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A Study of the English Translation of the Seven Letters of the Holy Quran

(RESEARCH)

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Abstract

Muslims regard the Quran to be the best, most complete and full book of God, as it does not twist or distort it. According to the majority of Muslim preachers, the Quranic term is a Semitic language because of its large linguistic mechanism and the selective use of words, therefore, it is particularly difficult to translate perfectly. The specific meaning of some of the terms, idioms, or phrases referred to in this wonderful Holy Quran is likewise challenging for even Arabian speakers of the current period.

This study relies in its methodology on the qualitative approach, where a systematic review will be conducted based on a set of previous literature, prophetic hadiths and Quranic verses that prove the correctness of the saying. This part will include a set of differing opinions regarding the interpretation of the meaning of the seven letters of the Holy Qur'an. Due to the glorify of the holy Quran in terms of meaning and rhetoric, the translator of Quran should take into account the restrictions for translating the seven letters of the Noble Qur'an and the Varity in their interpretations in order to give the best results.

The research reached a set of results, namely that the Qur'an, when it is translated into languages other than Arabic, loses the rhetorical and sensory miracles of its meanings. The translation of the Noble Qur'an, including the seven letters, is one of the most difficult and accurate translations ever, due to the difference of religious scholars in the



interpretation of the correct meaning of the seven letters. In addition, the translator of the Holy Qur'an must use simple terms to help non-Arab Muslims understand and know it. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the English translation of the seven letters of the holy Quran.

Keywords: (Seven letters, the holy Quran, Arabic language, Translation)

1. Introduction

In the remainder of the world's languages, the Arabian language is the most elegant, simple, profound and expressive. That is God Almighty's language, as God Almighty says in the Noble Quran, to deliver His message and remember all of humanity; ***“Indeed, we have made it an Arabic Qur'an so that you may understand.”*** The Noble Qur'an is the message of the Lord of the worlds He has disclosed to His Messenger Muhammad, to bring humanity to light out of the dark (May God bless him, and grant him peace). It is the largest of heavenly books as it is untold and unambiguous (Tashfin Akram, 2018).

The "problem of 7 letters" was the hardest and most critical matter in Quran history; it is based on the Prophet's hadith: *"God sent the Qur'an on seven letters. Read the one that is most convenient for you."* This story raises numerous questions. In the history of the Qur'an, the hadith related to the Prophet (S.A.) based on seven letters in the Qur'an is of



great importance (Al-Dani, 2010). Suleiman, (2010) said that here have been many opinions for and against this topic, but no effective outcome has been achieved either.

The Noble Qur'an was revealed to humans in the Arabic language, and since there are a large number of non-Arab, Muslims who would like to know more about this book, so it is translated into all languages of the world in order to reach all people. Muslims see the Quran, coming from the Almighty God directly, as one source (Tashfin Akram, 2018). The Qur'an is the core religious scripture of Islam and one of the key prerequisites of this society of knowledge is access to the finest translation or message of the Koran. In other words, the source text in which the Holy Quran's most accurate meaning and message is chosen may have many translations (Al-Dani, 2010). Accordingly, this research involves on English translation of the seven letters of holy Quran.

1.1 Study Problem Statement

Normally the translator turns a message or concept to the target text from the source text. The production of translation is generally governed by the political and religious agendas of the translator, in particular the translation of sacred writings like the Qur'an (Abdullah Kammani, 2013). The Qur'an is one of the biggest religious books in the world and is essential to the culture of Islam (AMENEH MOHAGHEGH, 2014). The accurate and intelligent translation of the Quran is essential for



understanding religion by millions of Muslims around the world. The authenticity of the translation of the noble Qur'an, which speaks of orders and forbidding, promises and threats, and stories about the prophets and proverbs on which it is based, has a clear understanding (Suleiman, 2010).

There is no explicit statement that is received from the Messenger Mohammad, (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), but the lawyers have tried to explain the seven letters and numerous interpretations are available (Abdullah Kammani, 2013). Due to the various interpretations and meanings of the seven letters referred to in the Holy Quran, it provides a major challenge for translators to translate the verses in which the seven letters are mentioned in to English (Al-Dani, 2010). This study aims to investigate on English translation of the seven letters of the Holy Quran.

2. Interpretation and Translation of the Seven Letters of the Noble Qur'an

This study relies in its methodology on the qualitative approach, where a systematic review will be conducted based on a set of previous literature, prophetic hadiths and Quranic verses that prove the correctness of the saying. To achieve the main objective, which is to study the English translation of the seven letters of the Holy Qur'an.



2.1 Interpretation of the Seven Letters of the Noble Qur'an

As a whole, the seven letters in the science of the readings of the Quran are verbal variety and multilingualism, with their qualities disclosed by the Quran, which includes Arabic words in their many meanings in the collection of most of the Arabic language circulating at the time. A simple term, for example: Ibrahim it is also said: Abraham, and so on. It can be a multiple usage based on the letters (Aldubai, 2015).

