

Qur'anic Semantic Markedness: A Translation and Linguistic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The ostensible unmarked meaning opted for by translators of the Qur'anic discourse is the commonsensical choice in many contexts. The drowned or marked meaning of some expressions is equally key and must be surfaced to the readership. Further, deciding on the more common sense of a word and leaving out the less common one usually results in a distortion of the intended meaning in certain Qur'anic renditions although it might not in other ones. Hence, the present study aims to accentuate some aspects of the Qur'anic semantic markedness at four levels of analysis: the lexical level, the space deictic level, the prepositional level, and the schematic level where a marked word is chosen to serve the formal patterning of the surahs. Markedness has been fully researched but, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, no research has been conducted on or dedicated to the Qur'anic semantic markedness. This study, therefore, is a novel contribution to the Qur'anic translation as it unconventionally tackles the concept of Qur'anic semantic markedness.

Keywords: The Holy Qur'an, semantic markedness, translation, Qur'anic schemata, space deixis.

Introduction

It would be very beneficial, by way of introduction, to explicate that there is more to translating the meanings of the Holy Qur'an than just substituting a Qur'anic word or expression for what it literally means in the target language (TL). This works in many cases though especially in schemata free contexts where the idea is universal and the word in question lends itself to straightforward translation. In other ones, the issue is much complicated and thorny as it needs deeper investigating and exploring of the marked meaning in the context under consideration. However, due to the very nature of the Holy Qur'an which resolutely makes a special case of linguistic inimitability, translators of the meanings of the Qur'anic discourse have almost always put forward that their ultimate end is not to flawlessly simulate the original text, rather, to approximate the idea or meaning to the reader. This is simply the case because the Holy Qur'an shows many, phonetic, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic features which together make the Qur'an a distinctively unique text that defies accurate translation and is difficult to be easily handled in the translation field (cf. Al-Kharabsheh and Al-Jdayeh, 2017; Al-Qinai, 2012; Abdul-Raof, 1999; Mustafa 2001).

Generally speaking, if all creative metaphors, rhetoric aspects of the Holy Qur'an, and language and culture bound terms are familiarized to suit the purposes of the TL reader, the result of such a translation process will be a characteristically different text. For this reason, translators, Islamic scholars, and linguists talk of the translation of the meanings of the Holy Qur'an rather than the Qur'an itself.

Abumahfouz (2011) believes that Islamic scholars and professional translators fairly convincingly argue that only the meanings of the Holy Quran can be conveyed to other languages by means of translation. It is true that when we translate one text into another language we do not, unjustifiably, assume that we convey all aspects of that text but, when it comes to the Holy Qur'an and similar authoritative texts, the problem is much grave and the damage on the side of the source language text is highly costly. This, however, is not to be taken as the norm; in other words, it does not mean that all the Holy Qur'an represents a case of creative metaphor or language uniqueness, in many cases it does though.

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Literature review:

The term linguistic markedness was first discussed by Trubetzkoy (1931) to demonstrate the phonological distinction; semantic markedness was then introduced to show specifications in semantic distinction. Formal, cognitive, phonetic, morphological, contextual, situational, typological, distributional and other kinds of markedness followed Trubetzkoy's distinction between a more common variant "unmarked" and a less common one "marked". Generally, Qur'anic semantic markedness (henceforth QSM) will heavily rest on this basis to distinguish between a more common sense of a word used in the Holy Qur'an "unmarked" and the less common sense of that same word, i.e., the "marked" one.

Markedness, or "non-ordinariness" of language use, as Al-Amri (2015: 17) puts it, occurs when language users opt for a less common linguistic variant instead of the more commonplace widely used "standard" one. He argues that non-standard use will make a certain instance of language usage stand out, thus serving the rhetorical purpose of the user more befittingly. In other words, the marked sense of a certain word is intentionally resorted to in order to highlight an unpredictable meaning which best answers the purpose of the context under discussion. Thus, when translators of the meanings of the Holy Qur'an opt for the unmarked meaning where the marked one is more apt in a certain context, a clear distortion of the intended meaning and message occurs.

This happens because the unmarked sense is more frequent and natural. Hume (2004) argues that since predictability is a function of experience, this means that patterns that are more familiar to the language user will have a greater chance of being produced and perceived. Moreover, translators might mistakenly believe that by resorting to such more common senses they best serve and convey the meaning of the source language text; but the nonstandard use which is intended to make a certain instance of language usage will always stand out.

