujjadan qālū āmannā birabbi hārūna wa mūsā*' in which Prophet Moses has been mentioned after Hārūn. Although scholars

---

[198] Fāḍil Ṣāliḥ Al-Sāmarrā'ī, *Al-Ta'bīr Al-Qur'ānī*, p. 61.

have explained the significance of the variable sequencing depending on the textual contexts[199], this type of order doesn't pose any challenge for translation and will, therefore, not be discussed in this thesis.

Although word order does exist in English, it is not as pervasive and is different from Arabic too. Firstly, in some respects, the very unmarked word order in Arabic is different from English. The most distinctive feature of Arabic is that in verbal sentences, the sentence starts with a verb followed by a subject, then a possible object and prepositional phrase(s). In English, the unmarked order is that a sentence always starts with a subject. In Qur'anic stylistics, however, many sentences contain a marked word order in which elements such as subject, object, and prepositional phrases are fronted for rhetorical reasons. Verse-5 of *al-raḥmānu 'alā al-'arshi istawā* الرَّحْمَٰنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى of this chapter illustrates not only the fronting of the subject *al-raḥmānu* but also the prepositional phrase *'alā al-'arshi*. The unmarked order from which this structure is derived is *'istawā al-raḥmānu 'alā al-'arshi* اسْتَوَى الرَّحْمَٰنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ in which the order is the verb followed subject and PP (prepositional phrase). The unmarked order has been modified by fronting two elements, the subject *al-raḥmān* ٱلرَّحْمَٰنُ and the PP *'alā al-'arshi* عَلَى الْعَرْشِ. A similar sentence appears in Q-25: 59 *thumma istawā 'alā al-'arshi al-raḥmānu* ثُمَّ ٱسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى ٱلْعَرْشِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنُ in which although the subject appears in the unmarked position the PP has been fronted. The marked word order in Chapter Ṭāhā, involving fronting of the Subject, which turns the sentence into a nominal one, doesn't pose any challenge in English translation because it fits nicely into the

[199] Fāḍil Ṣāliḥ Al-Sāmarrā'ī, *Al-Taqdīm Wa Al-Tkhir:* (Lamasāt Bayānīyah, 2012) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMZZOP_RDu8> [accessed 1 September 2021].

unmarked word order of English in which a sentence starts with a subject. Cases like these of Qur'anic stylistics will likewise not be discussed.

Noted contemporary scholar of Qur'anic stylistics Al-Sāmarrā'i lists the possible pragmatic effects that word order variation are used to achieve, which includes, among other things, *al-ikhtiṣāṣ*, foregrounding, *al-ihtimām*, highlighting, *al-ḥaṣr/al-qaṣr* 'restricting the scope of meaning', *al-madḥ* 'praise' and *al-taḥqīr*, 'contempt'.[200] He cites Q-6: 84 *wa nūḥan hadaynā min qablu* وَنُوحًا هَدَيْنَا مِن قَبْلُ as an example in which the object Nūḥ has been fronted for praise and not for *al-ikhtisās* because God has guided other prophets before him too. Given below in Table-1 is a list of instances of fronting. The Table clearly shows that the phenomenon of word order discussed in this research is quite pervasive.

Table 1. Verses Containing Fronting in Chapter-20

Verse	Verse in Arabic	Fronted element	Phrase
2	مَآ أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ ٱلْقُرْءَانَ لِتَشْقَىٰ	عَلَيْكَ	PP
5	ٱلرَّحْمَٰنُ عَلَى ٱلْعَرْشِ ٱسْتَوَىٰ	عَلَى الْعَرْشِ	PP
6	لَهُ مَا فِى ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَمَا فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَمَا	لَهُ	PP
10	لَّعَلِّى آتِيكُم مِّنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ	مِّنْهَا	PP
10	أَوْ أَجِدُ عَلَى النَّارِ هُدًى	عَلَى النَّارِ	PP
16	فَلَا يَصُدَّنَّكَ عَنْهَا مَن لَّا يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ فَتَرْدَى	عَنْهَا	PP
25	قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي	لِي	PP
26	وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي	لِي	PP
29	وَاجْعَل لِّي وَزِيرًا مِّنْ أَهْلِي	لِّي	PP
31	اشْدُدْ بِهِ أَزْرِي	بِهِ	PP
35	إِنَّكَ كُنتَ بِنَا بَصِيرًا	بِنَا	PP
38	إِذْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّكَ مَا يُوحَى	إِلَىٰ أُمِّكَ	PP
47	فَأَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا بَنِى إِسْرَٰءِيلَ	مَعَنَا	PP
55	مِنْهَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ وَفِيهَا نُعِيدُكُمْ وَمِنْهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ تَارَةً أُخْرَىٰ	مِنْهَا ,وَفِيهَا, وَمِنْهَا	PP
73	إِنَّا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّنَا لِيَغْفِرَ لَنَا خَطَايَانَا وَمَا أَكْرَهْتَنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنَ	لَنَا	PP
74	فَإِنَّ لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ لَا يَمُوتُ فِيهَا وَلَا يَحْيَىٰ	لَهُ	PP

[200] Fāḍil Ṣāliḥ Al-Sāmarrā'ī, *Al-Taʿbīr Al-Qurʾānī*, p. 64.

Verse	Verse in Arabic	Fronted element	Phrase
80	وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوَى	عَلَيْكُمُ	PP
99	كَذَٰلِكَ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنبَاءِ مَا قَدْ سَبَقَ	عَلَيْكَ	PP
107	لَا تَرَىٰ فِيهَا عِوَجًا وَلَا أَمْتًا	فِيهَا	PP
113	وَصَرَّفْنَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْوَعِيدِ	فِيهِ	PP
127	وَكَذَٰلِكَ الْيَوْمَ تُنسَىٰ	الْيَوْمَ	Adverb
129	لَكَانَ لِزَامًا وَأَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى	لِزَامًا	NP

Table-1 above shows that a vast majority of the fronted elements are PP, which function as adverbial known in Arabic as *al-ẓarf* or a prepositional phrase. In English, fronting of an object and prepositional phrase is structurally possible and used sometimes stylistically by poets, but it is not as common as it is in Arabic. T S Eliot's famous line 'These fragments I have shored against my ruins' from *The Wasteland* shows the fronting of the object 'these fragments' from its unmarked position, which is 'I have shored these fragments against my ruins'.[201] Similarly, in the sentence 'By the roaring sea, stood the quiet little boy', the prepositional phrase 'by the sea' has been fronted from the unmarked position 'The quiet little boy stood by the roaring sea.' Both these English examples underline the rhetorical effects of foregrounding and emphasis that is achieved by fronting.

This doesn't, however, mean that the fronting of a prepositional phrase is confined to literary texts. The phrase 'In God we trust', which appears on all US paper and coin currency and was adopted as the national motto in 1956, has the PP 'in God' fronted before the subject of the sentence 'we'.[202]

---

[201] Earl Breech, 'These Fragments I Have Shored against My Ruins: The Form and Function of 4 Ezra', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 92.2 (1973), 267–74 (p. 268).

[202] Andrew Glass, '"In God We Trust" Becomes Nation's Motto, July 30, 1956', *Politico* (New York, USA, 30 July 2018), section Congress <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/07/30/in-god-we-trust-becomes-nations-motto-july-30-1956-741016> [accessed 17 October 2021].

Sūrat Ṭāhā begins with a verse containing word order variation. In Verse-2 *mā anzalnā ʿalayka al-qur'āna li tashqā*, the prepositional phrase *ʿalayka*, 'on you' comes before the object of the verb *al-qur'āna*, which is not its unmarked Arabic word order. In the unmarked word order, which is neutral in terms of its proposition, the prepositional phrase should occur after the object of the transitive verb as in *mā anzalnā al-qur'āna ʿalayka litashqā*. A similar instance of fronting occurs in Q-20: 25-26, which has been discussed, among others, by Al-Zamakhsharī and Ibn 'Āshūr. So, I will start with these two verses, which will also help us understand the pragmatic reasons for the fronting in other verses that have not been discussed in classical books of exegesis.

Verses 25-26, *qāla rabbī ishraḥ lī ṣadrī wa yassir lī 'amrī* قَالَ رَبِّ ٱشْرَحْ لِى صَدْرِى is a supplication Prophet Moses makes to Allah before He sets out to confront the Pharaoh, one of the most infamous oppressors of the time. These two verses come right after Vers-24 in which God asks Prophet Moses to confront Pharaoh as the latter has transgressed. There are two instances of fronting of the prepositional phrase (PP) *lī* 'for me' in this short supplication. The basic unmarked structures are *rabbī ishraḥ ṣadrī lī* رَبِّ ٱشْرَحْ صَدْرِى لِى and *wa yassir 'amrī lī* وَيَسِّرْ أَمْرِى لِىَ . The question is: why does the Qur'an diverge from the unmarked order and front the prepositional phrases *li* in these two verses? To explain the marked word order, Zamakhsharī starts by stating that the meaning of the verses is complete even without the prepositional phrase *lī* as in *rabbī ishraḥ ṣadrī* رَبِّ ٱشْرَح صَدْرِى and *wa yassir amrī* وَيَسِّرْ أَمْرِى. He then argues that fronting has been used because of what he calls *ibhām* 'suspense' and *rafʿ al-ibhām* 'clearing of the suspense' whereby *ishraḥ lī* ٱشْرَحْ لِى creates some suspense/vagueness in the mind of the addressee which is then clarified by the use of *ṣadrī* صَدْرِى. He also treats this as a strategy of *ijmāl*, 'summary' and *tafsīl*, 'detailing'

in which a general statement is followed by specific information.[203] This linguistic device is one of the quintessential properties of Arabic stylistics in general and Qur'an in particular.[204]

While Zamakhsharī's explanation does sound plausible, it does not explain other similar cases of fronting in the same Chapter including Verse-2 *mā anzalnā ʿalayka al-qur'āna li tashqā* in which the PP *ʿalayka* has been fronted. Ibn 'Āshūr hits the nail on its head by arguing that the use of the prepositional phrases is an example of *iṭnāb*, a linguistic strategy of adding words to achieve certain pragmatic and semantic effects. He argues that the addition of *lī* achieves the purpose of making a request more earnest for him [Moses] *wa hūwa hunā ḍarb min al-ilḥāḥ fī al-duʿā li-nafsihi* وهو هنا ضرب من الإلحاح في الدعاء لنفسه.[205] His explanation is quite robust as it is contextually sensitive because Prophet Moses has the challenge of facing the most powerful and ruthless Pharoah, for which he needs God's assistance. He asks Him to grant him three things: 'to open up his heart', 'ease his task', and 'appoint his brother as his helper'. With these weapons in his arsenal, which he is asking God to grant him, he is fully prepared to confront the Pharoah. Fronting the prepositional phrase 'for me' makes the supplication asking for the favors more personal and, therefore, more likely to be accepted. It bridges the gap between him and God. Other great exegetes such as Ibn Kathīr and Al-Qurtubī do not discuss the strategic use of fronting of the PP *li* in their exegesis.[206] This strategy of personalization of statement, is quite common in modern

---

[203] Abu Al-Qāsim Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf ʿan Ḥaqā'iq Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl* (Al-Maktabah Al-Shāmilah, n.d.), p. 60.

[204] For more details see Sairawān Al-Jinābī, *Al-Ijmāl Wa al-Tafṣīl Fī al-Taʾbīr al-Qurʾānī: Dirāsah Fī al-Dilālah al-Qurʾānīyyah* (Iraq: Jamiʾat kūfah, 2006).

[205] Ibn 'Āshūr, XVI, p. 211.

[206] Abu Al-Fidā' Ismāʾīl Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr AAl-Qurʾān Al-ʿAẓīm* (Lebanon: Dār al-Kutub al-'Imīyah, 1997); Abū 'Abdullah Al-Qurtubī, *Al-Jāmiʾ Li Aḥkām Al-Qurʾān*, 20 vols (Cairo, Egypt: Dār Al-Kutub Al-Miṣrīyyah, 1964).

standard Arabic too. The marked sentence *sa-uqaddimu laka al-qahwa* 'I will offer you coffee' with the fronting of the prepositional phrase *laka* 'for you' is more personal than the unmarked *sa-uqaddimu al-qahwa laka*.

The fronting of the preposition phrase in Verse-2 has been motivated by the similar pragmatic reasons. God addresses Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) directly in the verse and comforts him for the challenges and difficulties he was facing in spreading His message. God says that he hasn't revealed the Qur'an on him to cause him distress. Since the addressee of the message is Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the focus of the message is to console him, the fronting of the prepositional phrase *alaika*, 'on you' which contains the preposition *-ka*, referring to the Prophet makes it pragmatically more effective as it foregrounds the Prophet and makes the whole conversation about *him*, rather than the revelation of the Qur'an. This is stylistically powerful.

Having discussed the stylistics imports of the fronting in the above three instances, let's examine how the stylistic strategy has been handled by the translators (See Table-2). While Arberry preserves the stylistic word order in Verse-26, he drops it from Verse-25. Pickthall also drops it from Verse-25. But in Verse-26, except Arberry, none of the translators including Nasr et al., who as a matter of principle, strive to preserve the original Arabic word order as much as possible, maintain it.[207]

---

[207] Joseph EB Lumbard, *Unveiling The Study Quran with Joseph Lumbar* (USA, 2021) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KIFL1-0Zmdk>.

Table 2. Translations of Verses 25-26	رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي

Translator	Translation
Arberry	25-'Lord, open my breast,' said Moses 26-and do Thou ease for me my task.
Pickthall	25-My Lord! relieve my mind 26-And ease my task for me
Yusuf Ali	25-"O my Lord! expand me my breast 26-"Ease my task for me
Khan & Al-Hilali	25-"O my Lord! Open for me my chest 26-"And ease my task for me".
A. Haleem	25-'Lord, lift up my hear 26-and ease my task for me
Nasr et al.	25-"My Lord! Expand for me my breast 26-Make my affair easy for me

Translations of Verse-2 are not much different. Given below in Table-3 are six English translations. Pickthall is the only translator who has preserved the marked word order of the original Arabic text by placing the phrase 'unto thee' '*alayka* عليك before the object 'the Qur'an' *al-qur'ān* القرآن. The rest of the translators have used the unmarked word order of English and Arabic in which object is followed by the prepositional phrase. The translators have done this because of a structural constraint in English which disfavors inserting a PP between the transitive verb and its object. In modern English, maintaining the marked Arabic word order results into 'We have not sent down [to you] the Qur'an so you may distress', which is awkward. The awkwardness, which is the result of inserting a PP (in large brackets) between the verb and the object, can be seen in ordinary sentences such as 'Ali bought [from the market] books'.

Table 3. Translations of Verse-2 مَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى

Translator	Translation
Arberry	We have not sent down the Koran upon thee for thee to be unprosperous
Pickthall	We have not revealed unto thee (Muhammad) this Qur'an that thou shouldst be distressed
Yusuf Ali	We have not sent down the Qur'an to thee to be (an occasion) for thy distress
Khan & Al-Hilali	We have not sent down the Qur'an unto you (O Muhammad SAW) to cause you distress
A. Haleem	It was not to distress you [Prophet] that We sent down the Qur'an to you
Nasr et al.	We did not send down the Qur'an unto thee that thou shouldst be distressed

Interestingly, in contrast with the above examples, where the original marked word order with fronting was not maintained in English by any translator, Abdel Haleem's translation of Verse-2 introduces fronting in English that didn't exist in the original Arabic. This is the fronting of the verb phrase *li-tashqā* in 'It was not to distress you [Prophet] that We sent down the Qur'an to you'. In the Qur'an, the phrase appears at the end of the verse which contains the *lām* known as *lām al-taʿlīl*, 'We didn't send down the Qur'an to you so you distress'. In the Qur'an, the proposition 'We didn't send down the Qur'an to you' is foregrounded, while 'so you distress' is given as a *taʿlīl*, by way of explanation of what is mentioned before. What Abdel Haleem's translation does is to flip the structure so that in English the reason has become foregrounded, and the proposition backgrounded. We will discuss his approach including this issue separately.

