

# **The Translation of God's Names in the Quran: A Descriptive Study**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## Dedication

To my beloved parents, who were unfailingly patient during my long absence abroad; to my wife, who has been always supportive and my children. To them all I dedicate this work.

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## Transliteration System for Standard Arabic

|                         |        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |              |
|-------------------------|--------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Arabic letter</b>    | ا      | ب | ت | ث | ج | ح | خ | د | ذ | ر | ز | س | ش | ص | ض | ظ | ع | غ | ف | ق | ك | ل | م | ن | ه | و            | ي            |
| <b>Trans-literation</b> | ʾ<br>ā | b | t | ṭ | j | ḥ | x | d | ḏ | r | z | s | š | ṣ | ḍ | ẓ | ʿ | ġ | f | q | k | l | m | n | h | w<br>or<br>ū | y<br>or<br>ī |

The vowels are: ‘a’ for ا; ‘i’ for ي; ‘u’ for و; ‘ā’ for آ; ‘ī’ for عي; ‘ū’ for و; ‘ay’ for ي; and ‘aw’ for ؤ. For simplicity of presentation, the definite article ال is written *al-* in all cases, regardless of whether it assimilates to the following consonant, or whether the initial ‘a’ disappears following a previous vowel. Hyphens are used at the end of *wa-* transcribing و ‘and’; *fa-* transcribing ف ‘(and) so’, *bi-* transcribing ب ‘and’, ‘with’, and before suffixed non-subject pronouns. A *šaddah* results in a geminate (consonant written twice). *tā’ marbūṭa* (ة) is transcribed as word-final *-h* or *-t*. *ʾalif maqṣūra* (ى) appears as *ā*, rendering it indistinguishable from *ʾalif*. The *nisbah* suffix appears as *-iyy-*, nunation is ignored in transliteration except where it would unavoidably be pronounced in speech (cf. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DIN\\_31635](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DIN_31635)). Some well-known names such as ‘Mohammad’ محمد, ‘Ali’ علي, ‘Abdullah’ عبدالله are transliterated according to their common recognized forms.

## List of Abbreviations

|      |                                 |
|------|---------------------------------|
| KJV  | King James Version of the Bible |
| Lit. | Literally                       |
| OED  | The Oxford English Dictionary   |
| SL   | Source Language                 |
| ST   | Source Text                     |
| SC   | Source Culture                  |
| TC   | Target Culture                  |
| TL   | Target Language                 |
| TT   | Target Text                     |



## Abstract

This thesis explores the translation of God's names in the Quran. It centres around many of the common issues that the translators of divine attributes face. Since these are sensitive cultural items, translators should ideally give special treatment to divine designations. God's names are not just stock names but rather they are nominalized adjectives with a descriptive content. As such divine names can enter into a variety of semantic relations such as synonymy, polysemy, hyponymy and hyperonymy (also termed 'hypernymy' and 'superordinateness'). Divine names' highly-nuanced semantic, syntactic and morphological makeup means that they require delicate treatment on the part of translators. Quran translators realize that God's names are culture-bound terms and employ different techniques to give faithful renditions. Often they make use of an amalgamation of strategies to accurately reflect their meaning(s) and offset any loss thereof. By and large, literal translation seems to take a rather safe precedence over any other strategy, which gives a safeguard against any misrepresentation of divine attributes. Sometimes the presence of recognized or cultural equivalents is a sufficient warrant to depart from literal matches. This thesis shows how selected Quran translators exhibit varying degrees of consistency in their renditions of divine names, which may be attributable to the absence of hard-and-fast rules for the interlingual transfer of culturally laden lexemes. A convoluted issue that Quran translators face is how to tackle near-synonymous expressions. The situation is aggravated when they deal with divine names where near-synonymy exists in abundance. Quite often, the selected translators in this study have not been able to successfully replicate the more pronounced differences between near-synonymous divine names. Finding matchable polysemous items between languages is a familiar quandary that interpreters have to grapple with. Data in this study demonstrates how it is a taxing task trying to find a single item in English that bears the full range of senses that a polysemous divine name has. Quran translators are often confronted with the task of picking up a single sense out of the multiple senses that the divine name can designate; the onus in such a pursuit is typically on the Quran exegeses. Usually, the primary (or literal) sense is the translators' first port of call to the exclusion of any other secondary sense. It is uncommon to find a translator who is keen on conveying the semantic polyvalence of God's appellations. In this way, Quran translators, inadvertently, do not do justice to the richness of the Quran text despite many readers' eagerness to become illuminated about the various meanings of their Sacred Book. It is perhaps translators' proclivity for brevity that is the overriding factor that has stopped them in their tracks. It is reasonable to assume that the brushing aside of

(intended) secondary meanings of divine names by many Quran translators to chase 'structural fidelity' has come at the expense of more accurate glosses.

# 1. Background of the Study

## 1.1 Introduction

It is a forgone conclusion that translation is an uphill task. It is a task that requires adequate proficiency not only in the source language but also in the target language. The task is even more strenuous when translating the words of God. Leading translators and translation experts have pointed out to the impossibility of equivalence even at the word level. Such difficulty is compounded in texts which are of sensitive nature like that of the Muslims' Holy Book, the Holy Quran.