Furthermore, the hypothesis that marked features can only be characterized by grammatical rules (cf. Bale, Gagnon, and Khanjian, 2011) is not always justifiable in the field of semantics because semantic markedness deals with meaning and the variegated shades of meaning cannot exclusively be judged or referenced in terms of grammatical rules as they are more abstract in nature. Hume (2004) puts forward that markedness is no longer limited to relations between elements on a language specific basis, as presumed by Trubetzkoy. Although some observed semantic asymmetries can be described by regular semantic concepts like synonymy, polysemy, and other sense relations. QSM can embrace restricted semantic features related to such asymmetries where some words have one common sense and another marked one that is usually lost sight of in the process of translating texts across languages. Hatim (2004) suggests that as a linguistic variable, markedness can be present at any level of language – the word, the clause or the level of text structure. Hence, dealing with semantic markedness on a broader scale, we believe, answers the purposes of the field of translation and better serves the Qur'anic studies and the translation theory.

Haspelmath (2006) argues for 12 different senses of markedness. Surprisingly, he holds the view that the term markedness should be deserted by linguists because of its frequency asymmetries, phonetic difficulty and pragmatic inferences. However, this argument is self-defeating if we take into consideration the vast amount of literature on markedness in linguistics. We believe that the concept of markedness is to be expanded to embrace more semantic concepts such as restricted cases of polysemy and synonymy as many linguists advocate the concept of markedness as a helpful tool to understand and explain many language phenomena.

Generally speaking, markedness is a fully-fledged linguistic phenomenon that has been thoroughly researched by many linguists. However, very little attention has been heeded to the interconnectedness between the translation of the meanings of the Holy Qur'an, on the one hand, and the QSM on the other. In the course of translating a text, it is commonsense to use the more frequent word in the TL as an equivalent to the SL word or expression than the less frequent one. The translator's job is to convey the meaning from one language to another in the clearest way possible. By contrast, the *drowned* or marked meaning is to be surfaced for a better reading and understanding of a text.

In the two Arabic words *أسد*/'asad/ and *لبؤة*/labu'a/, *أسد* is the unmarked one as it refers to the semantic distinction to male lion *أسد* or *أسد* in general, i.e., the class of lion. *لبؤة* with this respect is more specific, and therefore, the marked one as it deviates from the more common sense included in *أسد*.

This being said, the QSM goes beyond that and necessitates that a word has at least two senses. QSM, in this context, refers to the case of using the more common sense in a certain context at the expense of the less possible one which is usually overlooked. Sometimes, doing this does not hurt the meaning but in many contexts it does and the result could be a total mistranslation. More to the point, the marked meaning of a word or expression is, in the original text, selected to rhetorically make a particular linguistic usage more prominent. In the Qur'anic discourse, the translator sometimes finds him/herself in the choice of using the less or more common meaning of the word and logically the more common one takes precedence over the less common one. The marked meaning happens to be the intended one or more befitting in a certain context due to the mere fact that the marked meaning is semantically more complex and metaphorically richer. However, translators sometimes replace the marked meaning with the unmarked one, however inadequate the translation might have been.

Findings and discussion:

In this paper a fairly close investigation of the QSM will be undertaken with the aim of surfacing the marked senses of those expressions which can potentially have more than one meaning: a common sense and a less common one. These include:

1. Qur'anic lexical markedness
2. Qur'anic schematic markedness
3. Qur'anic prepositional markedness
4. Qur'anic space deictic markedness

In the following paragraphs, each of these concepts is defined and explained.

Qur'anic lexical markedness

Qur'anic lexical markedness refers to the case when a lexical item, particularly in the Holy Qur'an, has at least two senses: an unmarked sense and a marked one. Qur'anic lexical markedness is twofold: exotic markedness and blurred markedness. The difference between the exotic and blurred QSM, that we are going to discuss later in this paper, is that the former is usually mistranslated or has another possibility that is very weird to an average Arab, Muslim, or a person who is interested in learning about the Holy Qur'an as in the case of the words in table (1) below. The latter, on the other hand, is not usually mistranslated and the marked meaning can easily be worked out from the context in which it occurs as in the case of the words in table (3) below. Moreover, the exotic markedness does lead to a mistranslation of the SL expression because it needs specialized knowledge of the text in question, whereas the meaning of the blurred markedness can be grasped on contextual basis.

Exotic Qur'anic lexical markedness

QSM can happen to be a matter of whether the word is polysemous or not. The translator seems to be aware of the more common meaning of the word and unaware of, or intentionally ignores the less common but more suitable in that particular context. This occurs for the sake of familiarization, and the production of a text that can be understood by the largest number of readers possible. Al-Qinai (2011) indicates that one of the main obstacles to achieve accurate translation is the ambiguity resulting from a polysemous word that refers to a number of concepts in a context-free environment. In other words, the term in question is polysemous in the Qur'anic context and the meaning is not transparent, i.e., it cannot be figured out on contextual basis; it needs exegetical knowledge that the translators most likely lack. The following examples illustrate further the point under discussion:

1. "وَأَمْرَأَتُهُ قَائِمَةٌ فَضَحِكْتُمْ فَبَشِّرْنَاهَا بِإِسْحَاقَ وَمِنْ وَرَاءِ إِسْحَاقَ يَعْقُوبُ" (الآية 71 - سورة هود)

"And his wife was standing (there), and **she laughed**: But We gave her glad tidings of Isaac, And after him, of Jacob."