Verse-2 is not the only place where Abdel Haleem shows departure from the original word order considerably. In Verse-6, the prepositional phrase *lahū*, 'to Him' has been fronted for the purpose of *qaṣr*, restriction, indicating that it is only God who

has sovereignty over everything in the universe. Ibn 'Āshūr points out this aspect of the meaning, "the prepositional phrase *lahū in lahū mā fī al-samāwāt*, has been fronted for *qaṣr,* restriction, in reply to the belief of the polytheists that their gods have control over the earth and that djinns have knowledge of the future".[208] It is clear that Abdel Haleem's is the only translation that takes a radical approach in diverging from the Qur'anic word order. It is worth noting here that it was not difficult to preserve the word order, as shown by the rest of the translators.

Table 4. Translations of Verse-6   لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ الثَّرَى

Translator	Translation
Arberry	To Him belongs All that is in the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, and all that is underneath the soil
Pickthall	Unto Him belongeth whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, and whatsoever is between them, and whatsoever is beneath the sod
Yusuf Ali	To Him belongs what is in the heavens and on earth, and all between them, and all beneath the soil
Khan & Al-Hilali	To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth, and all that is between them, and all that is under the soil
A. Haleem	Everything in the heavens and on earth, everything between them, everything beneath the soil, belongs to Him
Nasr et al.	Unto Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth, whatsoever is between them, and whatsoever lies beneath the ground

Abdel Haleem's translation shows a departure from the marked Arabic word order throughout the Chapter. A final example is Verse-113 *wa kadhālika anzalnāhu qur'ānan ʿarabīyyan wa ṣarrafnā fīhi min al-waʿīdi* in which the prepositional phrase

---

[208] Ibn 'Āshūr, XVI, p. 188.

fīhī, 'in it' has been foregrounded. Its unmarked position is after the object *min al-waʿīd* 'of the threat'. The communicative function of the foregrounded element is to highlight its significance in the verse the focus of which is the Qur'an.

Table 5. Translations of Verse-113   وَصَرَّفْنَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْوَعِيدِ

Translator	Translation
Arberry	We have turned about in it something of threats
Pickthall	and have displayed therein certain threats
Yusuf Ali	and explained therein in detail some of the warnings
Khan & Al- Al-Hilali	and have explained therein in detail the warnings
A. Haleem	and given all kinds of warnings in it
Nasr et al.	and We have varied the threat therein

Four translators maintain the Arabic word order except Abdel Haleem and surprisingly Nasr, who, as mentioned earlier, strives to preserve the original Arabic word order. It is worth noting that the well-known exegetes such as Al-Rāzī, Al-Zamakhsharī, Ālūsī and Ibn Ashour do not discuss the fronting of the PP in this verse. This is important to note as I will use this later to explain Abdel Haleem's departure from the course language structure.

In English, the fronting of a prepositional phrase is grammatically possible as shown in the example of T S Eliot's poem below. So, in the verses discussed above, it is possible to translate them so that the Arabic marked word order is preserved in English as shown below for Verses-25-26, as an example:

'Lord, open [for me] my breast,' said Moses

'and ease [for me] my task'.

The reason why translators do not use fronting is not because they do not understand the stylistic significance; I have shown that they have done in other verses. Khan & Al-Hilali is a good example because they do it in Verse-25 but chose not to do in Verse-26. So, clearly the translators have made a choice to focus on the main content rather than these additional stylistic layering of the meanings. Moreover, the fronting of the prepositional phrases is not common in general prose. There is a syntactic reason too. While in Arabic the object carries the accusative case marker *'alāmat naṣb*, and therefore it is easy to move it around, in English case-marking is limited to pronouns. It is therefore awkward to insert a phrase in between the verb and its object if it is a noun. Consider the two examples given below.

      a) Majd bought the book from the market.   Unmarked

      b) Majd bought [from the market] the book.   Marked

The ordinary reader of English finds the second sentence, containing the fronted object 'the book' odd because inserting something between the governor, the verb, and its object 'the book' is not favored. By contrast in Arabic, and other synthetic languages like Latin, the second sentence will be fine.

4.3.2   Affirmation of Reporting *al-Tawkīd*

As discussed in Chapter-3, affirmation, *al-tawkīd* is an important stylistic strategy used in the Qur'ān to highlight a particular statement or part thereof based on the communicative and situational needs. Affirmation is needed if the addressee is in doubt or uncertain about the proposition expressed in the sentence, while it is not needed if the addressee is neutrally positioned with respect to the statement. The nominal sentence *al-waladu marīḍun* 'the boy is sick' needs to be affirmed with the addition of the particle *inna* if the addressee is skeptical about the sickness of the boy as in *inna al-*

walada marīḍun.[209] Grammatically, affirmation is achieved, among others, using the particle *inna, lām, inna-mā* and *al-nūn*. Although there are other strategies such as the repetition of the word, in this Chapter, the above-mentioned strategies were quite pervasive. Table-5 below gives examples of verses where affirmation has been used.

Table 6. Verses Containing Affirmation in Chapter-20

Verse	Verse in Arabic	Particle
7	فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ ٱلسِّرَّ وَأَخْفَى	إِنَّ
10	إِنِّىٓ ءَانَسْتُ نَارًا	إِنَّ
12	إِنِّىٓ أَنَا۠ رَبُّكَ فَٱخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ إِنَّكَ بِٱلْوَادِ ٱلْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى	إِنَّ
14	إِنَّنِىٓ أَنَا ٱللَّهُ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّآ أَنَا۠	إِنَّ
15	إِنَّ ٱلسَّاعَةَ ءَاتِيَةٌ	إِنَّ
16	فَلَا يَصُدَّنَّكَ عَنْهَا مَن لَّا يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا	النون
24	ٱذْهَبْ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ	إِنَّ
35	إِنَّكَ كُنتَ بِنَا بَصِيرًا	إِنَّ
37	وَلَقَدْ مَنَنَّا عَلَيْكَ مَرَّةً أُخْرَىٰٓ	اللام + قد
46	إِنَّنِى مَعَكُمَآ أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَىٰ	إِنَّ
47	إِنَّا رَسُولَا رَبِّكَ	إِنَّ
48	إِنَّا قَدْ أُوحِىَ إِلَيْنَآ أَنَّ ٱلْعَذَابَ عَلَىٰ مَن كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ	إِنَّ وقد
54	إِنَّ فِى ذَٰلِكَ لَءَايَٰتٍ لِّأُو۟لِى ٱلنُّهَىٰ	إِنَّ واللام
58	فَلَنَأْتِيَنَّكَ بِسِحْرٍ مِّثْلِهِ	النون واللام
63	قَالُوٓا۟ إِنْ هَٰذَٰنِ لَسَٰحِرَٰنِ يُرِيدَانِ أَن يُخْرِجَاكُم	اللام
68	إِنَّكَ أَنتَ ٱلْأَعْلَىٰ	إِنَّ
69	إِنَّمَا صَنَعُوا۟ كَيْدُ سَٰحِرٍ	إِنَّمَا
71	فَلَأُقَطِّعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُم مِّنْ خِلَٰفٍ وَلَأُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ فِى جُذُوعِ ٱلنَّخْلِ وَلَتَعْلَمُنَّ أَيُّنَآ أَشَدُّ عَذَابًا وَأَبْقَىٰ	النون + اللام
73	إِنَّا ءَامَنَّا بِرَبِّنَا	إِنَّ
74	إِنَّهُ مَن يَأْتِ رَبَّهُ مُجْرِمًا فَإِنَّ لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ لَا يَمُوتُ فِيهَا وَلَا يَحْيَىٰ	إِنَّ
82	وَإِنِّى لَغَفَّارٌ لِّمَن تَابَ وَءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَٰلِحًا ثُمَّ ٱهْتَدَىٰ	إِنَّ واللام
85	فَإِنَّا قَدْ فَتَنَّا قَوْمَكَ	إِنَّ
90	وَلَقَدْ قَالَ لَهُمْ هَٰرُونُ مِن قَبْلُ يَٰقَوْمِ إِنَّمَا فُتِنتُم بِهِۦ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنُ فَٱتَّبِعُونِى وَأَطِيعُوٓا۟ أَمْرِى	إنما وإنَّ واللام وقد
94	إِنِّى خَشِيتُ أَن تَقُولَ	إِنَّ
97	لَّنُحَرِّقَنَّهُ ثُمَّ لَنَنسِفَنَّهُ فِى ٱلْيَمِّ نَسْفًا	اللام والنون
98	إِنَّمَآ إِلَٰهُكُمُ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِى لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ	انَّما
100	فَإِنَّهُ يَحْمِلُ	إِنَّ
117	إِنَّ هَٰذَا عَدُوٌّ لَّكَ وَلِزَوْجِكَ فَلَا يُخْرِجَنَّكُمَا مِنَ ٱلْجَنَّةِ فَتَشْقَىٰ	إِنَّ

---

[209] Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Arabic Rhetoric: A Pragmatic Analysis*, p. 108.

Verse	Verse in Arabic	Particle
118	إِنَّ لَكَ أَلَّا تَجُوعَ فِيهَا وَلَا تَعْرَىٰ	إِنَّ
123	فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُم مِّنِّى هُدًى فَمَنِ ٱتَّبَعَ هُدَاىَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشْقَىٰ	النون
124	فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً	إِنَّ
127	وَلَعَذَابُ ٱلْءَاخِرَةِ أَشَدُّ	اللام
128	إِنَّ فِى ذَٰلِكَ لَءَايَٰتٍ	إِنَّ واللام
131	وَلَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ	النون

Of all verses in this Chapter, the use of affirmation by *inna* is nowhere stylistically more befitting of the context than in Verses-12 and 14. The context is that Verse-9 begins with the story of Prophet Moses and his meeting with God at Mount *Ṭūr* in preparation for receiving the revelation. It is important to note that Prophets generally receive the revelation from God through His angels, but this is an exceptional situation in which a prophet, an ordinary human being, is facing God directly and having a conversation with him. This is the reason why Prophet Moses has been given the title of *kalīmullāh*, 'someone who spoke to Allah'.[210] So, it is understandable that the situation is quite challenging since Prophet Moses, as a human being, must have been in a state of fear of meeting God, the Creator of the universe. Secondly, it has been narrated that when Allah called him, the Satan tried to create doubts in his mind that the voice was that of a Satan, and not of God.[211] So, Prophet Moses is faced with two major psychological conditional of fear about meeting God and doubt about the source of the voice and revelation. To alleviate these two fears, God in Verse-12 says *innī anā rabbuka* إِنِّى أَنَا رَبُّكَ using the double emphasis of *inna* and the use of the pronoun *anā,* instead of the third person hūwa. In order to understand the double-affirmation, it is important to see

---

[210] Ibn 'Āshūr, XVI, p. 196.
[211] Al-Zamakhsharī, p. 54.

the unmarked sentence from which this has been derived. Grammatically, all three sentences below are correct. But it is the demands of the communicative situation that determine which one of them is more forceful and effective.

a) *anā rabbu-ka*   'I am your lord'   Unmarked/neutral

b) *innī rabbu-ka*   'I am verily your lord'   Single emphasis

c) *innī anā rabbu-ka*   'I am verily your lord'   Double emphasis

Prophet Moses' fear needs to be alleviated and his doubts about the source of the message laid to rest so that he is calm and confident to receive the message. This comfort *sakīnah* has been accomplished first by the use of the first pronoun *anā*, which indicate an element of personal solace. It is further reiterated in Verse-13 in which the first person pronoun has been used *anā 'anā ikhtartuka* 'I chose you'. Secondly, it has been achieved by the use of double affirmation involving the particle *inna* and the pronoun *anā*, which removes fear in prophet Moses' hearts and any doubts about the source of the message. The sentence sends an unequivocal message that it is God and God alone who is communicating with him.[212] Another piece of evidence of the stylistic strategy employed here to comfort him is the use of the word *rabb*, which shows God's caring trait rather than his power and grandeur.[213]

      Once Prophet Moses has been prepared for the message after God removes fear and doubts in him, then in Verse-14 He again re-affirms *innanī anā Allahu*, 'I am verily God'. Here again we find double affirmation. Ibn 'Ashūr explains the use of the particle *inna* by saying that "the sentence has been affirmed with *inna* to dispel any doubts".[214]

---

[212] Ibn 'Āshūr, XVI, p. 196.
[213] Ibn 'Āshūr, XVI, p. 186.
[214] Ibn 'Āshūr, XVI, p. 200.

He adds that the repetition of the pronoun known in Arabic as *ḍamīr al-faṣl*, is for *li ziyādat taqwīyat al-khabar* 'for additional highlighting of the predicate/message'.[215]

Having discussed the stylistic use of affirmation particle and its semantic and contextual significance within the broader text, let us now see how this was handled by translators. The first thing to notice in the translations in Table-7 below is that all translators have translated *rabb* as 'lord' and Allāh as Allah or God. Secondly, Pickthall's attempt to capture the meaning using an unusual sentence structure 'I, even I, am thy Lord' sound archaic and thus not effective, so we move on to examine the translations of the double affirmation using the particle *inna* followed by *ḍamīr al-faṣl* by other translators.

Table 7. Translations of Verses-12 & 14   12 إِنِّي أَنَا رَبُّكَ   14 إِنَّنِي أَنَا اللَّهُ

Translator	Verse-12	Verse-14
Arberry	I am thy Lord	Verily I am God
Pickthall	I, even I, am thy Lord	Lo! I, even I, am Allah
Yusuf Ali	Verily I am thy Lord!	Verily, I am Allah
Khan & Al-Hilali	Verily! I am your Lord!	"Verily! I am Allah
A. Haleem	I am your Lord	I am God; there is no god but Me
Nasr et al.	Verily I am thy Lord	Truly I am God, there is no god but I.

As shown above these two verses do not simply contain affirmation of the predicate, *khabar*, but a double affirmation using a unique strategy of combining *inna* with the separating pronoun. As we can see that while Yusuf Ali, Khan & Al-Hilali, and Nasr et al. do use the adverb 'verily' to capture the affirmation, none of them have been able to

---

[215] Ibn ʿĀshūr, XVI, pp. 200–201.

capture the doubleness of the affirmation. This is not an oversight on the part of the translators as in English there is no way to capture this. In English, one can only emphasize one element at a time. We cannot, therefore, hold them accountable for not doing something that the structural property of the English language doesn't allow.

The question, however, remains why Abdel Haleem, who is a *ḥāfiẓ* of the Qur'an, a native speaker of Arabic, and a scholar of Qur'anic studies, doesn't not choose the adverb 'verily'. Moreover, older existing translations, which Abdel Haleem must have consulted, do use the adverb. It would, therefore, be too simplistic to conclude, as some critics have done, as we will see below, that he has *failed* to translate the meaning fully. The reason has to do with the decision translators make about, in addition to the source language structure, the audience of their translation. This is because the one of the main factors that guides Abdel Haleem's translation is the modern audience who may or may not be Muslim. This driving principle behind his translation is so critical that he has included the word 'new' in the title Qur'an: A *New* Translation to mark a departure from other existing ones. Furthermore, he highlights in the summary of the book that the translation is in contemporary English. He spells it out in the introduction clearly that he has chosen contemporary English, "In preparing this translation the intention was to produce *easily readable, clear contemporary English*, as free as possible from *the Arabism and archaism* that marked some previous translations, while remaining true to the original Arabic text".[216] He further clarifies his choice by saying that it is free from archaism of English and Arabism, indicating that he won't use Arabic expressions such as Allah and *ṣalāt* . So, his principle collides with the use of 'verily' as an affirmation particle in English because it has become archaic in English. The Oxford

---

[216] 'The Qur'an', trans. by M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, 2008, p. xxxvi emphasis mine.