SULAIMAN, (2011) asserted that the letters of the Arabic alphabet are based on the word, and the same word with various letters is in several Arabic languages. The letter is fully pronounced or mixed with another letter, its pronunciation is reduced by or changed its movement, or otherwise, which makes the term multilingual.

Because the Almighty said, ***{Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an}***, (surat Yousef (verses 2)), this stylistic miracle would not have happened because the Arabs were challenged by its style, wording and eloquence. Therefore, if the Qur'an had been translated to other than the language of the Arabs, this stylistic miracle would not have been achieved (Suleiman, 2010).

The interpret the seven letters in the holy Quran as the following according to (Nabhan, 2019):

- ❖ The first word: the seven letters have seven readings, each of which is part of the Quran, some of which are commandments and prohibits promises and feasts, stories, permissible and forbidden, firm and similar and proverbs. Attia said it is weak, and Al-Mawardi said it is wrong.
- ❖ The Second saying: It's seven languages from seven Arabic tribes; it's not a letter with seven faces because a few of them have been disclosed in the Quraysh language, others are in Hudhayl language, others in Tamim language and some are in Rabi'ah language. Ibn Abd al-Barr said: Knowledge people have rejected that seven letters had a meaning of seven languages, as, if they did, they would not have negated each other.
- ❖ Third saying: seven elements of meaning which agree with the diverse terms, such coming, hurrying, hurrying and seeing.
- ❖ The fourth is because of some lines, such as the saying of the Almighty: "**Of you.**" It is read on seven sides: accusative, proposed and raised, and each intentional and other, while the seventh aspect is assertiveness.
- ❖ The five saying: "What we want to say is that the knowledge of the Qur'an includes seven things: the knowledge of affirmation and creation, the knowledge of monotheism, the knowledge of transcendence, the knowledge of Self attributes, the knowledge of forgiveness and punishment, the knowledge of prophecy and imam knowledge."



- ❖ The sixth word: the absolute, the restricted, the general, the specific, the text, the interpreter, the abrogate and the abrogated, the generalized and the interpreter.
- ❖ Seventh saying: The seven letters of the Noble Quran are omission and connection, precedence, delay, metaphor, repetition and metonymy, summary and interpreter, truth and allegory.
- ❖ The eighth saying: The Noble Quran's seven letters signify masculine and feminine, condition and penalty, plurality and distinction, reduction and veneration.

2.2 The Translation of the Seven Letters of Quran

Abdullah Kammani, (2013) claimed that the objective of the Qur'an revelation with seven letters is to simplify and facilitate the nation by reading the Holy Qur'an and extend it. In addition to enrich the interpretation and legal decisions with the plurality of letters, as letters are multiplying, not as a consequence of conflict and contradiction, but for the sake of enrichment and support. As well, prove with the utmost brevity the perfection of the miracle, because every letter with the other is like a verse that has a meaning and what it contains.

There is no dispute among scholars that the Quranic miracle is represented more precise metaphorical meaning, such that the grandness of the Qur'an appears in the magnificence and beauty of its language, as is the precision of its phrases and the harmony of its



pronunciation and the meaning it intends to convey (Tashfin Akram, 2018). This wonderful coherence between pronunciation and meaning, and the connection of words, have made the Holy Qur'an a wonderful miracle. Thus in the synonyms of Holy Qur'an, the meanings are perverted and the style is perplexed if any incorrect substitution or alteration occurs (Suleiman, 2010).

Every word in the Qur'an reflects the miracles and displays the glory of the Quranic style and there is no possibility to replace a term by one of the similar. Replacing a word with a new one, though synonyms, disrupts the general meaning and in the Quranic pattern there is a state of suspension as if it is the verse itself, and as if its meaning is not the same. The Qur'an is an integrated unit, even when it is written without a Quranic drawing, in terms of words, meanings and performance. When he performed the same miracles that the Quranic drawing generates in how he expresses the Qur'an (AMENEH MOHAGHEGH, 2014).

The Quran's translation from Arabic into another language cannot be imagined from a mental or actual point of view. The translation is a human effort and there is a disparity in vocabulary selection, this is why the text is multifaceted and its words and rules are vary in terms of accuracy and precision. If in the context of the Arabic language it is difficult for the interpreter to replace or interpret the Qur'anic Word with something similar, then it is impossible for anyone who wants to translate the Qur'an to find a term, which expresses the Qur'anic



meaning, let alone to preserve a glory of the words considered in the Quranic (ibid).

No translations of the verses of the Qur'an, including those containing the seven letters, can be Qur'an. Moreover, if the Qur'anic text is negated, then all the peculiarities of the Qur'anic text that is worshiped by its recitation are negated with it (Nabhan, 2019).

2.3 Linguistic Challenges in Translation of the Holy Quran from Arabic to English

This section discusses the linguistic challenges of interpreting the Holy Quran. For Muslims, the Quran is Allah's word; it includes devotions and directions written in both literal and figurative ways. These figures of speech are an impediment to translating the Quran into English.