{Surah, 11: 71}

(Translated by Abdullah Ali)

And his wife was standing (there), and **she laughed**. But We gave her glad tidings of Ishaq (Isaac), and after Ishaq, of Ya`qub (Jacob).

{Surah, 11: 71} (Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)

And his wife, standing by, **laughed** when We gave her good tidings (of the birth) of Isaac, and, after Isaac, of Jacob.

{Surah, 11: 71} (Translated by Pickthall)

The word ضججت/dahikat/ (literally: laughed) has another marked meaning in this particular context which is “to menstruate”. The wife of the prophet Abraham was a very old woman who has reached the stage of menopause. When the angels gave her the glad tidings of having children (Isaaq and after him Jacob) she began to menstruate afresh which is a natural sign that she can have babies. This is another meaning that fits in the context as suggested by many Qur’anic exegeses. Ibn Kathir (1998, vol.2) states that Ibn Abbas (the most prominent interpreter of the Holy Qur’an) said, ضججت means “to menstruate”. This invisibility arises from the fact that the term has a marked meaning and the context itself does not allow for all the possible renditions. Worse yet, neither the translator nor an average Muslim is aware of such marked meaning.

Besides, there is another verse related to the same story in the Holy Qur’an which might make the idea more lucid. In verse (29) of *Surat al-dhāryāat*, “His wife came while angrily making loud voices: she smote her forehead and said, “A barren old woman.” The two verses, which are from the same story but in different surahs, make it more plausible for the word ضججت to be rendered as “to menstruate”. First, the expression “she smote her forehead” in verse (29) of *Surat al-dhāryāat* describes the same situation the thing that contrasts the laughing idea. People usually would not hit their face hard when receiving good tidings; doing so is a sign of dissatisfaction or anger. Secondly, in the Arabic literature we find examples of using the word ‘ضججت’ with the sense of “to menstruate” as in the following Arabic poetic line:

وضحك الأرناب فوق الصفا كمثل دم الجوف يوم اللقا

(The period flow of rabbits on the boulder

The like of the hollow blood in the battle field)

In the case of polysemy, the word is said to have more than one meaning, and therefore, more than one cognitive image; one sense of the word might serve the purpose of the text only in one situation. The following example illustrates the idea further:

2. "وَأَلْقِ عَصَاكَ فَلَمَّا رَآهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَأَنَّهَا جَانٌّ وَلَّى مُدْبِرًا وَوَجَّعَ يَا مُوسَى لَا تَخَفْ إِنِّي لَا يَخَافُ لَدَيْ الْمُرْسَلِينَ." (آية 10 - سورة النمل)

“Now do thou throw thy rod!” But when he saw it moving (of its own accord) as if it has been a **snake**. He turned back in retreat, and retracted not his steps: “O Moses!” (it was said), “Fear not: truly, in My presence, those called as messengers have no fear.

{Surah, 27: 10} (Translated by Abdullah Ali)

“And throw down your stick!” But when he saw it moving as if it were a **snake**, he turned in flight, and did not look back. (It was said:) “O Musa (Moses)! Fear not: verily, the Messengers fear not in front of Me.

{Surah, 27: 10} (Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)

And throw down thy staff! But when he saw it writhing as if it were a **demon**, he turned to flee headlong; (but it was said unto him): O Moses! Fear not! Lo! The emissaries fear not in My presence.

{Surah, 27: 10} (Translated by Pickthall)

As can be seen, Ali and al-Hilali and Khan render the term جَانٌّ/jān/ as “snake”, whereas Pickthall renders it as “demon”. Although the two meanings are worlds apart, both of them can fit in the context. However, rendering ‘جَانٌّ’ as “snake” serves the overall meaning in a better way as it makes this particular use of language answer the contextual rhetoric meaning more aptly in this verse and the other two different ones in the Qur’an describing the same situation making the divergent sense of ‘جَانٌّ’ more appropriate than the more common one. Debatably, almost nobody has ever seen a “demon”, so what is the use of using the similitude of it to describe the situation?

Verse (107) of *Surat al-A'rāaf*, “مبيناً فإذا هي ثعبانٌ فألقى عصاه” (Then Moses threw his rod! And it turned into a **serpent**, manifest!), describes the same story with the word ثعبان/thu'bān/ “a serpent”, and verse (21) of *Surat Taa-Ha*, “فألقها فإذا هي حيةٌ تسعى” (He threw it down, and it was a **snake**, moving swiftly), talks also about the same story but with the word حية “snake”. In this context, synonymy (near sameness of meaning), markedness, schemata and the context are strongly interwoven serving a rhetoric purpose and as such aggravating the translator’s mission opening the door for the translation theory to explain such linguistic phenomena.

