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معهد الترجمة



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Translation of Quranic verses on the light of New linguistic approaches

ترجمة بعض الآيات القرآنية على ضوء المقربات الترجمة الحديثة

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Abstract:

This study aims at comparing and analyzing some selected Quranic translations of some verses, which have revealed total or partial inaccuracies in their translation at the semantic and pragmatic levels. These latter are two of the most common approaches that attempt to unveiling the implicit meaning. This study is mainly descriptive and comparative one; it is concerned with evaluating the strategies used by six Quran translators in their translations of the Glorious Quran, such as literal translation, and hence highlighting some of those inaccuracies. It begins with brief semantics and pragmatics discussions and their close relationship to meaning at the word level, as well as, how meaning is conveyed in different ways in the holly Quran. The study ends with an investigation of some particular Quranic verses, taken as examples.

Keywords: Quran, semantics, pragmatics, lexical meaning, implied meaning,

ملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة الى مقارنة و تحليل بعض الترجمات لبعض الآيات القرآنية الكريمة، والتي بينت عدم

دقة كلي او جزئي على مستوى بعض الكلمات، كما تهدف إلى تسليط الضوء على بعض الصعوبات التي

يواجهها مترجمو القرآن الكريم على مستوى ترادف الكلمات و اختلاف بعض المعاني للكلمة الواحدة ضمن

سياقات مختلفة و تهدف التداولية كمقاربة جديدة الى دراسة المعنى الخفي الذي يرمي اليه الكاتب و بفضلها

يتسنى لنا إمطة اللثام على معنى بعض الآيات الكريمة التي تمت ترجمتها آليا أو حرفيا دون إعارة أهمية قصوى

للمعنى بالرغم من أنه يعد مركزا للترجمة

كلمات مفتاحية: القرآن، علم الدلالة، التداولية، المعنى المعجمي، المعنى الخفي .

1. INTRODUCTION

Background of the study and statement of the problem:

Since its appearance, translation has built hundreds and hundreds of bridges between different societies, through which the culture of the other has been conveyed. The translator as a communicator tries to convey the message he has understood from the SL into the TL as much as he can. Thus any translator shall ensure the passage of key elements exciting into the ST, so that the reader of the TT shall experience the same effect as the reader of the ST. The translation of Holy scriptures and sacred books is exposed to real dangers, because it is dealing with the words of God.

2. Semantics

Semantics as a branch of linguistics is the study of meaning, and changes that occur in the meaning of words according to context, because words live in an environment they do not occur in on their own, but they need a context to contain them to make sense no citation

2.1 Lexical field vs semantic field

Lexical meaning refers to the meaning of a word as it appears in its denotative meaning; however, contextual meaning or meaning in context deals with how words are uttered in different contexts

People are more focused on what they do with their speech or what it means more than what articulated words mean, when a language is used to relate to a given context. Yule (1996. 21) defines it as “a study of contextual meaning”. And he argues “To understand the meaning of the speaker, you can guess which listener or reader is speaking”.

Jean Aitchison in her book linguistics (1978) says in the same context the following:

“A linguist who is studying meaning tries to understand why certain words and constructions can be combined together in a semantically acceptable way, while others cannot. For example, why is it quite all right to say: My brother is a bachelor but not my brother is a spinster. These sentences are all well-formed syntactically: nouns, verbs and so on are all in the right order. But they are

contradictory” Jean Aitchison –linguistics-(.P82)

" يحاول الألسني الذي يدرس المعنى فهم كيف تؤلف بعض الألفاظ والتراكيب مع بعضها البعض نسقا دلاليا مقبولا، في حين أن بعضها الآخر ليس بوسعها ذلك. " فمثلا لماذا يمكن أن نقول: " أخي عازب ولا نقول أخي عانس " فهذه الجمل صحيحة من حيث البنى التراكيبية أي اسم و صفة، لكن المعنى متناقض " (انظر جين آيتشيزون ، اللسانيات، ص82) (ترجمتنا).

2.2 Lexical meaning vs contextual meaning

Language and context have a strong relationship and play important role in human’s life. Yule (1996:3), defines firstly, pragmatics as the study of utterances as communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a hearer. Secondly, pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning. It requires a consideration of how a speaker organizes what he or she wants to say.” Pragmatics is the study of how the language is used and how language integrated with context.