English Dictionary categorizes words into eight bands based on their frequency of occurrence in modern texts. Band eight contains words that are most frequently occurring at the rate of more than 1000 words per 1 million words.[217] Band four, within which 'verily' falls has a very low frequency of 0.1 – 0.99 per 1 million words. This not only explains his avoidance of the use of 'verily' but also explains his choice of using the pronoun *you* referring to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Allah instead of using *thy* and *thou*, as done by Nasr et al.

So far, we have examined Verses 14&16 with respect to the translation of the particle *inna*. Let us now examine how the verbal affirmation with *lām al-qasam al-nūn* has been translated into English. As discussed in Chapter-3, while *inna* is used with nouns, *al-nūn* particle is used with verbs. The *al-nūn* particle can combine with *lām al-qasam*, oath, to add a second level of emphasis because oath, even without the *al-nūn* is used for emphasis. Sibawayh summarizes the discourse function of the Arabic oath in his book by saying, "…know that oath is affirmation of your proposition".[218] A good example of this is Verse-*71innahu la-kabirukum al-ladhī 'allamakum al-siḥra fa-la'uqaṭṭiʿanna aydīyakum wa arjulakum min khalfin wa la'uṣallibannakum fi juẓuʿi al-nakhli wala ta'alumanna*

.إِنَّهُ لَكَبِيرُكُمُ ٱلَّذِى عَلَّمَكُمُ ٱلسِّحْرَ ۖ فَلَأُقَطِّعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُم مِّنْ خِلَفٍ وَلَأُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ فِى جُذُوعِ ٱلنَّخْلِ وَلَتَعْلَمُنَّ

In fact, this verse, in combination, shows multiple strategies of affirmation. It begins with *innahū* which has the *inna*-affirmation discussed above, but it also has the *lām*-affirmation in *la-kabīru-kum*, 'the chief of you'. Finally, it has the *al-nūn* affirmation

---

[217] 'Key to Frequency', *Oxford English Dictionary* <https://public.oed.com/how-to-use-the-oed/key-to-frequency/> [accessed 10 September 2021].

[218] 'Amr b. Uthmān Sībawayh, *Al-Kitāb*, 3rd edn, 4 vols (Cairo, Egypt: Maktabat Al-Khānjī, 1988), p. 104; See also 'Abd Allāh Al-Hitārī, 'Al-Qasam Fī Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm' (Yarmouk University, 1999).

in three verbs namely *la-uqaṭṭiʿanna-kum, la-uṣallibanna-kum,* and *la-taʿlamunna.* Note also that the affirmation is doubled with the use of the *lām* particle. This is another unique instance of double affirmation. In order to understand the stylistic significance of the use of affirmation in this verse, let us look at the unmarked basic structure from which these are derived.

a)   *uqaṭṭiʿa*   'I will cut into pieces'   Unmarked/neutral

b)   *uqaṭṭiʿnna*   'I will cut into pieces'   *Nūn*-affirmation

c)   *la-uqaṭṭiʿnna*   'I will cut into pieces'   Double (*lām* & *Nūn*) affirmation

Why is there a need for double affirmation in these three cases? This verse expresses the frustration, humiliation, and anger of the Pharaoh, who called himself a god, after his magicians were completely defeated in a show of strength which he himself had called. He was absolutely sure that Prophet Moses will not be able to meet the challenge he threw to him. Going from the confidence of invincibility to a total disastrous defeat filled him with anger. The power of the language of the humiliation and anger must match the level of his defeat. Ibn 'Āshūr describes, 'when the Pharaoh saw the magician's belief in God, he became furious, *taghayyaẓa.*[219] The ferocity of the Pharoah is also visible in the way he says he will cut them into pieces. Al-*Shanqīṭī* notes that the use of min *khilāf* in this verse meaning 'from both sides' is more horrific than chopping from one side suggesting that that he just did not want to cut off their hands and legs but wanted to do it in the most horrendous way, which captures the intensity of his anger and the corresponding revenge he wanted to inflict upon the magicians who believed in Prophet Moses.[220]

---

[219] Ibn 'Āshūr, XVI, p. 268.
[220] Muḥammad Aḥmad Al-Shanqīṭī, *Aḍwā' Al-Bayān Fī Īḍāḥ al-Qur'ān Bil Qur'ān* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Kutub al-'IImīyyah, 2011), IV.

The Qur'anic use of the double affirmation using the *alnūn* particle with the verb coupled with the intensifier *lām* is communicatively more effective than the single affirmation or the neutral one. Note also that the verbs *uqaṭṭi'u* and *uṣallibu*, even without the affirmation particle are morphologically forms that indicate abundance and high intensity.[221] So, what these instances of affirmation do is to combine morphological features with stylistics to achieve the desired force needed for the context.

Let us now examine just the first two of three verbs as to how such a powerful constellation of features aimed at double-affirmation has been handled by translators.

Table 8. Translations of Verse-71   فَلَأُقَطِّعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُم مِّنْ خِلَافٍ وَلَأُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ فِي جُذُوعِ النَّخْلِ

Translator	Translation
Arberry	I shall assuredly cut off alternately your hands and feet, then I shall crucify you upon the trunks of palm-trees
Pickthall	Now surely I shall cut off your hands and your feet alternately, and I shall crucify you on the trunks of palm trees
Yusuf Ali	be sure I will cut off your hands and feet on opposite sides, and I will have you crucified on trunks of palm-trees
Khan & Al-Hilali	So I will surely cut off your hands and feet on opposite sides, and I will surely crucify you on the trunks of date-palms
A. Haleem	I shall certainly cut off your alternate hands and feet, then crucify you on the trunks of palm trees
Nasr et al.	Now I shall surely cut off your hands and your feet on alternate sides, and I shall surely crucify you on the trunks of palm trees.

Table-8 above shows that all translators have added some form of an adverb such as 'surely', 'certainly', 'assuredly' to capture the double affirmation meaning for *fa-la-*

---

[221] Muḥammad Fāḍil Al-Sāmarrā'ī, *Al-Ṣarf Al-'Arabi: Aḥkām wa Ma'ānin* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2013), p. 30.

uqaṭṭi'anna فَلَأُقَطِّعَنَّ; Arberry and Pickthal have resorted to the use of the modal verb 'shall' for the second one to avoid repeating the same adverb. However none of them have been able to capture the meaning of intensity and abundance which comes from the morphological structure of the words in the form or *wazn* of *maṣdar taf'īl*. Also, as mentioned in the section dealing with *inna*-affirmation, the double affirmation created by the use of *al-nūn* and *lām* remains untranslated because it is not structurally possible to do it in English. This shows that the translators were not oblivious of the significance of the affirmation and tried to capture as much as possible in English even if it required adding an extra adverb.

A final example of emphasis for *ikhtiṣāṣ* is in Verse-98 using the particle *innamā*, which Arab grammarians describe as a tool of *qaṣr/ḥaṣr*, restriction. Abu Musa, a noted scholar of stylistics, argues that the particle *innamā* is used not only to emphasize something but also to correct an existing understanding in the mind of the listener. So, when a speaker says *innamā jā'anī zaydun*, he/she doesn't only want to emphasize the coming of Zaid but also wants to negate *nafy* the coming of anyone else.[222] This stylistic strategy has been used in other verses in the Qur'an, e.g. Chapter 18/110 *qul innamā anā basharun mithlukum yūḥā ilayya annamā ilāhukum ilāhun wāḥid* قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ يُوحَى إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ. Here God wants to emphasize the humanness of the Prophet and to dispel any belief that people might develop that he is divine and knows the unknown *al-ghayb*. This strategy has been used in four verses namely 69, 72, 90, and 98. Let's study Verse-98, in which the use of *innamā* is perhaps stylistically the most effective.

innamā ilāhukum allāhu al-ladhī lā ilāha illā huwa wa si'a kulla shay'īn 'ilmā

---

222 Abū Mūsā, pp. 138–39.

إِنَّمَا إِلَٰهُكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَسِعَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْماً

The context is that Prophet Moses in the previous Verse-97 tells the Pharoah of what his fate and the fate of his gods will be, including his threat that he will surely burn it and throw its ashes into the sea. After discussing the Pharoah's gods, which were many, Prophet *Moses* asserts the monotheistic belief in one God in Verse-98. The use of the particle *innamā* in this context adds power and strength to his assertion of Islamic monotheism and simultaneously dispelling association with other gods, which he does by saying *innamā ilāhukum allāhu* إِنَّمَا إِلَٰهُكُمُ اللَّهُ and further substantiates it by adding *al-ladhī lā ilāha illā huwa* الَّذِي لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ. Having seen the pragmatic and discoursal significance of *innamā*, let us now examine how this was translated into English.

Table 9. Translations of Verse-98   إِنَّمَا إِلَٰهُكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَسِعَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمَ

Translator	Translation
Arberry	Your God is only the One God; there is no god, but He alone who in His knowledge embraces everything.
Pickthall	Your Allah is only Allah, than Whom there is no other Allah. He embraceth all things in His knowledge
Yusuf Ali	But the god of you all is the One Allah: there is no god but He: all things He comprehends in His knowledge
Khan & Al-Hilali	Your Ilah (God) is only Allah, the One (La ilaha illa Huwa) (none has the right to be worshipped but He). He has full knowledge of all things
A. Haleem	[People], your true god is the One God- there is no god but Him- whose knowledge embraces everything.
Nasr et al.	Your only god is God, besides whom there is no other god. He encompasses all things in knowledge

The stylistic use of *innamā* in Arabic is unique not in terms of what it affirms and what it negates but also its position in the beginning of the sentences which adds extra force

to the statement. In English it is not possible to do it retaining the Arabic word order, so what the translators have done is to take recourse to an alternative way of encoding the meaning of *qaṣr* using words such as 'only', 'true, and 'one'. As it can be noticed that the translators are aware of the meaning conveyed by the *innamā*-particle of affirmation.

The same strategy of the use of 'only' has been used in Verves 69 and 70. In verse-90, however, some translators have just skipped this altogether. For example, while Pickthall captures the meaning of *qaṣr* in *innamā futintum bihi* إِنَّمَا فُتِنتُم بِهِ with the use of 'but', Yusuf Ali, Khan & Al-Hilali, and Abdel Haleem don't. Pickthall's translation is 'Ye are but being seduced therewith', but Yusuf Ali's is 'ye are being tested in this' which ignores the meaning and discourse function of *inna-mā*.

Table 10. Translations of Verse-90   إِنَّمَا فُتِنتُم بِهِ

Translator	Translation
Arberry	you have been tempted by this thing, *no more*;
Pickthall	Ye are *but* being seduced therewith
Yusuf Ali	ye are being tested in this
Khan & Al-Hilali	You are being tried in this
A. Haleem	this calf is a test for you
Nasr et al.	You are *merely* being tested by this

By comparing Table-9 and Table-10, it becomes clear that the translators are aware of the *qaṣr* function of *inna-mā* because they do try to render the meaning of restriction in English in Verse-98. It is also evident from their translation of Verse-90 that while some of them preserve this discourse meaning others choose not to. Of all translators, it is

clear that Abdel Haleem has consistently privileged the basic meaning or the message and has thus ignored discourse and stylistic components of the message. While some scholars will argue that the discourse meaning is part of the broader meaning of the sentences, others such as Abdel Haleem will disagree. Finally, it is worth noting that Arberry in the translation of the above verse chooses a very different strategy, which is the use of 'no more'. It is not clear if readers of modern English understand the meaning.

4.3.3   Verb Noun Alternation

As discussed in Chapter-3, the use of verbs and their nominal forms do not have the same stylistic force. While verbs indicate change, their derived nominals indicate stability and permanence of the features indicated by the verb. So, in Q-28: 5, *innahu ‘aduwwun muḍillun mubīn* إِنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ مُّضِلٌّ مُّبِينٌ the nominal form *muḍillun* مُّضِلٌّ has been used for Satan because the trait of 'misguiding' is permanent in him. With respect to human beings, however, the Qur'an uses the verbal form *yuḍillu* يَضِلُّ as in Q-6: 17 *inna rabbaka huwa a‘lam man yaḍillu ‘an sabīlihi* إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ مَنْ يَضِلُّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ indicating that the state of misguidance is not permanent and that people who were misguided at one point in time can become guided at another.

The second issue related to verbs is their use in the active, *mabnī lil ma‘lūm* and the passive forms, *mabnī lil majhūl*. In the active form, the agent of the action is mentioned while in the passive it is omitted. As discussed in Chapter-3, the omission achieves certain stylistic goals including the highlighting of the action rather than the doer or agent of the action. In Chapter-20, there are some cases involving verbs—the active and the passive form—and the nominal forms. Table-7 below lists the verses that

have these features. We will examine how the stylistic meanings were rendered into English by translators.

Table 11. Verses Containing Verbs and Nouns in Chapter-20

Verse	Verse in Arabic		Grammatical category
1	مَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى	لِتَشْقَى	Active Verb
11	فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ يَا مُوسَى	نُودِيَ	Passive
13	وَأَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَى	يُوحَى	Passive
15	إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ أَكَادُ أُخْفِيهَا لِتُجْزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعَى	آتِيَةٌ	Noun
		تَسْعَى	Active Verb
35	إِنَّكَ كُنتَ بِنَا بَصِيرًا	بَصِيرًا	Noun
59	قَالَ مَوْعِدُكُمْ يَوْمُ الزِّينَةِ وَأَن يُحْشَرَ النَّاسُ ضُحًى	يُحْشَرَ	Passive Verb
79	وَأَضَلَّ فِرْعَوْنُ قَوْمَهُ وَمَا هَدَى	هَدَى	Active Verb
81	وَمَن يَحْلِلْ عَلَيْهِ غَضَبِي فَقَدْ هَوَى	هَوَى	Active Verb
96	قَالَ بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوا بِهِ	بَصُرْتُ	Active Verb

A starting point for the inimitability of the Qur'an and its translation of verbs and their nominal forms is a comparison of Verse-35 *innaka kunta binā baṣīran* إِنَّكَ كُنتَ بِنَا بَصِيرًا, in which the nominal form *baṣīr* has been used, with Verse-96 *qāla baṣurtu bimā lam yabṣurū bihi* قَالَ بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوا بِهِ in which the verbal form *baṣurtu* بَصُرْتُ has been used. Before we delve into the variation in the meanings due to verb-noun alternation, it is important to know that in Qur'ān, in addition to *baṣura*, two other verbs *naẓara* and *ra'ā* have been used. Although on a superficial level, these three verbs seem to have the same meaning of 'seeing', but on a deeper level they have different meanings.

While *naẓara*, and its nominal form *naẓar*, mean 'seeing' something with the physical eyes, *ra'ā*, or its nominal form r*u'yah*, may or may not involve physical eyes.[223]

---

[223] Mīrfat Abdul Mun'im, 'Al-Farq Baina al-Ru'yah wa al-Naẓar wa al-Baṣar', *Al-Mrsal*, 2018 <https://www.almrsal.com/post/609585> [accessed 15 September 2021].

For example in Q-102: 6 the verb has been used to indicate seeing with sensory organs *latarawunna al-jaḥīm thumma latarwunnahā ʿayn al-yaqīn* لترون الجحيم ثم لترونها عين اليقين, but in Q-37:102 *yā bunayya innī ārā fī al-manāmi annī aẓbaḥuka* يَا بُنَيَّ إِنِّي أَرَىٰ فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ, it doesn't refer to the physical act of seeing. Similarly, *baṣura*, and its nominal forms such as *baṣīr* refer to both the physical act of seeing as in Sūrat Yūsuf Q-12:96 *fartadda baṣiran* 'he got his eyesight back' as well as our intellectual faculty to develop a comprehensive understanding of what the eyes are seeing as in Q-20:125 *wa qad kuntu baṣīran*.