Presumably, ثعبان/thu'bān/ and حية/hayyah/ refer to the same thing but جان is the odd one. In fact, each word of these words has a sense that is unique to it. جان is redolent of “a demon” or “a jinn” and is, therefore, contextually used in a scary situation or to describe such one, “O Moses! Fear not!”. It best fits in this context as it rhetorically draws attention to the scary situation by means of using the marked sense of the word ‘جان’. Originally, جان, has an unmarked meaning which is “demon”; and it has another marked one which is “snake”. The QSM suggestively conveys the two meanings. However, this rhetoric use cannot be transmitted to English because the word “demon” does not have a marked sense in English which is “a snake”.

Moreover, حية and ثعبان, which are used to describe the same situation in different surahs of the Qur'an, make the idea of the exotic Qur'anic semantic markedness of the word جان more lucid. The word ثعبان is mentioned, in the Qur'an in two verses ending with the attribute مبين translated by different translators as “manifest” or “clear”. ثعبان is a giant male snake, whereas حية is a snake, male or female, capable of moving very quickly. Hence, the interchangeability between the three expressions is utterly excluded as no word can serve the rhetoric meaning of the other due to the fact that one of them, which is جان, is semantically marked in the Holy Qur'an. This is, however, the source of the mistranslation of the term جان by Pickthall. On the other hand, ثعبان fits in its context as it draws attention to the “size” of the snake which makes it clear so that everyone can see it. In other words, ثعبان is used because of its connotations not its semantic asymmetry.

It remains to say that حية is neither semantically marked, as the case of جان, nor it is connotatively intended, as in the case of ثعبان; it has a deeper contextual meaning. The word حية is derived from the same root as the word حياة/hayāh/ “life”, and it is reminiscent of it especially in this context. “Cast down your rod”; the rod which is an object with no life turns into a حية moving swiftly. The philosophy behind that is that Allah is capable of bringing out the living thing from the dead. The disbelievers are dead and Allah can make them alive by turning them into believers, if he wills. The ubiquity of such expressions in the Holy Qur'an is undeniable. Table (1) below provides more examples of exotic QSM.

Table (1): exotic Qur'anic semantic markedness:

qur'anic expression	phonemic transcription	unmarked meaning	marked meaning	note
راعنا	/rā'inā/	listen to us	the worst one (an insulting word in Hebrew “רע” /ra:c/)	سورة البقرة: 104، سورة النساء: 46
ذرية	/dhurriyah/	offspring	A boy	سورة آل عمران: 38
كبد	/kabad/	toil	upright	سورة البلد: 4
أثقالها	/ 'thqālahā/	its burdens	the dead	سورة الزلزلة: 2
سجرت	/sujjirat/	set on fire	filled with water	سورة التكويد: 6

Blurred Qur'anic lexical markedness

By and large, not all kinds of markedness make axiomatic cases of QSM. In the blurred Qur'anic semantic markedness that we are going to address in this section, the marked sense of the word is not extraordinary and can be figured out from the context without prior exegetical knowledge. For instance, the Arabic term الأعراب/al'rāb/, which is usually rendered as “bedouins”, is problematic, to an extent. This is because of the fact that الأعراب and البدو/albadū/ are

usually mistaken to be perfect synonyms where in fact they are not. Many linguists explicate the difference between the two words, and we are going to shed some light on this difference from a QSM perspective. First, table (2) shows the dissimilarity between them in terms of componential analysis.

Table (2): componential analysis of الأعراب/al' rāb/and bedouins

	الأعراب /al' rāb/	البدو bedouins
generosity	-	+
eloquence /oratory	-	+
scurrility	+	-
known descent	-	+
lineage	-	+
toughness	+	-

The second point is that the two words are mentioned in the Qur'an in many contexts. Al'araab is always used in both the Islamic literature and the Holy Qur'an in negative contexts. For instance, nearly all Muslims know the story of one of them who peed in the mosque in the presence of the prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) and his companions. The following examples illustrate the idea further:

3. "لأعراب أشدُّ كُفْرًا وِيفَاقًا." (الآية 97 من سورة التوبة)

The Arabs of the desert are the worst in Unbelief and hypocrisy.

{Surah, 9: 97} (Translated by Abdullah Ali)

The bedouins are the worst in disbelief and hypocrisy.

{Surah, 9: 97} (Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)

The wandering Arabs are more hard in disbelief and hypocrisy.

{Surah, 9: 97} (Translated by Pickthall)

Al'araab (the wandering Arabs) are more hard in disbelief and hypocrisy.

{Surah, 9: 97} (Suggested translation by the researchers)

4. "وَقَدْ أَحْسَنَ بِي إِذْ أَخْرَجَنِي مِنَ السِّجْنِ وَجَاءَ بِكُمْ مِنَ الْبَدْوِ." (الآية 100 - سورة يوسف)

He was certainly good to me when He took me out of prison and brought you from **bedouin** life.