Levinson (1983: 5) gives a practical definition to the study of language use, in which the relationship between language and context becomes the basis for understanding what pronounced words mean and what namely can be guessed or interpreted from them. However, May (1993) mentions that one of the practical actions is to explain how the same topic is expressed differently in various contexts such as: cultural; religious; professional, etc...

In his theories, Nida (1964) distinguishes between two types of equivalence: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. In the first one (formal equivalence) the translator emphasizes the message itself, i.e., its form and content, as there should be a close correspondence between the ST and the TT message. However, in dynamic equivalence Nida mentions that content shall be given utmost importance in translation. He claims that “the translators who concentrate more on forms of poetry, for instance, are more likely to misinterpret the "intention of the author" and more apt to "distort the meaning" (Nida, 1964).

Nida dedicates much of his research to meaning on both levels: semantic and pragmatic. In his work on Bible translation, he gives meaning a more functional nature. For him, words get their meanings in the context and culture in which they occur. (Munday, 2001) states that”Nida” also distinguishes between many types of meaning: linguistic meaning, referential meaning and emotive meaning”

3. Pragmatic Approach

Pragmatics as a new approach is a branch of linguistics dealing with how the language is linked to context. It is mainly concerned with utterances, uttered in specific context, events, time and place embedding intentional acts of speakers. In this article, we will deal with what the author intends beyond the used expressions and what is the implicit meaning we need to detect. Whereas semantic translation deals with rendering the TT with paying attention to structural and grammatical features, pragmatic one pays more attention to meaning and prevails deep and far meaning in the structures of ST. As for Newmark (1981), “semantic translation tries to restore structural and grammatical features of ST as possible into TT with the original precise contextual meaning”,

3.1 Meaning as the core of translation

It is worthy to note that Nida's notion of meaning in translation is influenced by Chomsky's theory: Transformational Generative Grammar. Chomsky considers that each language is composed of both a deep and surface structure. Nida adopts this theory once dealing with the translation of the Bible; he gives much significance to the deep structure, which encloses the core of meaning. Nida focuses on the preservation of the text meaning on its style since it consents the translator to create the same equivalent effects. (1978, p: 55)

Newmark's distinction between 'communicative translation' and 'semantic translation' in his book entitled “Approaches to Translation” (1981) is the same as Nida's (1964) types of equivalence. 'Communicative translation' as Newmark argues tends to reproduce the same effect on the readers of the TT as the same effect felt by readers of the ST; this definition is likely similar to Nida's definition of dynamic equivalence. Semantic translation of Newmark emphasizes on rendering contextual meaning of the ST, according to the structural characteristics of the TT, and it is alike to Nida's formal equivalence. Munday (2001), on the other hand, pointed out that 'annotation translation' through 'footnotes' are most typical to formal equivalence, since they help the reader of TT to understand the source culture's language and customs. This type has been widely adopted in the translation of the Quran by most of its translators (with reference to three English

translations: Pickthall (1997), and Abdel Haleem (2005) Yusuf Ali (2000), M.Habib Shaker (2009), Dr Ghali (2003), A.J Arbery(1964) Al- Hilali & A.Raza Khan (1977))

The Word "أمة" occurred in the Quran with different meanings:

" أما الأمة بمعنى الصالح الذي يؤتم به ففي مثل قوله تعالى: ﴿إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِلَّهِ حَنِيفًا﴾ سورة النحل:

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"والأمة بمعنى الجماعة، كقوله تعالى ﴿و لما ورد ماء مدين وجد عليه أمة من الناس يسقون﴾ 1- سورة القصص:

23

" و الأمة بمعنى الحين من الزمن، كقوله تعالى: ﴿و قال الذي نجا منهما و ادكر بعد أمة أنا أنبئكم بتأويله

فأرسلون﴾ سورة يوسف: 45 (انظر محمد بوعمامة، علم الدلالة بين التراث و علم اللغة الحديث، دكتوراة مخطوط ص71).

3.2 Examples of meaning changes

Semantically, every language has its own genius and lexical field. In the first example, the translation does not expose any problem since the word « Ummah » occurred in its denotative meaning. However, pragmatically, the problem resides in the variation of meaning from one context to another, as we will see later on.