An important point about the translation of *baṣīr* and *baṣura* in this chapter is that the nominal form *baṣīr* morphologically is called *ṣīghat al-mubālaghah*. In Arabic, the form *faʿīl* in general denotes *mubālaghah* or intensity and exaggeration that the form *fāʿil* doesn't, for example *raḥīm* means 'having abundance of mercy', but the form *rāḥim* simply means 'someone who has mercy'.[224] Furthermore, it is worth stating again that the nominal form denotes permanence as against verbal form that suggests an action restricted to a specific time and place. With this background, now we are ready to examine the translation of the verbal form *baṣura* and the nominal form *baṣīr* in this chapter.

Table 12. Translations of Verse-35 إِنَّكَ كُنتَ بِنَا بَصِيرًا

Translator	Translation
Arberry	Surely Thou seest into us.
Pickthall	Lo! Thou art ever Seeing us
Yusuf Ali	"For Thou art He that (ever) regardeth us."

---

[224] ʾAwāṭif ʾAbbās, 'Maʿāni Ṣīghat Faʿīl Fī Sūrat al-Baqarah', *Al-Majallah al-ʾIlmīyah Li Kulliyat Uṣūl al-Dīn Wa al-Daʾwah*, 27.2 (2015), 2121–64 (p. 2125).

102

Translator	Translation
Khan & Al-Hilali	"Verily! You are of us Ever a Well-Seer."
A. Haleem	You are always watching over us.
Nasr et al.	Truly, Thou dost ever see us.

In English, there is no morphological form to capture the meaning of the Arabic *ṣīghat al-mubālaghah*, suggesting the presence of intensity, so the translators must find some alternative strategy. All translators have understood the significance of it and have tried their best to render it. While four of them namely Pickthall, Yusuf Ali, Khan & Al-Hilali, and Nasr et al. use the adverb 'ever' to capture the meaning of permanence, Abdel Haleem uses a different word 'watch' which denotes 'looking at something' for a sustained period, which perhaps is not as accurate as the others, but it does show that he is fully aware of the significance of the intensive form. However, Khan & Al-Hilai is the only one who tries to retain the nominal form 'seer' in English. In English, although morphologically, it is possible to turn the verb 'see' into a noun by adding the nominal marking suffix -er, it doesn't work very well with the verb 'see' in particular. The rest of the translators have used the verbal form instead of the original nominal form. But they have tried to retain the meaning of permanence by using the adverb 'ever' because the nominal form 'see-er' looks and reads awkward. This example also shows that the translators are aware of the difference the nominal form, in contrast with the verbal form, makes in a sentence.

The second aspect of the stylistic element in both the nominal and verbal forms is the comprehensive understanding of the situation, which goes beyond the simple act of seeing. Ibn ʿĀshūr citing al-Zamakhsharī explains that the meaning of *baṣīr* in this

verse is metaphorical, and therefore *baṣīr bi al-ʿashyāʾ* means *ʿālim bi al-ashyāʾ*.[225] He cites Q-12: 108 *hādhihī sabīlī adʿū īlā allāhi ʿalā baṣīratin* هَٰذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ ۚ عَلَىٰ بَصِيرَةٍ to suggest that *baṣīr* in Chapter Ṭāhā means *al-maʿrifah al-rāsikhah*, 'unshaking belief'. Most translators, however, have interpreted the word more literally and have, therefore, chosen to use the word 'see' and not 'know'. Yusuf Ali is the only one who goes beyond 'see' and uses 'regardeth' to capture this meaning. But, as per Oxford English Dictionary, in Middle English, the word 'regard' also meant 'to see' as is clear from the examples given in the dictionary. It must, however, be pointed out that although New Yorker used in 2007, this meaning is very rare in modern English.

> 1988   J. Herbert Haunted xi. 93   They regarded him in silence.

> 2007   New Yorker 14 May 65/2   A white station wagon pulled up. Its driver, in an orange trucker hat, rolled down a window and regarded us warily.[226]

This shows that although Yusuf Ali doesn't use the word 'see', his use of the word 'regard' is similar to 'see' and, therefore, doesn't capture the Ibn ʿĀshūr's interpretation of *baṣīr*. Let us now turn to the verbal form *baṣura* in Verse-96 *qāla baṣurtu bimā lam yabṣurū bihī* قَالَ بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوا بِهِ and examine its translations.

Table 13. Translations of Verse-96   قَالَ بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوا بِهِ

Translator	Translation
Arberry	'I beheld what they beheld not,' he said,
Pickthall	He said: I perceived what they perceive not,
Yusuf Ali	He replied: "I saw what they saw not:
Khan & Al-Hilali	(Samiri) said: "I saw what they saw not,

---

[225] Ibn ʿĀshūr, XVI, p. 295.
[226] 'Regard', *Oxford English Dictionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 2021) <https://0-www.oed.com.mylibrary.qu.edu.qa/view/Entry/161187?rskey=0yUaCW&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid> [accessed 14 September 2021].

Translator	Translation
A. Haleem	He replied, 'I saw something they did not;
Nasr et al.	He said, "I saw that which they saw not.

Ibn 'Āshūr, citing Al-Akhfash and Al-Zajjāj disagrees with those scholars who have interpreted the word *baṣura* literally and argues that the word *baṣura* in this context has been used metaphorically, meaning 'knowing' and not physical act of seeing.[227] He explains *baṣurtu bimā lam yabṣurū bihī* بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوا بِهِ as meaning '*alimtu mā lam ya'lamūhu*. It is clear from Table-9 that in contrast with the nominal form *baṣīr*, the translation of the verbal for *baṣura* in Verse-96 shows some variation. While Yusuf Ali, Khan & Al-Hilali, Abdel Haleem, and Nasr et al. use the word 'see', Arberry and Pickthall choose different words. Arberry uses 'behold', while Pickthall 'perceive', which tries to capture Ibn 'Āshūr's interpretation. But, given the differences of opinions among Arab exegetes themselves about whether the word should be interpreted literally or metaphorically, the variation in translation is understandable.

Another example of the use of verb and noun is in the translation of Verse-2. In Chapter-20/2 *mā anzalnā 'alayka al-qur'ān li tashqā* مَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى, the verbal form *li tashqā* لِتَشْقَى has been used, which has been translated with a verbal form in English by all translators except Yusuf Ali, who translates it as 'thy distress' using a nominal form making an addition (to be an occasion). But the fact that he places 'to be an occasion' shows that although he used a nominal form he is aware that the noun could potentially suggest a permanence of *shaqāwah*. 'distress', so he adds the parenthetical material to restrict it to a time and place.

---

[227] Ibn 'Āshūr, XVI, p. 295.

The second stylistic issue regarding verbs is the strategic use of active and passive forms depending on the context of the situation and the need for highlighting different elements in a sentence. In Verse-11, *falammā atāhā nūḍiya yā mūsā* فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ يَا مُوسَى, a passive form of the verb *nādā*, 'to call' has been used which means that the agent of the call, the *munādī* is not mentioned. Ibn 'Āshūr argues that the passive form has been used as a strategy of *ibhām* 'suspense', which makes the hearer look forward to knowing who the caller is.[228] Then the voice comes and clarifies the *ibhām* by announcing , 'I am your Lord'. So the use of passive in this verse creates some suspense, which prepares Prophet Moses to anticipate the call, which when he finds out that it is his Lord, comforts him and calms him down for the reception of the revelation.

Four of the translators have preserved the passive form of the verb in English. Arberry and Yusuf Ali have departed from the Arabic structure, but only marginally. Arberry translates it as 'a voice cried', using an intransitive verb *fi'l lāzim*, which comes close to the intended meaning of a passive form. While other translators have retained Moses as the subject of the passive verb *nā'ib fā'il*, Yusuf Ali's translation 'a voice was heard' has an added word 'a voice' in it. But given the context of the revelation, the meaning is preserved in English.

In the translation of *yūḥā* يُوحَى in Verse-13 *fastami' limā yūḥā* فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَى, however, Arberry and Pickthall have taken liberty of moving away from the passive structure. While Arberry translates it as 'give thy ear to this revelation' by turning the passive verb into a nominal form 'this revelation', which disregards the spatial and temporal boundedness of the event of revelation. Prophet Moses was being asked to listen to what was being revealed to him at that moment and place. While it may look

---

[228] Ibn 'Āshūr, XVI, p. 195.

like that the use of the nominal form takes away that temporality and boundedness of the feature, the context of the conversation makes it clear that he is asked to listen to what is being revealed to him, and other revelations to other prophets of other times and places. So, the pragmatics and the use of the demonstrative pronoun 'this' take care of the stylistic meaning that the structure couldn't.

As a final example, let us examine the translations of the intransitive verb *hawā* هَوَى in Verse-81. An active form of the verb indicates the agent or doer of the action, which also means placing responsibility on the agent. By, contrast, the use of a passive form hides the subject and therefore, there is no agent to take responsibility of the action. In *hawā* هَوَى the person himself is responsible for his 'fall'. In many of the translations, however, the translators have used passive verb forms, which give the impression that the act of 'falling' wasn't their own, but done by someone else, which is contrary to the meanings of the Arabic verse. Arberry translates it using the passive form 'the man is hurled to ruin', which doesn't clearly place the responsibility of 'fall' on the man because 'is hurled into' means that someone else did it. Nasr et al., whose express goal in translating the Qur'an is to stay as close to the Arabic forms as possible, have rendered it as '…has been cast into ruin'. This sentence doesn't clarify who is responsible for the action of being cast into ruin. The original Arabic places the responsibility on the man himself. This is because the verb fall could mean literal fall, which is not the intended meaning. That is the reason for using the passive form.

4.3.4   Deletion of Object *Ḥadhf Mafʻūl bihī*

As discussed in Chapter-3, objects, *mafʻūl bihī* of transitive verbs *fiʻl mutʻaddī*, are sometimes deleted for or the sake of brevity or for giving a more comprehensive meaning, unrestricted by the object. The former happens when the object is easy to

recover from the linguistic context, while the latter for stylistic reasons. A good example of the former is the use of the transitive verb *yakhshā* يَخْشَى in Verse-3 of Chapter-20, without the object *allāh*, which the context helps recover without difficulty.[229] The example of the latter is the use of transitive verbs *yuḥyī wa yūmītu* يحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ without mentioning the objects. Deletion of the objects from these verbs makes the scope of God's power of granting life and death unlimited, making the Qur'anic strategy extremely powerful.

Table 14. Verses Containing Object Deletion in Chapter-20

Verse	Verse in Arabic	Words
3	إِلَّا تَذْكِرَةً لِّمَن يَخْشَى	يَخْشَى
44	فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى	يَتَذَكَّرُ يَخْشَى
46	قَالَ لَا تَخَافَا إِنَّنِي مَعَكُمَا أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَى	أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَى لَا تَخَافَا
48	إِنَّا قَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْنَا أَنَّ الْعَذَابَ عَلَىٰ مَن كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّى	مَن كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّى
50	قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى	هَدَى
52	قَالَ عِلْمُهَا عِندَ رَبِّي فِي كِتَابٍ لَّا يَضِلُّ رَبِّي وَلَا يَنسَى	وَلَا يَنسَى
56	وَلَقَدْ أَرَيْنَاهُ آيَاتِنَا كُلَّهَا فَكَذَّبَ وَأَبَى	فَكَذَّبَ وَأَبَى
61	وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنِ افْتَرَى	افْتَرَى
68	قُلْنَا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْأَعْلَىٰ	لَا تَخَفْ
77	لَا تَخَافُ دَرَكًا وَلَا تَخْشَى	تَخْشَى
79	وَأَضَلَّ فِرْعَوْنُ قَوْمَهُ وَمَا هَدَى	هَدَى
88	قَالُوا هَٰذَا إِلَٰهُكُمْ وَإِلَٰهُ مُوسَىٰ فَنَسِي	فَنَسِي
113	لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ أَوْ يُحْدِثُ لَهُمْ ذِكْرًا	يَتَّقُونَ
122	ثُمَّ اجْتَبَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ وَهَدَى	وَهَدَى

In the chapter under study, there are multiple cases of object deletion. Table-13 above gives a list of verses where this stylistic feature appears. Let us examine Verse-3 *liman*

---

[229] It is worth mentioning that sometimes dropping the object makes the verse rhyme with other verses. However, in Quranic stylistics meaning takes precedence over form. This becomes clear from cases where the rhyme has been broken for the sake of meaning.

yakhshā 'for those who fear' closely. According to Al-Khiḍr, the main reason why the object *allāh* has been deleted in Verse-3 is to highlight the broader aspect of *khashīyah*, or 'fear of God' which is one of the goals the *tanzīl*, the Qur'ān tries to achieve.[230] He argues that a transitive verb has been used with the deletion of the object so that the reader focusses on the verb and doesn't even think of the object. Let us examine the translations of the verse in the Table 15 below.

Table 15. Translation of Verse-3   إِلَّا تَذْكِرَةً لِّمَن يَخْشَى

Translators	Translations
Arberry	but only as a reminder to him who tears
Pickthall	But as a reminder unto him who feareth
Yusuf Ali	But only as an admonition to those who fear (Allah)
Khan & Al-Hilali	But only as a Reminder to those who fear (Allah)
A. Haleem	but as a reminder for those who hold God in awe
Nasr et al.	but only as a reminder unto one who fears [God]

In dealing with this stylistic feature, four translators have chosen to add God/Allah, the deleted object, between brackets to mark that it didn't exist in the source language. A possible reason why the translators have made an addition is that the lack of an object in an English sentence containing a transitive verb sounds odd and may cause confusion; 'fear' is one of those verbs whose object, if deleted, could create confusion.

Nida calls this strategy addition, which he argued is needed to remove a possible ambiguity in the target language text.[231] Although Pickthall chooses the same word

---

[230] Al-Khiḍr, p. 620.
[231] Eugene Albert Nida, pp. 188–89.

'fear' as the other translators but chooses not to add the deleted object. In this sense he preserves the source language structure faithfully. Arberry uses a different strategy; he chooses an intransitive verb 'tears' and therefore doesn't need to worry about how to handle the deleted object because intransitive verbs do not need objects. The same word appears in Verse-44 *la'allahu yatadhakkaru aw yakhshā* لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى wherein the same strategy of addition of the deleted object *allāh* has been used by all translators except Arberry and Pickthall who despite using the transitive verb 'fear' leaves out the object.

In contrast with these two verses, Verse-46 *qāl la takhāfā innī ma'akumā asma' wa ārā* قَالَ لَا تَخَافَا إِنَّنِي مَعَكُمَا أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَى shows a very interesting point (Table 16). In translating this verse, except Yusuf Ali and Abdel Haleem, who insert an object 'everything', other translators have preserved the Arabic strcuture and have *not* made any additions of the deleted object.

Table 16. Translation of Verse-46   إِنَّنِي مَعَكُمَا أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَى

Translators	Translations
Arberry	I shall be with you, hearing and seeing
Pickthall	I am with you twain, Hearing and Seeing
Yusuf Ali	for I am with you: I hear and see (everything)
Khan & Al-Hilali	verily! I am with you both, hearing and seeing
A. Haleem	I am with you both, hearing and seeing everything
Nasr et al.	Truly I am with ye twain; I hear and I see

There are two possible reasons. First, the transitive verbs *asma' wa arā* أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَى meaning 'hear' and 'see' are verbs that are used in English to refer to either the general

sensory abilities to 'hear' and 'see' or to specific acts of 'hearing' and 'seeing'. For example, if it is dark, one can say 'I can't see' without the object because the speaker is talking about their ability to see in general. In this sense the verb 'see' and 'hear' are different from the verb 'fear' in the above two verses, which explains why the object has not been added in these two verbs. There is another stylistic reason for the lack of addition of the object in translations. The subject or the agent of the verbs 'hear' and 'see' is God, whose power is infinite and therefore the things He can see and hear are infinite and therefore there is no confusion with regard to what He can or cannot 'hear' and 'see'.