{Surah, 12: 100} (Translated by Abdullah Ali)

He was indeed good to me, when He took me out of the prison, and brought you out of the **bedouin** life.

{Surah, 12: 100} (Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)

He hath shown me kindness, since He took me out of the prison and hath brought you from **the desert life**.

{Surah, 12: 100} (Translated by Pickthall)

Understandably, the father and brothers of the prophet Yusuf (Joseph) were bedouins, and they were leading a poor and hard life as assumingly known in the story of Yusuf and his brothers. Further, in the pre-Islamic era and during the first Islamic time, children used to be sent to the desert to be raised among the bedouins for the sake of learning standard Arabic, leading a healthy lifestyle, and becoming well-mannered and physically stronger. Obviously, all these traits are positive. When it comes to الأعراب, all these characteristics cannot be used to describe them save for physical strength. They are characterized by toughness and scurrility (cf. Ibn Katheer, 1998, vol. 2). Hence, /al' rāb/ and the bedouins are notably different things where "bedouins" is the common word and /al' rāb/ is the divergent and marked one. In the translation of the Qur'anic discourse, none of the consulted translations has clarified this difference even in a footnote.

When it comes to translation, one finds more awkward renditions of the term الأعراب/al' rāb/ such as "desert dwellers" which is a very general expression. Dwellers of the desert in Texas are understandably not bedouins or

/al' rāb/. Another translator renders it as "Arabs" which is a downright mistranslation of the original term because not all Arabs are bedouins. It remains to be said that Pickthall's translation "wandering bedouins" tells the reader that they represent a particular kind of bedouins which is, to an extent, successful. Consider the following example to further explain the idea:

5. " وَكَأَلَّا وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ الْخُسْنَى. " (الآية 95 - سورة النساء)

But to all Allah promised a **goodly (reward)**.

{Surah, 4: 95} (Translated by Abdullah Ali)

To each, Allah has promised **good (Paradise)**

{Surah, 4: 95} (Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)

Unto each Allah hath promised **good**.

{Surah, 4: 95} (Translated by Pickthall)

6. " أَيُّ مَا تَدْعُوا فَلَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى. " (الآية 110 من سورة الإسراء)

{Surah, 17: 110} (Translated by Abdullah Ali)

By whatever name ye call upon Him, (it is well): for to Him belong **the Most Beautiful** Names.

{Surah, 17: 110} (Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)

By whatever name you invoke Him (it is the same), for to Him belong **the Best** Names.

{Surah, 17: 110} (Translated by Pickthall)

Unto whichever ye cry (it is the same). His are **the most beautiful** names.

Statistically, the term *الحسنى/al-ḥusnā:/* is used (17) times in the Holy Qur'an. It was used in (10) of them with the meaning of "Heaven", and the other seven with the meaning of "the best" or "the most beautiful". Abdullah Ali and Pickthall lost sight of the semantically nonstandard sense of the term *الحسنى* as they render it into "a goodly (reward)" and "the good" respectively. Al-Hilali and Khan, on the other hand, were aware of the fact that there is more to the term than the unmarked sense, and therefore, used the term (Paradise) between parentheses. However, such a rendition is successful to a high extent but the term *الحسنى* is general in nature just like the English term "Heaven". *الحسنى*, we believe, is to be translated as "Heaven". Table (3) below provides more examples of blurred Qur'anic semantic markedness with their renditions.

Table (3): blurred Qur'anic semantic markedness

the Qur'anic expression	phonemic transcription	unmarked meaning	marked meaning	note
الحسنى	/ al-ḥusnā:/	the best/ the most beautiful	heaven	سورة الكهف:77، النساء:95، التوبة:107، الأعراف: 137 و180، يونس:26، الرعد:18، النحل:62، الإسراء:110، طه:8، الأنبياء:101، فصلت:50، النجم:31، الحديد:10، الحشر:24، الليل:6 و9.
الكوثر	/alkawthar/	Al-Kauther	abundance	سورة الكوثر:1 "Al-Kauther" is a river in the Heaven
ورق	/wariq/	note (money)	silver coins	سورة الكهف:19
نبتهل	/nabtahil/	pray	nabtahil (to pray in groups saying that the curse is on the liar)	سورة آل عمران: 61
مرض	/marad /	a disease	hypocrisy	سورة البقرة:
صعودا	/ṣa'ūdā:/	climbing	the name of a slippery mountain in Hellfire	المدثر: 17

the Qur'anic expression	phonemic transcription	unmarked meaning	marked meaning	note
ويل	/wayl/	woe	the name of a valley in Hellfire	سورة الماعون: 4
سقر	/saqar/	Hellfire	the name of a valley in Hellfire	سورة المدثر: 26
أبيكم	/'abīkum/	your father	your grandfather your great grandfather	سورة الحج: 78
النجم	/annajm/	the stars	kind of pants	سورة الرحمن: 6
سبع من المثاني	/sab'un min al-mathānī:/	seven oft-repeated	the seven long surahs of the Qur'an (al-Baqarah, aal-'Imran, an-Nisa', al-Maa'idah, al-An'aam, al-A'raaf, and al-Anfaal)	سورة الحجر: 87
الجمل	/aljamal/	the camel	the thick rope	سورة الأعراف: 40