3.2.1 Example one: the word « Ummah » as nation

تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَآلُكُمْ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ ﴿١٣٤ البقرة﴾		
Translators	The verse in English	The word « nation » " أمة "
M.M.W.PICKTHALL	Those are a people who have passed away; theirs is that which they earned and yours that which ye earn.	<i>People</i>
ABD. YUSUF ALI	That was a people that have passed away. They shall reap the fruit of what they did, and ye of what ye do!	<i>People</i>
M.HABIB SHAKIR	This is a people that have	<i>People</i>

	passed away; they shall have what they earned and you shall have what you earn.	
DR. GHALI	That is a nation (that) has already passed away; it will have whatever it earned; and you will have whatever you have earned.	<i>Nation</i>
A. J. ARBERRY	That is a nation that has passed away; there awaits them that they have earned, and there awaits you that you have earned.	<i>Nation</i>
A. RAZA KHAN	They were a group that has passed away; for them is what they earned, and for you is what you earn.	<i>Group</i>

The target audience or foreign readers of the translated Quran who do not have back knowledge of the Quran in Arabic will never understand how a unique individual can be "a nation." as in example above where M.M.W.PICKTHALL and DR. GHALI have translated it as a nation and instead it means "the exemplar and model man"

This translation lacks comprehensibility for the target audience. Translation is to reproduce what has been understood from the TS, not reproducing structural and grammatical features in TT; thus, the translator must recognize the value of the variation meaning of some words in the context to better translate the expected meaning of the verses to the target audience.

3.2.2 Example two: the word « Ummah » As a period of Time

وَقَالَ الَّذِي نَجَا مِنْهُمَا وَادَّكَرَ بَعْدَ أُمَّةٍ أَنَا أُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِتَأْوِيلِهِ ﴿٤٥﴾ يوسف

Translators	The verse in English	The word « nation » " أمة "
<i>M.M.W.PICKTHALL</i>	And he of the two, who was released, and (now) at length remembered, said: I am going to announce unto you the interpretation.	<i>Length</i>
<i>ABD. YUSUF ALI</i>	But the man who had been released, one of the two (who had been in prison) and who now bethought him after (so long) a space of time, said: "I will tell you the truth of its interpretation.	<i>A space of time</i>
<i>M.HABIB SHAKIR</i>	And of the two (prisoners) he who had found deliverance and remembered after a long time said: I will inform you of its interpretation.	<i>A long time</i>
<i>DR. GHALI</i>	And the one who (was) delivered of the two said and recollected after some time, "I will (myself) fully inform you of its interpretation.	<i>Some time</i>
<i>A. J. ARBERRY</i>) Then said the one who had been delivered, remembering after a time, 'I will myself tell you it's interpretation.	<i>A time</i>
<i>A. RAZA KHAN</i>	And of the two the one who was released said and after a long time he had remembered "I will tell you it's interpretation.	<i>A long time</i>

3.2.3 Example three : the word « Ummah » As the wise and model man

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِلَّهِ حَنِيفًا وَمَمْ يَكُ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (12 النحل)		
Translators	The verse in English	The word « nation » " أمة "
M.M.W.PICKTHALL	Lo! Abraham was a nation obedient to Allah, by nature upright, and he was not of the idolaters	<i>Nation</i>
ABD. YUSUF ALI	Abraham was indeed a model, devoutly obedient to Allah, (and) true in Faith, and he joined not gods with Allah:	<i>Model</i>
M.HABIB SHAKIR	Surely Ibrahim was an exemplar, obedient to Allah, upright, and he was not of the polytheists.	<i>Exemplar</i>
DR. GHALI	Surely, Ibrahim (Abraham) was a nation, (i.e.; a leader, Imam) devout to Allah, unswervingly upright, and he was not of the associators, (Those who associate others with Allah).	<i>Nation</i>
A. J. ARBERRY	Surely, Abraham was a nation obedient unto God, a man of pure faith and no idolater	<i>Nation</i>
A. RAZA KHAN	Indeed Ibrahim was a leader, obedient to Allah, and detached from all; and he was not a polytheist.	<i>Leader</i>

3.2.4 Example four : the word “ BI AYOUNINAH” as guidance and supervision

فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ أَنْ اصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحَيْنَا ﴿٢٧﴾ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ		
Translators	The verse in English	The word « In Our eyes » "بِأَعْيُنِنَا"
<i>M.M.W.PICKTHALL</i>	Then We inspired in him, saying: Make the ship under Our eyes and Our inspiration.	<i>Under Our eyes</i>
<i>ABD. YUSUF ALI</i>	So We inspired him (with this message): “Construct the Ark within Our sight and under Our guidance	<i>Within Our sight</i>
<i>M.HABIB SHAKIR</i>	So We revealed to him, saying: Make the ark before Our eyes and (according to) Our revelation	<i>Before Our eyes</i>
<i>DR. GHALI</i>	So We revealed to him, (saying), “Work the ship under Our Eyes and Our Revelation	<i>Under Our eyes</i>
<i>A. J. ARBERRY</i>	Then We said to him, ‘Make thou the Ark under	<i>Under Our eyes</i>