Table 17. Translations of Verse-52   لَّا يَضِلُّ رَبِّي وَلَا يَنسَى

Translator	Translation
Arberry	My Lord goes not astray, nor forgets
Pickthall	My Lord neither erreth nor forgetteth
Yusuf Ali	My Lord never errs, nor forgets,
Khan & Al-Hilali	My Lord is neither unaware nor He forgets
A. Haleem	My Lord does not err or forget
Nasr et al.	(Knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a Book)—He errs not, nor does He forget

It is precisely for these reasons that the deleted objects of the transitive verbs 'err/lead astray'' and 'forget' in Verse-52 *lā yadhīllu rabbī walā yansā* لَّا يَضِلُّ رَبِّي وَلَا يَنسَى have not been supplied by the translators in Table-17 because the subject is *allāh*, whose ability to 'not guide' or 'forget' does not know any bounds.

In conclusion, what is the big picture emerging from the analysis of the four stylistic features in Chapter-20 of the Qur'an? We found that in the translation of Verse-

2, the original marked word order of Arabic was not preserved in English because of syntactic constraints whereby inserting a phrase between the transitive verb and its object is dis-preferred in English, especially in prose, even though it is sometimes used in poetry. In cases where there were no structural constraints such as in Verse-6, where the prepositional phrase was fronted at the beginning, all translators except Abdel Haleem preserved the marked word order of Arabic in English.

Similarly, with regard to the translation of clauses with affirmation particle, we found that, in cases where English grammar allows, translators generally used some strategy to capture the meaning of affirmation. The strategy differed from one translator to another. For example, some used the adverb 'verily' for *inna*, whereas others used the adverb 'truly' or some other words such as 'one' 'only', 'merely', etc. Abdel Haleem is an exception here too. We will discuss him separately. We also found that double affirmation, one of the unique Arabic stylistic properties, was not rendered into English by any translators because structurally it is not possible to express it in English.

As regards the translation of nouns such as *baṣīr* in Verse-125 which is in *ṣīghat al-mubālaghah,* for which there is no corresponding word in English, translators tried to capture the essence by adding the adverb 'ever'. Similarly, in the translation of deletion of objects in sentences with transitive verbs, we found two important factors that explain the preservation of the original Arabic structure (without the object) or addition of the deleted object. Firstly, some transitive verbs such as 'hear' and 'see' allow for the deletion of the object because they may refer to the general ability of 'hearing' and 'seeing'. Verses containing these verbs were translated preserving the object deletion. Secondly, we found that the nature of subject plays a critical role too. If the subject was God, then the translations preserved the Arabic structure because the

ability of God the verb refers to is unlimited as in Verse-50 *lā yaḍīllu rabbī walā yansā*

لَّا يَضِلُّ رَبِّي وَلَا يَنسَى. But, when the subject is a human being as in Verse-44 *la'allahu*

yatadhakkaru aw yakhshā لَّعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى , the translators supplied the deleted object

allāh to clear any possible ambiguity.

4.4   Assessing Translation

We have seen in this Chapter that in translating stylistic features such as word order *al-taqdīm wa al-Ta'khīr* , affirmation, *al-tawkīd*, and verb-noun alternations, Abdel Haleem often chooses a path different from other translators, which shows distance and difference from the source language form and structure. This has raised concerns among many researchers that his translation has resulted into grammatical and sematic losses. To review a translation in terms of its accuracy, appropriateness, and effectiveness is known as translation assessment in the field of translation studies. Although I have alluded to some of the reasons behind Abdel Haleem's choices above, I review some of those critical studies *critically* in more detail and offer a different perspective on what has been referred to as errors, mistakes, and losses by integrating assessments of translation into theories of translation.

Let me start with Shah, who has also written critical reviews of Rodwell's and Sale's English translations.[232] In his review, he discusses some of the positive points about Abdel Haleem's translation, including his choice of the positive word 'scheme' for the verb *makara* and the noun *mākir* in Q-3: 54 *wa makarū wa makara allāhu wa allāhu khayru al-mākirīn* in describing the actions of God in contrast with other

---

[232] See Muḥammad Sulṭān Shāh, 'A Critical Study of Rodwell's Translation of the Qur'ān', *Pakistan Journal of Islamic Research*, 12 (2013), 53–66.

translators who have used 'plot', a negative word.[233] He then points out some 'lacunae' in Abdel Haleem's translation, including in the translation of the words *al-ḥamd* in Q-1:1 and *al-ʿālamīn* in Q-21:107.[234] He points out that the former should have been translated as 'all praise' and not just 'praise' as Abdel Haleem does it. Similarly, he argues that while Abdel Haleem correctly translates *al-ʿālamīn in* Chapter-1 as 'the worlds' containing the mankind, angels, animals, plants, this world, the next, etc., Shah claims that Abdel Haleem makes a mistake in translating it as 'all people' in Q-21:107 referring to the mercy of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He argues that if the word was translated as 'the worlds' in one place, it should have been done the same in other places as well.[235] He offers his own correction, "And We have not sent you but a mercy for all the worlds". It is not difficult to understand why Abdel Haleem chose 'the worlds' in former context and 'all people' in the latter. In Chapter 1, the word *al-ʿālamīn* is in relation to *rabb*, one of the names/attributes of God referring to his infinite lordship over every entity—living or non-living, unrestricted by anything. In the latter context, however, it refers to Prophet Muhammad's mercy, which although quite abundant, is limited by human constraints. In a way, Abdel Haleem's choice should be commended because he is making a difference between God and his prophet and their respective scope of lordship and mercy. Regarding his criticism of the translation of *al-ḥamd*, one can argue that in English a common noun without any determiner such as 'a', 'an', or 'some' does have an inclusive meaning.

---

[233] Muhammad Sultan Shah, 'A Critical Study of Abdel Haleem's New Translation of the Holy Qur'an', *Al Qalam*, 1 (2010), 1–15 (p. 7).

[234] Shah, p. 4.

[235] Shah, pp. 7–8.

In another critical review, based on a study of stylistic features such as word order, duality, conjunction, and verbs in *Sūrat al-'Ārāf*, Abdelaal & Rashid criticize Abdel Haleem's translation. They accuse him of causing 'grammar-related semantic losses'. They claim that their analysis, '…revealed *frequent grammatical losses* in the translation, which have mostly led to partial semantic losses, while at other times, caused *complete semantic losses"*.[236] I will discuss only two of their claims, which are related to this study: namely, *al-tawkīd*, emphasis or affirmation and *al-taqdīm wa al-ta'khīr*, word order. As pointed out earlier in this chapter, while others have translated *inna* in Verse-12 as 'verily', 'Verily, I am thy/your lord', Abdel Haleem chooses not to 'I am your lord'. We also discussed that Abdel Haleem's choice is motivated by his choice of using contemporary English free of archaism, which defines his western audience. Although Abdelaal and Rashid accept that the primary meaning has been conveyed, they still conclude that the omission has led to partial loss of meaning.[237] While discussing semantic loss caused by lack of adherence to the Arabic syntactic order in English, they study Q-7:13 *qāla fa-ihbiṭ minhā famā yakūnu laka an tatakabbara fīhā* and find fault with Abdel Haleem's addition of God with the verb *qāla*:

> God said, "Get down from here! This is no place for
>
> your arrogance. Get out! You are contemptible".

While they accept that English is not a language where you can drop a pronoun, they still go ahead and claim that the addition of the subject 'God' "creates partial semantic

[236] Noureldin Mohamed Abdelaal and Sabariah Md Rashid, 'Grammar-Related Semantic Losses in the Translation of the Holy Quran, with Special Reference to Surah Al A'araf (The Heights)', *SAGE Open*, 6.3 (2016), p. 4.
[237] Abdelaal and Md Rashid, p. 6.

loss' which affects the expressive meaning".[238] Their claim remains quite impressionistic and dubious as they do not delineate what counts as expressive meaning and how that addition has led to its loss.

They also, surprisingly, claim semantic loss in translating Arabic dual pronouns, known in Arabic as *muthannā*, which does not exist in English. They argue that "duality is lost in the translation of…words, such as *dhāqā* ذَاقَا and *saw'ātuhumā* سَوْأتِهُمَا, which could not be rendered as dual in the TT due the linguistic differences between Arabic and English".[239] Al-Ghazālī, another study, which Abdeaal and Md Rashid cite copiously, seeks to examine the translation of verbs derived from triliteral roots such as those on the patterns of *taf'īl* from *fa'ala*. It will suffice here to give one example from his analysis. He argues that the *taf'īl* form denotes intensity, which has not been rendered correctly in English by all four translators in his study. He concludes that "…all the renditions above *failed* to convey the sense concerned" and then quickly offers his own correct translation of *yudhabbiḥūna abnā'akum* in Q-14: 6 as, "…and were abundantly slaughtering your sons". It is disappointing that he does not even mention the fact that English morphology doesn't have anything similar to the *taf'īl* morphological form and therefore the translators chose the verb 'slaughter', which captures the meaning of intensity. In English the difference between kill and slaughter is that of intensity and abundance. For example, if someone kills one individual, we cannot use the verb slaughter. According to Cambridge English dictionary, the word

---

[238] Abdelaal and Md Rashid, p. 6.
[239] Abdelaal and Md Rashid, p. 8.

slaughter in English refers to "the killing of *many people* cruelly and unfairly, especially in a war".[240]

Although there are some minor differences between their critical reviews, what is common between the studies of translation assessment such as the ones discussed above is their theoretical basis. It stems from what has been referred to in the literature as *faithfulness* to source language structure in Chapter-1, which implies that a translator must reproduce the source language structure in the target language. while criticizing translators who translated Arabic nouns as verbs into English, Abdelaal and Rashid spell out quite clearly, "however, it was translated into a noun (i.e. arrogance), which does not serve the same function as the verb. It also makes the translation *less faithful to the ST*".[241]

In the theoretical approach espoused by Abdelaal & Rashid, for any translation to be accurate, the source language structure must be preserved in the target language. As we discussed in Chapter-1, the Roman authors and translators Horace and Cicero grappled with this issue over two thousand years ago and decided to move beyond it; the debate hasn't gone away in the twenty-first century. There are two major problems with this theoretical position. Firstly, preserving the form and structure of the source language is not always possible or may lead to ambiguity as Abdel Haleem has shown in the translation of Q-4:122 *tajrī min taḥtiha al-anhār*. A translation that remains faithful to the source structure would translate it as 'under which rivers flow', which may indicate to English readers 'that rivers flow underground', which is not the

---

[240] 'Slaughter', *Cambridge Dictionary* (UK: Cambridge University Press)
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/slaughter> emphasis mine.
[241] Abdelaal and Md Rashid, pp. 6; emphasis mine.

intended meaning in Arabic.[242] Abdel Haleem, therefore, translates it as "graced with flowing stream". He also gives other examples, including the deletion of the main clause in conditional sentences in which adherence to the principle of faithfulness will lead to incomprehensible texts in English. Conditional sentences in English consists of two parts—the dependent clause which contains the condition and the independent clause that contains the response. For example, the sentence 'If I were a translator, I would translate *al-Kashshāf* ', contains the dependent clause 'if I were a translator' and the main clause 'I would translate *al-Kashshāf*'. In Arabic stylistics, deletion of the independent clause is not only allowed but considered literary refinement, and there are many examples of this in the Qur'an; in English however, it is ungrammatical and will be meaningless to English speakers. Abdel Haleem gives the example of Q-13:31 *wa law anna qur'ānan suyyirat bihi al-jibālu aw quṭṭiʿat bihi al-arḍu aw kullima bihi al-mawtā* in which the main clause, which is the response to conditional clause 'If there were a Qur'an with which mountains were moved, or the earth were cloven asunder, or the dead were made to speak' is deleted. In dealing with this, Yusuf Ali has added the clause "this would be the one!" between brackets. This explains why most translators have not adhered to the faithfulness principle.

Excessive faithfulness to the source language form has also led Khan& Al-Hilali to adopt Arabic words into their translation. They do not use the English names of prophets and angels common in the Abrahamic faiths such as Joseph, Moses, Aaron, etc. and keep their Arabic equivalents Yousuf, Moosa, and Haroom. They decide not to translate Allah as God and keep the Arabic word *ilāh* for god in Verse-88, "They said: "This is your ilah (god), and the ilah (god) of Moosa (Moses), but (Moosa (Moses)) has

---

[242] Abdel Haleem, 'The Qur'an', p. xxxii.

forgotten (his god)". Remember that El-Khatib in his work also calls for retaining many Arabic words, including *allāh* in English translation.[243] Khan & Al-Hilali also use Arabic words such as *mujrim* in Verse-74 and *mujrimūn* in Verse-102 in their translation, which others have translated as 'sinner', evil-doer', guilty, etc.

The question is why did Khan & Al-Hilali decided to keep these Arabic words in English despite knowing well that their predecessors such as Pickthall and Yusuf Ali had translated them? Is their approach correct? The answer is that there is no final answer. It depends on the ideological choice the translator must make between being faithful to the source structure and meaning and being comprehensible to a modern English reader. Each decision has a set of consequences. Khan & Al-Hilali's belief that the Arabic names of the prophets have different connotations in English has led to their retention in their translation, which has consequences. Their text doesn't flow well because of the addition they had to make in brackets to insert English spellings of the names of the prophets. "They said: "This is your ilah (god), and the ilah (god) of Moosa (Moses), but (Moosa (Moses)) has forgotten (his god)". Their additions clearly show that they are fully aware that their non-Muslim English-reading audience may not recognize the Arabic spelling of Moosa or the word *ilāh* so they put the translations in brackets. Their choice of using the Arabic word *mujrim* Verse-74 forced them to explain its meaning as "criminal, polytheist, disbeliever in the oneness of Allah" between brackets because they are aware that the *mujrim* is not comprehensible to English speakers. "Verily! Whoever comes to his Lord as a mujrim (criminal, polytheist, disbeliever in the Oneness of Allah and His Messengers, sinner, etc.), then

---

[243] El-Khatib, 'A Critical Study for the Proper Methodology of Translating Islamic Terms in the Holy Qur'an into English with Special Reference to Some Qur'anic Terms', pp. 523–44.

surely, for him is Hell, therein he will neither die nor live".[244] Their translation of Verse-14 shows the same strategy wherein they keep the word asssalat, meaning 'prayer' as it is "…and perform AsSalat (Iqamat-as-Salat) for My Remembrance".

In sum, while choosing to privilege the source language structure and meaning has retained Arabic meanings but the text has become quite clunky and maybe even incomprehensible to non-Muslims.

Hatim, a well-known scholar of translation, sums this up, "Ignoring such factors as text *type, audience or purpose* of translation has invariably led to the rather pedantic form of literalism…".[245] He further adds that the result of such as slavish adherence to source language structure is, '…the vocabulary of a given language may well be recognizable and the grammar intact, but the sense is quite lacking…'.[246] On the other hand, choosing to privilege the audience, as evidenced in translations of Abdel Haleem, makes the text flow well and is comprehensible to all English reader but sacrifices some of the meanings of the original Arabic text. So, it is a trade-off whose cost must be counted for by the translator before making their decisions.

What the above discussion shows is that the principle of faithfulness, which is at the core of the criticism of many Qur'an translation, is not always a virtue to be followed; in fact, in some cases, it becomes mandatory to violate the faithfulness principle so that the translation becomes meaningful. But there are other factors too that underlie the choices that translators make which impact the output. The most important of which is the function and the audience of the translation. In Chapter 2.6, I discussed

---

[244] https://www.islamawakened.com/quran/20/74/default.htm
[245] B. Hatim, *Teaching and Researching Translation*, Applied Linguistics in Action, 2nd ed (New York: Pearson Longman, 2012), p. 14 Emphasis mine.
[246] Hatim, p. 14.

how the issue of assessment of the effectiveness of translation is related to theory of translation, type of text, and the target audience. Without taking these factors into account, any assessment will be shoddy and will fail to provide any meaningful insight into translation as a process. Let us examine how privileging audience over, say source language form and structure, will impact translation.