Qur'anic schematic markedness:

As stated above, QSM has a rhetoric dimension that contextually answers the purpose of the text more aptly than the more common use of language. One aspect of this Qur'anic semantic markedness is related to the overall ordered system of rhymes at the end of each Qur'anic verse or simply the rhyming schemata of the verses in each surah. Though systematically dissimilar, the Qur'anic schemata and the regular poetic rhyme scheme share only one characteristic in common which is the rhyme at the end of the line. Strictly speaking, the selection of a certain word at the end of a verse always serves the formal structure of the verses and surahs. Hence, choosing the marked word, not any other one with the same meaning but more common use, makes a special case of QSM to best convey the meaning intended. However, this Qur'anic idiosyncrasy is utterly and inevitably lost in the course of the translation process, and no translation ever of the Qur'anic discourse keeps the original rhyming schemata of the surah.

Linguistically speaking, it is no use endeavoring to replicate the formal characteristics of the Qur'anic text into another language, say English, as this amounts to forcing the schematic patterns of one language into the straightjacket of another which seems to be practically unaccomplishable. Thus, the linguistic system of the English language falls short of successfully handling the rhyme effect, inter alia, at the end of the verses of the Holy Qur'an. Consider the following example to further illustrate the idea:

7. "تَلْكَ إِذَا قِسْمَةٌ ضِيزَى." (الآية -22 سورة التجم)

Behold, such would be indeed a division most **unfair!**

{Surah, 53: 22} (Translated by Abdullah Ali)

That indeed is a division most **unfair.**

{Surah, 53: 22} (Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)

That indeed were an **unfair** division!

{Surah, 53:22} (Translated by Pickthall)

Translationally speaking, the word ضِيزَى/dīzā:/ in (7) above means "unfair" or "unjust". All the translators of the Qur'an render the meaning of the word successfully; nothing is wrong with translation of the meaning of the word. However, the schematic effect of ضِيزَى with its rhyming sound that is the same as the end of all the verses in the surah is utterly missing. The English equivalent of ضِيزَى which is "unfair" or "unjust", or whatever synonym a translator could come up with, does not have a rhyming effect as the source language word. This is the case because the term schematically represents a case of QSM. Consider the word قَسْوَرَة/qaswarah/ in the following verse:

8. "كَانَهُمْ حُزْرٌ مُسْتَنْفِرَةٌ (50) * فَزَرَّتْ مِنْ قَسْوَرَةٍ (51)." (الآية 50 و 51 - سورة المدثر)

As if they were affrightened asses,
fleeing from **lion!**

{Surah, 74: 50 and 51} (Translated by Abdullah Ali)

As if they were (frightened) wild donkeys.

Fleeing from **a hunter (or lion, or a beast of prey).**

{Surah, 74: 50 and 51} (Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)

As they were frightened asses

Fleeing from **lion?**

{Surah, 74:50 and 51} (Translated by Pickthall)

Apparently, the term *فسورة*, literally *أسد*, is translatable as “lion” which is a very successful rendition. The word *أسد* as we stated in the introduction is unmarked in comparison with *ليؤة*, the marked one. This is the conventional way of dealing with semantic markedness. Schematically speaking, *فسورة* is particularly used here because of the rhyming effect that it has with the rest of the verses of the surah. It best fits the meaning and the formal patterning of the surah. However, the Holy Qur'an abounds with such words which make them easier to remember and smoother to read, not to mention the rhetoric and aesthetic dimension they add to the Qur'anic discourse.

Qur'anic prepositional markedness:

Qur'anic prepositional markedness occurs when a certain preposition changes the meaning of a verb into a divergent way which can cause confusion in understanding it in the Qur'anic discourse. QSM can be extended to embrace more linguistic phenomena such as prepositions because prepositions in Arabic are more semantic in nature as they show a wide variety of meanings. Unlike English, where prepositions almost always have a fixed and collocational usage, prepositions in Arabic show a very complex semantic behavior, and many prepositions can be used interchangeably with a certain rhetoric effect. For example, in English we cannot use the preposition “on” to mean “in”, in Arabic we can. For instance, in verse 71 of *Surat Taa-Ha* *وَأَصْلَبْتِكُمْ فِي مَجْدُوعِ النَّحْلِ*, the preposition *في/fi:/* means *على/la:/*. Not surprisingly, the interchangeability of prepositions is a well-established linguistic phenomenon in Arabic. Arabic linguists authored many articles related to it; and many chapters of the language books are dedicated to the range of meanings that prepositions can have. This being said, it was noticed that some verses of the Holy Qur'an were mistranslated because the translators were not aware of the QSM of the prepositions in the Qur'an. Consider the following example:

9. "سَأَلَ سَائِلٌ بِعَذَابٍ وَاقِعٍ." (الآية 1 - سورة المعارج)

A questioner **asked about a penalty** to befall

{Surah, 70: 1} (Translated by Abdullah Ali)

A questioner **questioned concerning** a torment about to befall

{Surah, 70: 1} (Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)

A questioner **questioned concerning** the doom about to fall

{Surah, 70:1} (Translated by Pickthall)

A careful scrutiny of QSM reveals that it is also applicable to prepositions. Some prepositions have at least two senses: an unmarked one and a marked one. The divergence of a preposition from its original meaning to a deviant one might be the source of the mistranslation of an expression or a whole verse. For instance, the preposition *(بِ) /bi/* in the word *بعذاب/bi'athābin/* is semantically marked in the sense that it has a nonstandard sense that is bound up to go unnoticed and is usually mistakenly taken to be the desired one. Obviously, Ibn Katheer (vol.2), as many exegeses of the Qur'an, states that the questioner in this verse is “Al-nadhar bin al-Harith”. The reason of the revelation of this verse is that Al-Nadhar bin al-Harithin verse 32 from *Surah al-Anfaal* said, “O Allah if this (The Qur'an) was the truth from You, then rain us with stones from the sky, or send us a painful penalty”. These types of torment mentioned by this person were the same as the threats and penalties promised to those who disbelieve in Allah and his prophet.

Moreover, example (9) above along with verse 32 from *Surah al-Anfaal* are about the same situation and the same person who represents the disbelievers and their ideology as they request that the torment or the penalty of Allah be hastened to them, if it were ever true; they are not asking about the nature of the penalty or torment itself as they are told about it by the prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) and it is stated in the Holy Qur'an which is also recited to them. The purpose of their request is to mock the prophet and his message by challenging him to such a request. Thus, the rendition of the preposition as "asking about" or "questioning concerning" does not suffice or it even spoils the meaning and misleads the reader. Al-Zamakhshari (2006) states that *سأل/sa'ala/* means *دعا/du'ā' /* (literally: call for or order).

Moreover, there are many verses in The Holy Qur'an where the preposition is used in this same way. In verse 55 of *Surat al-Duhkan*, "فِيهَا بِكُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ يَدْعُونَ", the term *يدعون/yad'ūna/* together with the preposition (ب) have the same divergent sense which supports the argument that the preposition (ب), with the verb *سأل/sa'la/*, has a marked sense and is consequently mistranslated because of that. Obviously, *يدعون ب* means "call for" or "order". The problem will be easily solved when we replace "سأل" with "دعا" by way of testing the meaning. The following is a suggested translation for the verse under discussion to make up for this translation loss:

Hastening it, an asker asked for the torment to come about.

{Surah, 70:1}

(Suggested translation by the researchers)

Qur'anic space deictic markedness:

Levinson (1983) puts forward that the term deixis is borrowed from the Greek word for pointing or indicating. He holds that place or space deixis concerns the specification of locations relative to anchorage points in the speech event. Relevant to this study, translating QSM, is space or place deixis. Obviously, Qur'anic space deictic markedness arises from the fact that the place Qur'anic lexical item has a contextual meaning which is the exact opposite of the unmarked meaning of that lexical item causing a case of mistranslation and misunderstanding. For instance, the term "وراء" /*warā'*/, in Arabic, is deictic in nature because it derives part of its meaning from the context of situation in which it occurs. It has a literal meaning, which is "behind" and another marked meaning which is "ahead of"; the latter, however, is the exact opposite of the former. The following examples illustrate further enough the point in discussion:

10. "فَإِذَا سَجَدُوا فَلْيَكُونُوا مِنْ وَّرَائِكُمْ" (الآية 102 - سورة النساء)

When they finish their prostration, let them take their positions in **the rear**.

{Surah, 4: 102}

(Translated by Abdullah Ali)

When they finish their prostrations, let them take their positions in **the rear**.

{Surah, 4: 102}

(Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)

Then when they have performed their prostrations let them fall to **the rear**.

{Surah, 4: 102}

(Translated by Pickthall)

11. "وَكَانَ وَّرَاءَهُمْ مَلِكٌ يَأْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِينَةٍ غَصْبًا." (الآية 79 - سورة الكهف)

for there was **after** them a certain king who seized on every boat by force.

{Surah, 18: 79}

(Translated by Abdullah Ali)

as there was a king **behind** them who seized every ship by force.