The Holy Quran employs a number of stylistic, grammatical, and rhetorical elements that culminate in a powerful and sublime style. This use of linguistic and rhetorical aspects poses a difficulty to the Holy Quran's translators, particularly when translating literary devices like as metaphor, assonance, epithet, irony, repetition, polysemy, metonymy, simile, synonymy, and homonymy. The following is a discussion of various stylistic and linguistic challenges encountered when translating the Holy Quran into English (Abdullah Kammani, 2013).



The Holy Quran is difficult to translate from Arabic into other languages since no two languages are identical in the meanings given to the corresponding symbols or in the ways in which such symbols are placed in phrases and sentences (AMENEH MOHAGHEGH, 2014).

Abobaker Ali (2012) determined that when translating the meaning of the Holy Quran into English, lexical, syntactic, metamorphic, metonymy, Ellipsis, and Polysemy challenges arise:

- **Lexical Challenges**

The main issue that the Quran translator found was difficulties in rendering specific lexical terms. One of the linguistic issues in translating the Holy Quran is the lack of equivalency or absence of the equivalent of some Islamic phrases. Because these phrases have no direct equivalent in English, the translator must explain them in a communicative manner. These are some examples of Islamic terms: taqw (piety – التقوى), kufr (disbelief – الكفر), shrk (associating other gods with God – الشرك), Haq (truth – الحق), marouf (charity – المعروف), Munkar (wrong – المنكر), ghaib (the unseen/unknown – الغيب), zakh (almsgiving – الزكاة), The English translations of these phrases merely provide approximations of their meanings.

- **Syntactic Challenges**

When translating the Holy Quran into English, the significant variances between Arabic and English cause a variety of grammatical issues. Tense refers to the 'grammatical manifestation of time location' and how time



location can be communicated in language. Tense and verb form should be governed by the entire context and stylistic factors while translating the Holy Quran.

- **Metonymy Challenges**

According to Newmark (1988, p. 125), occurs when "the name of an object gets shifted to take the place of something else with which it is linked." The existence of a contiguity relation between the literal and figurative meanings, as well as the presence of an implicit clue suggesting that the literal meaning is not meant, condition this substitution. Metonymy is not a meaningless substitute in the Holy Quran because it typically serves a purpose.

- **Metaphor Challenges**

Is a term or phrase that is used to describe something else in a way that is distinct from its typical use, in order to demonstrate that the two things share similar features and to make the description more compelling. The employment of metaphor, as well as other rhetorical devices, is a feature of the Quranic text. As a result, when seeking to translate the Quranic text, translators should not disregard its use.

- **Ellipsis Challenges**

The removal of some portions of a statement that can be understood from the surrounding text or the context itself is referred to as ellipsis. Due to the way English uses ellipsis, it is occasionally required to add the



elided words (which normally appear in brackets) to complete a statement in the translation of the Holy Quran.

However, in English, it is preferable to recover the deleted word in order to get the full meaning of the verse, because literal or word-for-word translation is not relevant in Quran.

- **Polysemy Challenges**

It is one of the Holy Quran's semantic and linguistic qualities. It is also a phenomenon in which a term has multiple meanings that are all related to each other. The translator will clearly struggle to express the intended meaning of the polysomic words since he or she will be perplexed by the multiple meanings and senses of these words. The structure of the Holy Quran contains several polysomic terms.

3. Conclusion

In order to convey the meanings of the Qur'an to the fullest, the translator must conclude the goals for the revelation of the verses and the contexts of the Quran. In addition to understanding the rhetorical characteristics of the Arabic language, so that the translation is done without adding, deleting or changing the basic meaning of the seven letters. Some translators who tried to simplify the meanings of the seven letters, which are included in the verses of the Noble Qur'an, but they did not pay attention to their rhetorical characteristics.



In summary, the translating the Noble Qur'an into other languages is not an easy matter for anyone who wants to do so. Rather, whoever tackles the work must be fully familiar with the science of Arabic language, firmly know its rhetorical methods, and delve into its secrets. In addition to that, taking into account the restrictions for translating the seven letters of the Noble Qur'an and the Varsity in their interpretations in order to give the best results.

The Glorious Quran is Prophet Muhammad's miracle until the Day of Judgment. Muslims recite the Glorious Quran on a regular basis in order to honor Allah and be rewarded by Him. Muslims should attentively contemplate the Glorious Quran and try to decipher its meanings. Many words have meanings unfamiliar to many Muslims, depending on the exegesis. The commonly held belief is that the repeated word has the same meaning as the original one. Readers should be aware that these repeated words could have completely different meanings at times. Muslims may be unable to comprehend the meaning of these terms unless they rely on Islamic authorities' interpretations of these words (exegeses). Homonymy refers to lexical items that have the same form and spelling but differ in meaning (Nabhan, 2019).

Homonymy causes major problems for translators since it creates ambiguity in the translating process. This is known as lexical ambiguity, and it arises when "a word has two senses that are both equally effective (pragmatically and referentially) in the relevant stretch of language." In



this scenario, translators seek to determine all the meanings that these identical words may have then carefully evaluate the context and choose the intended meaning that the writer want to convey by employing homonymic language (Abedelrazq, 2014).

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