In Chapter 2, while discussing functional theories of translation, we discussed Katharine Reiss's work which places emphasis on types of texts and their intended communicative function, known in Greek as *skopos*. According to Schäffner, faithfulness to the source text could be one of the goals or *skopos* but not *the* goal. Audience is one of the critical *skopos* of any translation. Abdel Haleem, in his introduction, devotes a whole section called "This Translation" which is a detailed metalinguistic explanation of the set of choices he has made in translating the Qur'an. Therein, he discusses issue related to style of language, audience, context, etc. He starts this section with a clear statement that his translation is:

"written in a *modern, easy style*, avoiding where possible the use of *cryptic language* or *archaisms* that tend to obscure meaning. The intention is to make the Qur'ān *accessible to everyone* who speaks English, Muslims or otherwise including the millions of people all over the world for whom the English language has become a lingua franca".[247]

In this short statement, he clarifies many of the theoretical issues related to translation. Unlike many translators such as Pickthall who used Biblical/medieval English, which is evident in their use of archaic forms such as 'feareth' (Verse-3), 'speakest' (Verse-7) 'hath' (Verse-9) for 'fears', speak', and 'has' respectively, Abdel

---

[247] Abdel Haleem, 'The Qur'an', p. xxix Emphasis mine.

Haleem boldly states the reasons for his choices. He states that his language is "modern and easy" in which he has deliberately avoided "archaisms" such as those of Pickthall, because he is not only targeting native speakers of English in the western countries but also a large number of non-native speakers from around the World for whom English has become a lingua Franca. He further justifies that Qur'an was addressed to all Arabs with their different levels of command of Arabic language and literature. When Pickthall was translating the Qur'ān into English, his English-speaking audience was not necessarily as diverse as Abdel Haleem's audience. English had not become a language of millions of people; beyond the native English-speaking countries, it was the language of the small, educated elite in British colonies. Even in the twenty first century, some translators can make a decision to use an older diction and a language style that might seem archaic. A great example is Nasr et al. 2015 translation. Seyyed Nasr, while discussing some salient features of their translation disagree with Abdel Haleem's decision to use the common man's language in his translation noting critically that their language "does not rise up to the level of a sacred text".[248] Lumbard further enunciates this by arguing that the language of a scared text like Qur'an must be different from the common people's language. He argues that even today the most popular English Bible is that of King James version which uses medieval, and not modern, English.[249] This, according to them, is evidence that English speakers do not have difficulty in understanding what Abdel Haleem believes is an archaic language. Lumbard further adds a structural argument that modern English has only one second

---

[248] Politics and Prose, *Dr. Sayyed Hossein Nasr, 'The Study Quran'* (USA, 2016)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pSAt45aYyQ> [accessed 27 September 2021].
[249] Joseph Lumbard, *Unveiling The Study Quran with Joseph Lumbard* (USA, 2016)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KIFL1-0Zmdk> [accessed 27 September 2021].

person pronoun *you* for both singular and plural, which creates problems in translating *iltifāt* involving a shift from the second person to the third person.

So, a pertinent question is which view of the use of language is correct? In Chapter 2.4.2, we discussed that some translations theories, e.g., Nida's dynamic equivalence theory, privilege the reader and their language and culture whereas others adopt an approach in which source language text and culture are privileged (See 2.5.3). Friedrich Schleiermacher's 'alienating' and Venuti's 'foreignization' highlight orienting the reader towards the source language text and culture. In Venuti's foreignization approach, instead of facilitating the reader's fluency using the common man's easy language, it is challenged. Kadiu sums it up, "Venuti advocates instead an approach to translation which seeks to resist fluency and highlights the fact that the text produced in the target culture is a translation".[250]

In sum, as much one would like to have a decisive answer on whether to use the modern or medieval English for translating sacred texts like the Qur'an, there isn't really a final answer. Different theories hold different, often opposing views, on this. The only way it can be resolved is by using insights from sociolinguistics. This requires sampling relevant people and presenting them with two translations that have everything constant except that one has modern English structure and the other medieval English and asking them to rate the two versions on some agreed upon criteria. The results of the survey can help resolve the issue.

Sociolinguistic studies can answer only one of the questions—the choice of a language. Choice of words, structures, and the recognition of the audience are ideological questions that every translator must decide for themselves. But there is

---

[250] Silvia Kadiu, p. 21.

another misunderstanding that the assessment of Qur'an translation into English reveals—and that is the wrong impression that the totality of the meanings and interpretations must be transferred into the target language. This assumption undergirds many of the critics of Qur'an translation who describe the translators as "having failed" in transferring the meanings into English.[251]

The expectation that the whole of the meaning must be transferred becomes even more problematic when a word has multiple interpretations in the exegetic tradition. A good example of the relationship between multiple syntactic structures and their impact on Qur'an translation is Al-Mulaifi's work who shows that many variations in translations are attributable to multiple *i'rāb*. For example, Al-Mulaifi shows that in translating Chapter 7/2, *kitābun unzila ilayka*, translators such as Pickthall have treated *kitābun* as *khabar* of a *mubtadā' maḥdhūf* as in 'It is a scripture that is revealed unto you' whereas others such as George Sale treats it as *mubtadā'* as in 'A book hath been sent down unto you'. While his work is commendable for tracing variations in translation to differences in *i'rāb* that have existed in the Qur'anic studies tradition, he also falls in the same trap that the totality of the meanings must be transferred to the target language based on the structure of the source language. He criticizes most translations of Chapter 18/95 *wa tilka al-qurā ahlaknāhum,* because, he argues, the intended meaning of *al-qurā* is *ahl alqurā* was not translated. He offers his own correct translation 'And those (**people of**) of cities—we destroyed them.[252] One can argue that in English destruction of city is impossible without the destruction of people living in

[251] See for example Mehdi F Al-Ghazalli, 'A Study of the English Translations of the Qur'anic Verb Phrase: The Derivatives of the Triliteral', *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2.3 (2012), 605–12; Abdelaal and Md Rashid.
[252] Al-Mulayfī, p. 59.

it. The pragmatics of the word take care of the intended meaning even if the addition is not made. He, like other critiques of Qur'an translation, advocates that the whole meaning of the source language must be transferred.

Recent scholarship in translation studies, however, does not shy away from accepting that it is impossible to transfer the totality of the meanings and effects into the target language. If this was humanly possible, a translation wouldn't be different from the original. Hatim alerts translators of the limitations of translation, "there will always be entire chunks of experience and some unique ST values that will *simply defeat our best efforts to convey them across cultural and linguistic boundaries…*".[253] He further asserts that the goal of transferring the totality of meaning is an impossible task, and something that will make the target text difficult to understand, "we argued that to insist on full translatability across languages and cultures is to risk being incomprehensible (i.e. producing TTs that are confusing atbest). Similarly, to insist on full comprehensibility in translation is to perpetuate the myth that there is no real difference between translation and other forms of communication".[254]

It should not be concluded from the discussion above that I defend Abdel Haleem's approach to translation and attack others or to judge his translation as better than others. What this study has shown is that the differences in the translations are not always the result of mistakes or errors or 'losses' but a consequence of certain critical decisions they make about their work. While for some translators, such as Arberry and Yusuf Ali, the preservation of the source language structure into English ranks higher than the flow of the text for a contemporary audience, for others such as Abdel Haleem,

---

[253] Hatim, p. 15 emphasis mine.
[254] Hatim, p. 40.

the audience and its demands ranks higher. Both have consequences in that while preserving the source structure Arberry and others may lose the audience in the same way as Abdel Haleem, while attending to the audience may lose some elements of the meaning in the source language. Quite similar is the issue of the use of Arabic words in translation as evidenced in the work of Khan & Al-Hilali. Since they believe that the words such as *allāh, ṣalāh, mujrim*, etc. lose parts of their meaning when translated into English as 'God', 'prayer', 'wrong-doer', they insist on using the same. The consequence is that while they were successful in preserving the full semantic range of these words, they lose the non-Muslim audience, who may not understand these words or the nuances they are trying to preserve.

Is there an approach that doesn't go to the either extreme? Put differently, while the goal of communication and the centrality of the audience is critical in translation, does it mean that the translator is completely free to diverge from the source text as they please? The answer, of course, is that they are not, especially if the text under translation is a sacred text like the Qur'an. In the same way as no one would like a translation of the Qur'an that preserves all source language features but fails to communicate the intended meanings to its readers, nobody would like a translation of the Qur'an that has succeeded in conveying the broad meanings to the audience but has sacrificed even those features of the source language with which the reader is unlikely to have any difficulty.

In other words, is it possible to strike a balance between the needs of communication for the audience and the retention of features of the source language in the target language? This is especially true of the Qur'anic text, but it might apply to literary texts as well. Nord tries to chart a path that balances the dilemma by arguing

that a translation must strike a balance between function and what he calls *loyalty*, which is different from faithfulness. He argues, "we want the translation to attain new functions for the target audience (= functionality) *without betraying the communicative intentions and expectations of both the source-text authors and the target-text readers* (= loyalty)".[255] According to Nord, loyalty requires that the translator is simultaneously and equally responsible to both the source and the target side.

Considering this principle, it is clear that Abdel Haleem has gone to the extreme of privileging his modern English readers at the cost of sacrificing some critical features of the source language. His decision to *not* front prepositional phrases in Verses 25 'Lord, lift up my hear' and 26 'and ease my task for me', which we discussed, is understandable because of the structural restriction in English involving the insertion of any phrases between the verb and the object. His decision, however, to *not* front PP's in cases where the structure of English allows it is debatable. Without multiplying examples, I present below three cases of fronting *taqdīm* in Sūrat Ṭāhā namely Verse-3 and Verse-6, which Abdel Haleem could have translated in ways that would achieve loyalty to both the source text and the target audience. Below, I also provide alternative translations, by simply moving his own sentences or parts thereof around, which will show that Nord's loyalty is not difficult to achieve. Let us start with an examination of his translation of Verse-3 *mā anzalnā 'alayka al-qur'āna li tashqā.*

---

[255] Christiane Nord, 'Function and Loyalty in Bible Translation', in *Apropos of Ideology: Translation Studies on Ideology-Ideologies in Translation Studies*, ed. by Maria Calzada-Pérez (London ; New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 89–112 (p. 94) emphasis mine.

Table 18. Abdel Haleem's Translation of Verse-2   مَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى

Abdel Haleem's Original Translation	Suggested Revision
It was not to distress you [Prophet] that We sent down the Qur'an to you	We did not send down the Qur'an to you to distress you [Prophet]

Abdel Haleem's translation of the above verse has two elements of divergence from the source language strcuture. First, the PP *'alayka* is fronted in Arabic, which his translation has ignored. Secondly, he also changes the structure of the sentence by adding the negative marker 'not' in 'not to distress you', to the verb '*tashqā'*, although in the source language it is the verb '*mā anzalnā*' that has the negative element *mā*. Both of these features could have been preserved without sacrificing his audience. In the suggested revision "It was not to distress you [Prophet] that We sent down the Qur'an to you" the source language verb '*anzalnā'* carries the negative marker and the fronting of the prepositional phrase has also been preserved. So, with two minor changes in my suggested revision above, the translation achieves loyalty. The same goes with Verse-6 *lahū mā fī al-samāwāti wa mā fī al-arḍi*, in which the fronting of the PP 'To him' is structurally possible, similar to the example of 'In God We Trust', discussed above.

Table 19. Abdel Haleem's Translation of Verse-6

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ الثَّرَى

Abdel Haleem's Original Translation	Suggested Revision
Everything in the heavens and on earth, everything between them, everything beneath the soil, belongs to Him	To Him belongs everything in the heavens and on earth, everything between them, everything beneath the soil

In summary, it is clear from the above discussion that the assessment of Qur'an translation is largely based on three major theoretical issues: namely, (1) faithfulness to source language form and structure and (2) lack of recognition of the target audience, and (3) belief in full translatability. The first and the second are related in that a strong belief in the faithfulness to the source language and culture leads to a disregard of the target audience and culture. There is also an unrealistic expectation based on an incorrect assumption that translation can transfer the whole meaning. As shown these three elements are problematic and therefor any assessment of Qur'an translation based on these will be flawed. Equally flawed will be a translation that completely abandons the source language features for the sake of the audience. So, in the translation of sacred texts like the Qur'an, the translator must try to achieve loyalty, a balance between the communication and the retention of the source language features unless the structure of the target language doesn't allow.

4.5 Conclusion

In this Chapter, I examine four stylistic features namely word order, affirmation, verb-noun alternation, and object deletion and how they were handled by different translation. Firstly, we discussed the significance of the features and their deployment by showing how their use gives rhetorical and communicative force to the sentences. We then examined their translations in English, which showed that the translators are generally cognizant of the stylistic meanings of these features and have attempted to capture them. We found that in translating affirmation *al-tawkīd* with *al-nūn* particle in Verse-71, translators used the strategy of adding adverbs to capture the meaning. We also found that sometimes, the structure of the target language imposes certain constraints such as the ones found in the translation of the fronted prepositional phrase.

We found that since in English the insertion of a PP between the transitive verb and its object is disfavored, many translators did not retain the fronting in English.

There are other factors which play a role in determining whether these features are translated or not; the most important of which is the translator's beliefs and perception of their audience. We found that some translators privilege the source language form and structure over the audience. The ideological choices they make have consequences on the translation outcome. We found that Khan & Al-Hilali privilege source language meanings including nuances in the connotations of proper names and Arabic words such as *aṣṣalāt* and *mujrim* and therefore decide to retain them. This choice creates a text that looks quite clucky and doesn't flow well because they has to make insertion to explain the meanings of the Arabic names and words.

By contrast, Abdel Haleem's privileging of the audience over faithfulness to the source language form and meaning has resulted into the choice of the contemporary English that flows well and has the potential to address a larger audience of Muslims and non-Muslims from around the world. The result of his choice is that some of the meanings of the original Arabic for example the lack of use of the archaic 'verily' for *inna* has not been transferred or as loss, as some critics have described it. I also showed that as important as it is to keep the function and the audience of a translation in mind, it is equally important to not diverge from the source structure unless there is a valid reason for the departure. Abdel Haleem has shown divergence even in cases where it was not difficult to preserve the source language features.

We also discussed that the assessment of any translation has to be done in light of translation theories and ideological choices those theories impose on the translator. We showed that many assessments of Qur'an translation is singularly based on the

belief in the faithfulness to the source language form and meaning and do not take into account other attending factors such as the audience or the function of the text.

While there is no doubt that the Qur'anic stylistic is critical to the structure of the Arabic language in general and Qur'an in particular, this chapter also raises another important question: Are these stylistic and rhetorical features indispensable core of the meanings of the Qur'an and its function as a book of guidance. We address this issue in the final chapter.

CONCLUSION

Stylistic inimitability of the Qur'an is considered to be a hallmark of the Qur'anic textual structure. Muslims believe that both the meanings and the words are divine in origin and, therefore, no human language can approximate, let alone capture, the totality of the message contained in it. A translation of the Qur'an in any language was, therefore, considered impossible until recently. In 1908, the famous Islamic scholar Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā issued a fatwa banning its translation. This fatwa was finally revisited and revoked by the Rector of Al-Azhar University in 1936, following which scores of translations have appeared in many languages, including English. The permission was, however, issued with the condition that a translation must clearly state that it is a 'translation of the meanings of the Qur'an'. The condition stipulated in the fatwa springs from the belief among Muslim scholars that the whole of the Qur'an— with its words and meaning—is divine, and it is, therefore, impossible for a translator to achieve full translation in any language. The best that translators can do is to translate its meanings, which is only part of the Qur'an; other elements such as the recitation and stylistic elements are beyond the abilities of the translators.