{Surah, 18: 79}

(Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)

as there was a king **behind** them who seized every ship by force.

{Surah, 18: 79}

(Translated by Pickthall)

As shown in (10) above, the term *وراءكم/warā'akum/* is transparent in the sense that the context makes it clear enough for the translator to render it as "behind". The unmarked sense of *وراءكم* lends itself to direct translation but when it comes to the marked sense, problems start to surface. Surprisingly, in nine different translations of the Holy Qur'an, not a single translator could convey the marked sense inherent to the term *وراءهم* in (11) above although it is not a matter

of choice between the more common and the less common sense as the case in example (1) above. Such a place deictic expression, which has two senses, poses a serious obstacle to the translation of the meanings of the Holy Qur'an. Consider the term فوق/fawq/ in the following example:

12. "إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي أَنْ يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَا بَغُوضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا." (الآية 26 - سورة البقرة)

Allah disdains not to use the similitude of things, even of a gnat as well as anything **above it**.

{Surah, 2: 26} (Translated by Abdullah Ali)

Verily, Allah is not ashamed to set forth a parable even of a mosquito or so much **more when it is bigger (or less when it is smaller)**.

{Surah, 2: 26} (Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)

Lo! Allah disdaineth not to coin the similitude even of **a gnat**.

{Surah, 2: 26} (Translated by Pickthall)

Ibn Katheer (1998, vol.1) states that فوق/fawqa/ means دون/dūna/ "lower in size and meanness". In Arabic, when you describe someone as being mean, we say: "هو فوق ذلك"; "he is smaller than that". This is what the word فوق means in this particular context. In fact, it all depends on the word in the context. For instance, in the case of a negative context, it would be more appropriate to render the adverb فوق as "smaller" or "less". In the case of a positive context, it would be more apt to translate it as "bigger" or "more". Imagine the context where we describe a person as a generous one and you say: "هو فوق ذلك". He/she is "more than that" in generosity, of course.

Hence, the term فوق cannot be translatable into "above" as rendered by Abdullah Ali because such a rendition, to say the least, is not accurate. Al-Hilali and Khan confuse the reader by giving him/her two choices opposing one another: "more when it is bigger (or less when it is smaller)". Worse yet, Pickthall omits the whole idea of فوق. The following is a suggested translation of the verse:

Indeed Allah disdains not to set forth the similitude of a gnat or anything **smaller** than it.

Conclusion:

Qur'anic semantic markedness is a linguistic phenomenon which permeates the entire Qur'anic discourse and poses a serious obstacle for translators of the Holy Qur'an, and one is indeed hard put to it to translate such semantic idiosyncrasy. Qur'anic semantic markedness can be an option where the translator chooses between the commoner or the less common sense of a word where the text potentially tolerates both senses. In other cases, it is not a matter of choice, and the unmarked meaning misleads the reader and results into a mistranslation of the term, and therefore needs a fairly close investigation to clarify the intended message of the original text.

The four main markedness related issues that have been raised in this paper impede the translation of the meanings of the Holy Qur'an into English unless they are looked at with the eye of an expert surfacing the invisible message. It remains to be said that this study is not exhaustive and every single section herein needs further investigation the thing that is beyond the scope of one single paper.

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محدودية الشبوع الدلالي القرآني: من منظور الترجمة واللغة

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ملخص

تنظر هذه الدراسة في المعنى الأكثر شبيوعاً، الذي يلجأ إليه مُترجمو النصّ القرآني، وهو الخيار المنطقي في كثير من السياقات، ولكن هذه الدراسة تذهب إلى أن المعنى الأقل شبيوعاً لبعض المفردات والتراكيب لا يقل أهمية، وينبغي تبيانها وإظهاره للقارئ. علاوة على ذلك، فإن اختيار المعنى الأكثر شبيوعاً للفظه وترك المعنى الأقل شبيوعاً عادة ما يؤدي إلى خلل وتضيق في المعنى المراد في سياق قرآني معين مع أن الأمر قد لا يحصل في سياق آخر. وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التركيز على بعض جوانب محدودية الشبوع الدلالي القرآني ضمن أربع مستويات: الألفاظ، و الإشارية المكانية، وحروف الجر، و النمط الشكلي، إذ تستخدم اللفظة الأقل شبيوعاً لخدمة النمط الشكلي لآيات السورة، وعلى الرغم من أن محدودية الشبوع قد تم بحثها ملياً، ولقلة الدراسات المخصصة لمحدودية الشبوع الدلالي القرآني؛ فإن هذه الدراسة يمكن لها أن تكون إضافة نوعية للترجمة القرآنية كونها تتناول بالدرس ظاهرة محدودية الشبوع الدلالي القرآني. الكلمات الدالة: القرآن الكريم، محدودية الشبوع الدلالي، الترجمة، النمط الشكلي القرآني، الإشارية المكانية.

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