	Our eyes and as We reveal	
A. RAZA KHAN	So We sent him the divine revelation that, "Make the ship in front of Our sight, and by Our command	<i>In front of Our sight</i>

3.2.5 Example Five the word " BI AYOUNINAH as Care and attention

وَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ فَإِنَّكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا ﴿٤٨﴾ الطور		
Translators	The verse in English	The word « In Our eyes » " بِأَعْيُنِنَا "
M.M.W.PICKTHALL	So wait patiently (O Muhammad) for thy Lord's decree, for surely thou art in Our sight.	<i>In Our sight</i>
ABD. YUSUF ALI	Now await in patience the command of thy Lord: for verily thou art in Our eyes	<i>In Our eyes</i>
M.HABIB SHAKIR	And wait patiently for the judgment of your Lord, for surely you are before Our eyes.	<i>Before Our eyes</i>
DR. GHALI	And (endure) patiently under the Judgment of your	<i>Under Our eyes</i>

	Lord, (for) then surely you are under Our Eyes.	
A. J. ARBERRY	And be thou patient under the judgment of thy Lord; surely thou art before Our eyes.	<i>Before Our eyes</i>
A. RAZA KHAN	And be patient upon your Lord's command, (O dear Prophet Mohammed – peace and blessings be upon him), for you are indeed in Our sight.	<i>In Our sight</i>

Pragmatically, all the words "BI AYOUNINAH" have been translated by the six translators in examples four, five and six as: "under our eyes" or "before our eyes" or "in our eyes" and this will not make sense for the target audience. The translators did not pay attention to the variations of the same words in the different contexts they occurred in.

<p>﴿٢٧﴾ فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ أَنْ اصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحَيْنَا ﴿٢٧﴾</p> <p>المؤمنون ﴿﴾</p>	<p>تفسير القرطبي و ابن كثير فكلمة بأعيننا في هذه الآية الكريمة تعني "بوحى منا و بأمر منا"</p> <p>Noah was building the Ark under the guidance and orientation of "Allah" so that it can resist to water and bear all those animals</p>
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In the next example the word has changed in the context but all translators kept on the same translation: "under our eyes" or "before our eyes" or "in our eyes"

<p>﴿٤٨﴾ وَأَصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ فَإِنَّكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا ﴿٤٨﴾ الطور ﴿﴾</p>	<p>أما كلمة بأعيننا فلقد وردت حسب تفسير القرطبي و</p>
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	<p>ابن كثير بمعنى " نراك ونحفظك ونحوطك ونحرسك ونرعاك" do protect and preserve you from liovers</p>
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4. CONCLUSION

It is worth noting that the translators of the Holy Quran are English-speaking in their majority, for whom the Arabic language is a passive language. The translations of verses cited hereinbefore as examples showed inaccuracies at the level of meaning. We notice how much the translators stuck to the original, trying to bring back the structures of the ST as much as possible in the TT, and this would lead to a dead end; if the translator adopts this way, it is very often because of a deficiency in comprehension. The more ambiguous the text becomes, the more the translator considers that the translation can make it clearer. In addition, the more it is stuck to the original text, transcribing it “word for word”, the more it becomes incomprehensible and unclear for the target audience.

Another problem that hinders the translation of the Quran is its religious and divine aspect. It can be noticed here that the translators recreate the ST structures for fear of creating a misinterpretation and thus misleading the audience, but the contrary is right.

Results and recommendations

Because of the limited framework of this article, we did not deal with translation approaches in substance, but with broad outlines to relate the processes of understanding and reformulating with the translations of the Quran, which is unique in its style conciseness and preciseness. Allah challenged all the humankind to produce even a verse that is likely to Quran and affirm that they could not.

All the translations of verses above are very distant from the real meaning, in order to enable the translators to produce a relevant translation. They shall

exhaust research in the exegesis books of the source language for better reformulating the meaning of the text. Furthermore, translation can only be approximate, it cannot convey the meaning, the richness or the value of the original verses of the holly Quran. Because translation is a mere human work, there is a loss at the levels of words and meaning. This kind of translation contributes to the impoverishment of the text from stylistic, aesthetic and comprehensibility sides.

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