We know from recent theories of translation that no translation, no matter how great it is, is the same as the original. There are always unique linguistic and cultural elements that can never be rendered in another language fully. This is even more true in the case of the translation of the Qur'an. No translation of the Qur'an can capture the endings of, *fawāṣil al-'āyī,* that create a musical harmony. For example, in Chapter 20, the verses from two through thirteen end in the sound *ā* in the words *tahsqā, yakhshā, 'ulā, istawā, al-tharā, akhfā, ḥusnā, mūsā, hudā, ṭuwā.* Al-Sāmarrāi argues that this *al-*

insijām al-mūsīqī, or 'musical harmony' leaves a great musical and psychological impact on the listener.[256] So, the psychological impact that the power of the sounds has on the listener will remain untranslated in the best of tranlations. Similarly, we have discussed earlier how certain elements of Arab culture found in the use of words related to date such as *qitmīr*, *naqīr*, *ruṭab*, etc. are difficult to translate in any language.

Yet, translators have taken up the challenge of translating the Qur'an, and it is only through translation that a vast majority of non-Arab Muslims and non-Muslims in the world at large can read it. Against this background, this thesis set out to examine how the stylistic inimitability of the Qur'an was handled by six major translators from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. To this end, it focused on Chapter-20 as a sample. The study was focused on four major features of Qur'anic stylistics: namely, fronting *taqdīm* and *ta'khīr,* affirmation *al-tawkīd, al-fi'l wa al-ism* verb-noun alternation, and object deletion, *hadhf maf'ūl bihī.* A close examination of the translations has shown that translators are aware of the significance of these stylistic features and have tried to preserve them in English in cases where the structure of English allows for that. In cases where the structure of the English language doesn't, they had no option but to diverge from the source language structure. This was evidenced in the fronting of the prepositional phrase from its unmarked position after the object to its marked position before the object. Since the insertion of an prepositional phrase, or any other element for that matter, between the verb and the object is disfavored in English, translators had to ignore the source structure.

---

[256] Fāḍil Ṣāliḥ Al-Sāmarrā'ī, *Al-Ta'bīr Al-Qur'ānī*, pp. 287–258; See also Mustafā Muslim, p. 105; Al-Rāfi'ī, pp. 222–29; Waleed Bleyhesh al-Amri, 'Qur'an Translatability at the Phonic Level', *Perspectives*, 15.3 (2007), 159–76 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050802153954>.

The second instance where the stylistic features of fronting or affirmation were not preserved was when the translator has, on purpose, privileged the audience/readers and their language and culture. This was the case with Abdel Haleem's translation. We found that, unlike other translators, he chooses not to translate the affirmation particle *inna* in all instances. He also marks a departure in some cases involving the translation of the fronted element, for example *lahū* in *lahū mā fī al-samawāti wa mā fī al-arḍi* in Verse-6. While others have placed the PP 'to Him' or 'Unto Him' at the beginning of the sentence keeping the source language structure intact, Abdel Haleem places it at the end of the sentence, following the unmarked modern English structure, which begins with a subject rather than a prepositional phrase. I have shown that in such a case where fronting is allowed in English, Abdel Haleem's decision to ignore the retention of the source language feature is inconsistent with Nord's principle of loyalty.[257]

I reviewed some assessment of Qur'an translation and discussed how some researchers such as Abdelaal and Rashid have described Abdel Haleem's translation as suffering from grammatical and semantic losses. I argued that many existing assessments of Qur'an translation are based on the assumption that any successful translation must render a totality of source language meaning into the target language. This assumption, which is over two thousand years old, is an outgrowth of a translation theory that privileges source language over other factors that impact translation such as the type and function of text and the audience. Because of its excessive reliance on the source language, such a theory has been termed as retrospective theory of translation.[258] Modern theories including the *skopos* theory argue that, based on a variety of factors

---

[257] Nord, pp. 93–94.
[258] Snell-Hornby.

such as the significance and type of source text, its function, its audience, the translator

weighs different elements and decides what for them is the most critical element and

then they try to harmonize them. For Abdel Haleem, in addition to faithfulness to the

source language, audience is an equally important *skopos*, if not the only one, which he

has boldly stated in his introduction emphasizing that his translation is for ordinary

readers of modern contemporary English. He further states that his audience consists of

diverse readers of English who may or may not by native speakers and that they are not

limited to Muslims. I have shown the influence of these factors in his translations.

Another ideological choice of his, which also feeds into his privileging of the audience,

is to keep his translation free of English archaism and Arabism. He therefore desists

from using terms that will not appeal to a broader audience. While Abdel Haleem's

approach works well for his audience, it may not work in another context. Sohaib Saeed,

a scholar of Qur'an and an award-winning translator of Al-Rāzī points out that while

working on translating Al-Rāzī's book, he didn't find Abdel Haleem's translation

useful because he had changed a particular Arabic phrase so much to suit his English-

speaking audience, that it lost its Arabic-ness which is needed to show connections with

other usage in Al-Rāzī's *tafsīr* elsewhere.[259]

This is in contrast with Khan & Al-Hilali who choose to use many Arabism,

including Arabic words such as *ilāh* 'god' *mujrim* 'wrong-doer', *assalat*, 'prayer' and

Arabic spellings of names such as Moosa, Haroon, Firaun, and As-Samiri because to

them these words, when translated, lose part of their meanings. But since they are not

unaware that their non-Muslim audience may not understand these terms, they explain

---

[259] Sohaib Saeed, *Lost in Translations? The Quran in English*, 2020
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=970QfllMidM> [accessed 21 September 2021].

them through, sometimes lengthy additions between brackets, which hampers the flow of the text. So, in order to stay faithful to the source language, they have sacrificed the flow of the text and the diversity of their audience. While Muslims, who already have some background knowledge, can understand their translations, others will find it difficult.

I have also shown that there is a real possibility of translators breaking free from the principle of faithfulness in order to achieve communication for the target audience. Invoking Nord's concept of loyalty, I have argued that in the translation of sacred texts such as the Qur'an, it is important to show loyalty to both the source text and the target language audience. Abdel Haleem's translation in many verses, e.g. Verse-3, 6, and 31 diverges from the source language features involving fronting of Prepositional phrases, even though the English language structure allows it.

This raises a pertinent question: which translation is more correct? And What should be its criteria? A more productive question would be which translation is better for whom and what purpose? Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter-1 and Chapter-4, the question is linked to the theory of translation. A strong believer in word for word translation theory, who privileges source language over other factors impinging on translation, will consider any deviations from the source structure incorrect. This approach was clearly visible in the Qur'an's translation assessment of Shah, Abdelaal & Rashid, and Al-Ghazali. Remember that they have criticized Haleem for causing semantic loss because of his lack of translation of fronting and affirmation particle. Another related assumption that advocates of word for word translation espouse is that an effective and successful translation must accomplish full translation, which modern translation theorist such as Hatim have rejected as an impossibility.

Related to the unrealistic assumption that a translation must render the full meaning into the target language, is the belief that the stylistic features constitute the core of the meaning, and if not translated fully, leads to semantic loss. First of all, semantic loss is an inevitable consequence of any translation. Sohaib Saeed, highlights the imperfection that is inbuilt into translation by saying that, "whenever a translation takes place, it is going to be imperfect; translation is inherently lossy".[260]

Secondly, while many of the stylistic features do add force to the communicative event and contribute to the effectiveness of the delivery of the meaning, the message of guidance, *hidāyah*, which is the main purpose for which the Qur'an was revealed, can still be conveyed. While discussing the amazing literary and stylistic uniqueness of the Qur'an, we often tend to overlook the *hidāyah* aspect of the Book. I was reminded by a young American Muslim *dā'ī*, who calls non-Muslims to Islam, after I finished giving a talk on Qur'anic stylistic inimitability at the Central Illinois Mosque and Islamic Center, USA in 2019. He asked me how my talk relates to Islamic *da'wah* in non-Muslim countries. His argument was that non-Arabs, who constitute the majority of the Muslims today, accepted Islam because of the content or the message of monotheism and equality rather than some stylistic uniqueness.

The point made by my interlocutor deserves to be taken seriously. While he understood the nuanced linguistic and stylistic points I made in my presentation, he didn't find it relevant in the field of *da'wah* for which he worked actively. For him, the deeper and broader message of the Qur'an, which he could deliver to non-Muslims in English was more important. In other words, his point was that Islam spread to non-Muslims through Qur'an's basic meanings rather than the fine and nuanced stylistic

---

[260] Saeed.

usage. This is not far from truth. I have indicated in a few places that some of these stylistic inimitabilities were not discussed by many well-known exegetes. For example, I discussed that the fronting of the PP *li* in verses-25-26 *rabbī ishraḥ lī ṣadrī was yassir lī amrī* makes Prophet Moses' supplication personal and stronger and thus more likely to be accepted. While this stylistic shade of the meaning that comes from fronting has been discussed by Al-Zamakhsharī and Ibn ʿĀshūr, it has not been even mentioned by other exegetes such as Al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr. If this was a critical component of the message of the verse, it would not be missed by them. The stylistic effects of fronting the PP in other verses, for example Verse-2 &113, are similarly not discussed by many exegetes.

The main findings of this research can be summarized as follows:

1. Since Qur'anic text is structurally and stylistically complex, its translation is quite challenging. One of the most challenging aspects of Qur'an is its stylistics because Arabic grammar and stylistics are different from English.

2. Unlike, translations by orientalists which were marked by errors and biases, newer translations do not suffer from such mistakes. I have shown that translators do understand many subtle points about Arabic stylistics and try their best to render them in English, provided its structure allows such renditions.

3. Different translators may have different goals and audiences, which will have an impact on the translation. It is, therefore, important to keep them in mind when assessing a translation. A translation meant for a broader audience with the aim of *da'wah* will be different from one that primarily targets Muslim readers. Similarly, a translation for young Muslim teenagers, which currently doesn't exist, must be different from others.

4. In assessing a work of translation, it is critical to take a comprehensive approach that takes into account factors other than faithfulness to the source text, which, although important, is not the only factor. What is needed is a loyalty to both the source language features and the audience.

5. Qur'an translation assessment must go beyond the discourse of loss of meanings in translation because all translations are inherently imperfect, especially if the text is as complex as the Qur'an.

6. There is no one answer to the question: which translation is the best? The answer rests not so much on the translation per se but on such vital issues as what is the goal of the translation, which audience does the translator aim to reach, and what is the overall perspective or worldview of the translators. This is not to suggest that the subject of faithfulness to the source language is unimportant, only that it is not *the* factor but one among many.

7. There is a need to use sociolinguistic methods to understand how a particular translation is received by the readers. Only such studies can answer whether contemporary English, *a la* Abdel Haleem or medieval English *a la* Nasr et al. is better received by translation readers.

REFERENCES

'Abbās, 'Awāṭif, 'Ma'āni Ṣīghat Fa'īl Fī Sūrat al-Baqarah', *Al-Majallah al-'Ilmīyah Li Kulliyat Uṣūl al-Dīn Wa al-Da'wah*, 27.2 (2015), 2121–64

'Abbās, Faḍl, and Sanā 'Abbās, *I'jāz al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Amman, Jordan: Dār Al-Nafa'is, 1991)

Abdel Haleem, M. A. S., 'Grammatical Shift for Rhetorical Purposes: Iltifāt and Related Features in the Qur'ān', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 55.3 (1992), 407–32

———, 'Qura'nic Arabic', in *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, ed. by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, First edition (New York, NY: HarperOne, an imprint of Collins Publishers, 2015)

———, tran., 'The Qur'an', 2008

———, *The Qur'an: A New Translation* (OUP Oxford, 2005)

———, *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Style* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011)

Abdelaal, Noureldin Mohamed, and Sabariah Md Rashid, 'Grammar-Related Semantic Losses in the Translation of the Holy Quran, with Special Reference to Surah Al A'araf (The Heights)', *SAGE Open*, 6.3 (2016)

Abdul Mun'im, Mīrfat, 'Al-Farq Baina al-Ru'yah wa al-Naẓar wa al-Baṣar', *Al-Mrsal*, 2018 <https://www.almrsal.com/post/609585> [accessed 15 September 2021]

Abdul-Raof, H., 'On the Stylistic Variation in the Quranic Genre', *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 52.1 (2007), 79–111 <https://doi.org/10.1093/jss/fgl039>

Abdul-Raof, Hussein, *Arabic Rhetoric: A Pragmatic Analysis* (Routledge, 2006)

———, *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture and Exegesis* (Routledge, 2013)

———, 'The Linguistic Architecture of the Qur'an', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 2.2 (2000), 37–51

Abū Dā'ūd, Sulaymān, *Sunan Abī Da'ūd, Kitāb Al-'Ilm, Riwāyat Ḥadīth Ahl Al-Kitāb*, 4 vols (Ṣayda, Beirut: Al-Maktabah Al-'Asrīyyah, n.d.)

Abū Mūsā, Muḥammad, *Khaṣā'iṣ Al-Tarākīb* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 1996)

Al-Abdullatif, Mohammed, 'The Qur'an Translatability: The Translation's Invisibility', *Babel*, 64.2 (2018), 205–24

Al-Dārqutnī, 'Alī b.'Umar, *Sunan Al-Dārqutnī*, 3 vols (Riyadh, K.S.A.: Dār Al-Mu'ayyid, 2001), I

Al-Ghazalli, Mehdi F, 'A Study of the English Translations of the Qur'anic Verb Phrase: The Derivatives of the Triliteral', *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2.3 (2012), 605–12

Al-Ḥarbī, 'Abdul Hādī Karīm, 'Ḥadhf Al-Maf'ūl Bihī Fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm Bayn al-Isti'māl al-Qur'ānī Wa al-Tanẓīr al-Naḥwī: Al-Juz' al-Thalāthūn Namūdhajan', *Majallat Al-Kullīyah al-Islāmīyyah*, 9.31 (2015), 165–87

Al-Hijrī, Muḥammad, and Mubārak Najmuddīn, 'Al-Fi'l al-Mabnī Lil Ma'lūm Wa Fi'l al-Mabnī Lil Majhūl: Naẓrah Dilālīyyah', *Journal of Islamic Science & Research*, 18.2 (2017), 1–14

Al-Hitārī, 'Abd Allāh, 'Al-Qasam Fī Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm' (Yarmouk University, 1999)

Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, *The Holy Qur'an:Text, Translation and Commentary*, First Edition, 1934 <https://archive.org/stream/EnglsihTranslationOfQuranByAbdullahYusufAli WithCommentaryAndIndex/Englsih%20Translation%20of%20Quran%20by% 20Abdullah%20Yusuf%20Ali%20with%20Commentary%20and%20Index_dj vu.txt>

Al-Jinābī, Sairawān, *Al-Ijmāl Wa al-Tafsīl Fī al-Ta'bīr al-Qur'ānī: Dirāsah Fī al-Dilālah al-Qur'ānīyyah* (Iraq: Jami'at kūfah, 2006)

Al-Khaṭīb, 'Abd Allāh, 'Al-Juhūd Al-Mabdhūlah Fī Tarjamat Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm ilā Al-Lughah al-Injilīzīyyah', *Journal of College of Sharia and Islamic Studies*, 29 (2011), 75–128

Al-Khiḍr, Zakarīyā 'Alī Maḥmūd, 'Al-Asrār al-Bayānīyyah Fī Ḥadhf al-Maf'ūl Bihī Fī Sūrat Ṭāhā', *Majallat Ittiḥād Al-Jāmi'āt al-'Arabīyah Lil Ādāb*, 11.1 (2014), 611–48

Al-Mulayfī, Khālid b. Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, *Ta'addud Tarājim Ma'ānī Al-Qur'ān Bil-Lughah Al-Injilīzīyah Fī Ḍaw' al-I'rāb: Dirāsah Taḥlīlīyah Naqdīyah li Ba'ḍ al-Namādhij*, Dirāsāt Naqdīyah, 5, al-Ṭab'ah al-ūlá (Riyadh: Markaz Tafsīr lil-Dirāsāt al-Qur'ānīyah, 2015)

Al-Qurṭubī, Abū 'Abdullah, *Al-Jāmi' Li Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān*, 20 vols (Cairo, Egypt: Dār Al-Kutub Al-Miṣrīyyah, 1964)

Al-Rāfi'ī, Muṣṭafā Ṣādiq, *I'Jāz al-Qur'an Wa al-Balāghah al-Nabawīyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitāb al 'Arabī, 1973)

Al-Sāmarrā'ī, Fāḍil Ṣāliḥ, *Al-Ta'bīr Al-Qur'ānī* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2016)

———, *Al-Taqdīm Wa Al-Tkhir:* (Lamasāt Bayānīyah, 2012)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMZZOP_RDu8> [accessed 1
September 2021]

Al-Sāmarrā'ī, Muḥammad Fāḍil, *Al-Ṣarf Al-'Arabi: Aḥkām wa Ma'ānin* (Beirut,
Lebanon: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2013)

Al-Sāmarrāʾī, Muḥammad F. Ṣāliḥ, *Al-Naḥw Al-ʿArabī: Aḥkām wa-Maʿānin;*, 1st edn
(Beirut: Dār Ibn-Kathīr, 2014)

Al-Sarkhasī, Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad, *Kitāb Al-Mabsūṭ*, 30 vols (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār
Al-Ma'rifah, 1993), I

Al-Shanqīṭī, Muḥammad Aḥmad, *Aḍwā' Al-Bayān Fī Īḍāḥ al-Qur'ān Bil Qur'ān*
(Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Kutub al-'IImīyyah, 2011), IV

Al-Sharafi, Abdul Gabbar, and Rizwan Ahmad, 'Translating the Inimitable: A Study
of Agency in Translating Verb-Noun Alternation in the Qur'an'

Al-Suyūṭī, 'Abd Al-Raḥmān b. Abū Bakr, *Al-Itqān Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'ān* (Cairo,
Egypt: Al-Hayyah Al-Miṣrīyyah Al-'Āmmah Li Al-Kitāb, 1974), I

Al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad b. Jarīr, *Jami' Al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Ā'ī Al-Qur'ān*, 24 vols
(Cairo, Egypt: Dār Al-Ma'ārif, 2000), XVIII

Al-Zamakhsharī, Abu Al-Qāsim, *Al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl* (Al-
Maktabah Al-Shāmilah, n.d.)

Arberry, Arthur John, *The Holy Koran: An Introduction with Selections*, 1953rd edn
(New York: Routledge Library Edition, 2013)

Āzād, Abulkalām, tran., *Turjumān Al-Qur'ān* (Delhi, India: Asia Publishing House,
1962)

Baker, Mona, 'Arabic Tradition', in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*,
ed. by Gabriela Saldanha and Mona Baker (London ; New York: Routledge,
2009), pp. 328–37

Bassnett, Susan, *Translation Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2014)

Bleyhesh al-Amri, Waleed, 'Qur'an Translatability at the Phonic Level', *Perspectives*,
15.3 (2007), 159–76 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050802153954>

Breech, Earl, 'These Fragments I Have Shored against My Ruins: The Form and
Function of 4 Ezra', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 92.2 (1973), 267–74

Bsoul, Labeeb Ahmed, *Translation Movement and Acculturation in the Medieval
Islamic World* (Berlin: Springer, 2019)

Chomsky, Noam, *Syntactic Structures* (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2009)

Crystal, David, 'Two Thousand Million?', *English Today*, 24.1 (2008), 3–6
    <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078408000023>

De Saussure, Ferdinand, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. by Wade Baskin (New
    York: Philosophical Library, 1959)

Dryer, Matthew S., 'Word Order', in *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*,
    ed. by Timothy Shopen, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
    2007), pp. 61–131 <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619427.002>

El-Desouky, Ayman, 'Discussions of Qur'anic Inimitability: The Theological Nexus',
    in *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, ed. by Mustafa Shah and
    Muhammad Abdel Haleem (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp.
    374–87

El-Khatib, Abdallah, 'A Critical Study for the Proper Methodology of Translating
    Islamic Terms in the Holy Qur'an into English with Special Reference to
    Some Qur'anic Terms', *Dirasat*, 33.2 (2006), 523–44

———, *Translations of the Meanings of the Holy Qur'an into English Language
    (From 1649 till 2013)* (Sharjah, UAE: University of Sharjah, 2014)

Findlow, Sally, 'Higher Education and Linguistic Dualism in the Arab Gulf', *British
    Journal of Sociology of Education*, 27.1 (2006), 19–36

Ghazālah, Hasan Sa'īd, 'Asālīb Al-Mustahriqīn Fī Tarjamat Ma'Ānī al-Qur'Ān al-
    Karīm: Dirāsah Uslūbīyah Li Tarjamatay Sīl Wa Ārbarī Li Ma'Ānī al-Qur'Ān
    al-Karīm Ila al-Injilīzīyah' (presented at the Tarjamat Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān:
    Taqwīm lil Maḍī wa Takhṭīṭ lil Mustaqbal, Madinah, KSA: King Fahd
    Complex For Printing The Holy Quran, 2002)

Ghāzi, Maḥmūd, *Al-Madkhal al-Wajīz Ilā Dirāsat al I'jāz Fī al-Kitāb al 'Azīz* (Beirut:
    Dār al Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyyah, 2010)

Glass, Andrew, '"In God We Trust" Becomes Nation's Motto, July 30, 1956',
    Politico (New York, USA, 30 July 2018), section Congress
    <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/07/30/in-god-we-trust-becomes-
    nations-motto-july-30-1956-741016> [accessed 17 October 2021]

Hassan, Mustapha, 'Qur'ān (Koran)', ed. by Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha,
    Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies (London ; New York:
    Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), pp. 225–29

Hatim, B., *Teaching and Researching Translation*, Applied Linguistics in Action, 2nd
    ed (New York: Pearson Longman, 2012)

Hatim, B., and Jeremy Munday, *Translation: An Advanced Resource Book for
    Students*, Routledge Applied Linguistics, Second edition (London ; New York,
    NY: Routledge, 2019)

Henrich, Sarah, and James L Boyce, 'Martin Luther-Translations of Two Prefaces on Islam', *Word and World*, 16 (1996), 250–66

Hermansen, Marcia K, 'Tension between the Universal and the Particular in an Eighteenth Century Theory of Religious Revelation: Shaah Wali Allah of Delhi's Hujjat Allah al Baligha', *Studia Islamica*, 63 (1986), 143–57

House, Juliane, 'Translation Quality Assessment: Linguistic Description versus Social Evaluation', *Meta*, 46.2 (2002), 243–57 <https://doi.org/10.7202/003141ar>

Huddleston, Rodney D, and Geoffrey K Pullum, *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016)

Ibn ʿĀshūr, Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir, *Tafsīr Al-Taḥrīr Wa Al-Tanwīr* (Tunis: Al-Dār Al-Tūnīsīyah lil Nashr, 1984), XVI

Ibn Kathīr, Abu Al-Fidā' Ismā'īl, *Tafsīr AAl-Qur'ān Al-ʿAẓīm* (Lebanon: Dār al-Kutub al-'Imīyah, 1997)

Joseph Lumbard, *Unveiling The Study Quran with Joseph Lumbard* (USA, 2016) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KIFL1-0Zmdk> [accessed 27 September 2021]

'Key to Frequency', *Oxford English Dictionary* <https://public.oed.com/how-to-use-the-oed/key-to-frequency/> [accessed 10 September 2021]

Khalafallāh, Aḥmad, and Zaghlūl Salām, eds., *Thalātha Rasā'il Fī Iʿjāz al-Qur'Ān Li Rummāni Wa al Khaṭṭābī Wa ʿAbdul Qāhir al Jurjāni* (Cairo: Dār al-Adab, 1976)

Kidwai, Abdur Raheem, *Bibliography of the Translations of the Meanings of the Glorious Quran into English, 1649-2002: Acritical Study* (Madinah, KSA: King Fahd Complex For Printing The Holy Quran, 2007)

———, *Translating the Untranslatable: A Critical Guide to 60 English Translations of the Quran*, 1. ed (New Delhi: Sarup Book Publ, 2011)

Lawrence, Bruce B, *The Koran in English: A Biography* (Princeton University Press, 2017)

Leaman, Oliver, 'Miraculousness of the Qur'an', ed. by Oliver Leaman, *The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia* (Routledge, 2006), pp. 403–6

Likhlāfah, ʿAbdulāī, Tarjamat al-Qur'ān laisa Qur'ānan, 2008 <https://www.quranicthought.com/wp-content/uploads/post_attachments/5fe22f66311e5.pdf>

Lumbard, Joseph EB, 'The Quran in Translation', in *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, ed. by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York: HarperOne, an imprint of Collins Publishers, 2015), pp. 1601–7

———, *Unveiling The Study Quran with Joseph Lumbar* (USA, 2021) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KIFL1-0Zmdk>

Mahboob, Ahmar, 'English as an Islamic Language: A Case Study of Pakistani English', *World Englishes*, 28.2 (2009), 175–89 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-971X.2009.01583.x>

McEnery, Tony, *Arabic Corpus Linguistics*, 2019

Mohammed, Khaleel, 'Assessing English Translations of the Qur'an', *Middle East Quarterly*, 2005, 58–71

Munday, Jeremy, *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*, 2. ed (London: Routledge, 2008)

Muslim, Mustafā, *Mabāhith Fi Al-I'jāz Al-Qur'ān* (Riyadh: Dar Al Muslim, 1996)

Muslim, Musṭafā et al, *Al-Tafsīr Al-Mawḍū'ī Li Suwar Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* (Sharjah, UAE: University of Sharjah, 2010)

Najjar, Sumaya Ali, 'Metaphors in Translation: An Investigation of a Sample of Quran Metaphors with Reference to Three English Versions of the Quran' (unpublished PhD Thesis, Liverpool John Moores University, 2012)

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, 'General Introduction', in *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, ed. by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York, USA: HarperOne, an imprint of Collins Publishers, 2015), pp. xvii–xxxviii

———, ed., *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, First edition (New York, NY: HarperOne, an imprint of Collins Publishers, 2015)

Naudé, Jacobus A, 'The Qur'ān in English-an Analysis in Descriptive Transaltion Studies', *Journal for Semitics*, 15.2 (2006), 431–64

Nida, Eugene A, 'Science of Translation', *Language*, 45.3 (1969), 483–98

Nida, Eugene Albert, *Toward a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 1964)

Nida, Eugene Albert, and Charles Russell Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), VIII

———, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 1982)

Nord, Christiane, 'Function and Loyalty in Bible Translation', in *Apropos of Ideology: Translation Studies on Ideology-Ideologies in Translation Studies*, ed. by Maria Calzada-Pérez (London ; New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 89–112

Oilver-Dee, Sean, 'Courting Islam: The Evolution of Perceptions of Islam within the British and American Governments from the European Colonial Period to the War on Terror', *Journal of College of Sharia & Islamic Studies*, 39.1 (2021), 171–91

Onley, James, 'Indian Communities in the Persian Gulf, c. 1500–1947', in *The Persian Gulf in Modern Times*, ed. by Potter, Lawrence G. (Springer, 2014), pp. 231–66

Politics and Prose, *Dr. Sayyed Hossein Nasr, 'The Study Quran'* (USA, 2016) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pSAt45aYyQ> [accessed 27 September 2021]

Qaḥṭān, Ṭāhir 'Abd Al-Raḥmān, 'Al-Iltifāt Fī Al-Balāghah Al-'Arabīyyah Wa Namādhij Min Asrār Balāghatihī Fī Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm', *Majallat Al-Dirāsāt Al-Islāmīyyah*, 19 (2005), 163–86

Qutb, Sayyid, *Al-Taṣwīr Al-Fannī Fī Al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq)

Rahman, Fazlur, 'Translating the Qur'an', *Religion & Literature*, 1988, 23–30

Rahman, Yusuf, 'The Miraculous Nature of Muslim Scripture: A Study of Abd Al-Jabbar's I'jāz Al-Quran', *Islamic Studies*, 35.4 (1996), 409–24

Rammuny, Raji M., 'Al-Jurjani: A Pioneer of Grammatical and Linguistic Studies', *Historiographia Linguistica*, 12.3 (1985), 351

Razi, Fakhr al-Din, *Great Exegesis: Al-Tafsir Al-Kabir-The Fatiha.*, trans. by Sohaib Saeed (Islamic Texts Society, 2018)

'Regard', *Oxford English Dictionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 2021) <https://0-www.oed.com.mylibrary.qu.edu.qa/view/Entry/161187?rskey=0yUaCW&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid> [accessed 14 September 2021]

Reiss, Katharina, 'Text Types, Translation Types and Translation Assessment', in *Readings in Translation Theory*, ed. & trans. by Andrew Chesterman (Helsinki: Oy Finn Lectura Ab, 1977), pp. 105–15

Saadat, Sabiha, 'Human Embryology and the Holy Quran: An Overview', *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 3.1 (2009), 103–9

Sāb, Haitham, 'Study of the translation of the meanings of the Qura'ān into English by the orientalist Arthur J. Arberry', *Islamhouse*, 2014 <https://islamhouse.com/ar/books/459994>

Saeed, Sohaib, *Lost in Translations? The Quran in English*, 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=970QfllMidM> [accessed 21 September 2021]

Salah, Basalamah, and Sadek Gaafar, 'Debates around the Translation of the Qur'an', in *The Routledge Handbook of Arabic Translation*, ed. by Sameh Hanna, Hanem El-Farahaty, and Abdel Wahab Khalifa (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), pp. 9–26

Salama-Carr, Myriam, 'The French Tradition', in *Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. by M Baker and G Saldanha (London ; New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 404–10

Saliba, George, *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2007)

Schäffner, Christina, 'Functionalist Approaches', ed. by Baker, Mona and Gabriela Saldanha, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2009), 115–21

Sefercioğlu, Nejat, and Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, *World Bibliography of Translations of the Holy Qur'an in Manuscript Form*, Bibliography on the Holy Qur'an, 2, 3, 4 (Istanbul: Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture, IRCICA, 2000)

Serjeant, RB, 'Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam: Misconceptions and Flawed Polemics', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 110.3 (1990), 472–86

Shah, Muhammad Sultan, 'A Critical Study of Abdel Haleem's New Translation of the Holy Qur'an', *Al Qalam*, 1 (2010), 1–15

Shāh, Muḥammad Sulṭān, 'A Critical Study of Rodwell's Translation of the Qur'ān', *Pakistan Journal of Islamic Research*, 12 (2013), 53–66

Sībawayh, 'Amr b. Uthmān, *Al-Kitāb*, 3rd edn, 4 vols (Cairo, Egypt: Maktabat Al-Khānjī, 1988)

Silvia Kadiu, *Reflexive Translation Studies: Translation as Critical Reflection* (London: UCL Press, 2019)

'Slaughter', *Cambridge Dictionary* (UK: Cambridge University Press) <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/slaughter>

Snell-Hornby, Mary, 'The Turns of Translation Studies', in *Handbook of Translation Studies*, ed. by Yves Gambier and Luc Van Doorslser (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2010), pp. 366–70

Steiner, George, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, 2nd ed (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992)

Thomason, Sarah G, *Language Contact* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2001)

Vasalou, Sophia, 'The Miraculous Eloquence of the Qur'an: General Trajectories and Individual Approaches', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 4.2 (2002), 23–53

Venuti, Lawrence, 'The Translator's Invisibility', *Criticism*, 28.2 (1986), 179–212

Windle, Kevin, and Anthony Pym, 'European Thinking on Secular Translation', in *The Oxford Handbook of Translation Studies* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 1–16

Younis, Nagwa, 'Semantic Prosody as a Tool for Translating Prepositions in the Holy Qur'an: A Corpus-Based Analysis', in *Arabic Corpus Linguistics*, ed. by Tony McEnery, Andrew Hardie, and Nagwa Younis (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), pp. 120–42

Zilberdik, Nan Jacques, 'Relay Translation in Subtitling', *Perspectives*, 12.1 (2004), 31–55 <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2004.9961489>