Many Muslim scholars object to the use of the word "translate" when describing the process of rendering the meaning of the Quranic text into English. Instead, they prefer to use the word "interpret" as it more aptly describes what translators do. Such "interpretations" are just "crude approximations" at best. This has made Muslim scholars reject the idea of translating the Quran. Shakir (1926) explains that in regard to "the matter of the lawfulness of translating the holy Qur'an into any foreign language, we can have little confidence in the balance of meaning being preserved" (cited in Abdul-Raof, 2004: 92). In general, Muslims believe that the Qur'an should be read in Arabic because it is the direct and exact word of Allah. We can only resort to translation to gain a general or rather an incomplete idea of the original meaning. Accordingly, it goes without saying that no translator of the Quran has ever claimed that their translation is meant to be a substitute for the original text.

The difficulty of translating the Quran can be seen when the translator of the Quran is confronted with words that are language-specific, time-specific, or culture-specific. According to Akbar (1978: 3), almost all translations of the Quran contain literal renderings of some lexical items, which make them unintelligible to the target audience. Abdul-Raof (2001) points out that many translations of the Qur'an are characterised by the overuse of difficult and rare combinations of words, which clearly indicates that they are source-language oriented. This adherence to the source language style has sometimes resulted in changing the intended meaning. It is extremely important to mention here that it is difficult to stick to the source language style and texture because there is no "perfect match between languages" (Nida and Taber 1969: 5).

One of the thorniest issues that any translator of the Quran faces is the translation of God's names. Ibn Ṣuṭaymīn (1994) states that these are proper nouns used to refer to God Himself and they are also attributes in that they have a meaning. In other words, these names denote some of His powers. These names are of a sensitive nature since one of the pillars of Muslims' faith is to believe in God and to believe that He has the best of attributes. Muslims are encouraged to use these names in their prayers and supplications. One of the principles that is related to God's attributes is that these attributes and names cannot be likened to any of His creation. Translators in their endeavour to adhere to this principle use modifiers like 'all' and the superlative for in relation to God, so as to distinguish human attributes from those ascribed to God. In this regard, Saheeh international (1997: i) after stating in the introduction that the translation of God's names is "an impossibility", go on to say that:

for even in Arabic they cannot represent more than an approximation limited by human understanding. To any description given by Allah of Himself in human terminology, the mind is required to apply the concept of absoluteness and perfection befitting Him. Ibn Taimīyyah stated concisely that true belief in Allah (i.e., the correct Islamic 'aqeedah of Ahl as-Sunnah) includes belief in whatever is described in His Book (the Qur'ān ) or through His Prophet (Muhammad) ﷺ— belief that is free from distortion<sup>1</sup>, suspension<sup>2</sup>, qualification<sup>3</sup> or comparison<sup>4</sup>. The same can be said for those aspects of the unseen, such as Paradise and Hellfire, which are beyond the limits of human language and human Imagination.

Generally speaking, names, divine or otherwise, in the Quran are not easy to transfer into the target text language. The translator might transliterate them or might try to find equivalents for them in the Jewish or Christian traditions. Abdul-Raof (2001) criticises the translation of certain

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<sup>1</sup> This is called *تَحْرِيف* (taḥrīf) which is "applying an allegorical meaning which will inevitably be incorrect since it is not based upon knowledge" (Saheeh International 1997: i).

<sup>2</sup> This is *تَعْطِيل* (taʿṭīl), which is translated here, inaccurately perhaps, as 'suspension' and involves "desertion of the concept altogether or denial that Allah would have such an attribute or quality" (Saheeh International 1997: i). This concept is related to *تَفْوِيد* (tafwīd), which literally means 'relegation' which is superficially acknowledging the 'letter' of the attribute while relegating the knowledge of its sense (not its howness) to God.

<sup>3</sup> This is *تَكْيِيف* (takyīf) or "attempting to explain how a certain attribute or quality could be, while such knowledge lies only with Allah" (Saheeh International 1997: i).

<sup>4</sup> This is *تَمْثِيل* (tamṭīl) or supposing that divine attributes resemble those of creation, while Allah has said, "There is nothing like unto Him." (42: 11) (Saheeh International 1997: i).

names which, he argues, should have been transliterated and explained in informative footnotes. One of the examples he cited is Asad's (1980: 917) translation of the following:

{عَيْنًا فِيهَا تُسَمَّى سَلْسَبِيلًا}

[derived from a source to be found therein, whose name is “**seek thy way**”]

While other translators transliterate the name, Asad prefers to translate the name since some exegetes comment on the significance of this name.

Despite their disagreement on whether or not to transliterate proper nouns in the Quran, translators seem to agree that God's names should be translated and should not receive the same treatment as other proper nouns. This stems from the fact that in Arabic and Islamic studies one can observe a clear interest in explaining the meaning of God's names. Books devoted to explaining God's names usually focus on defining these names and drawing a distinction between their standard or dictionary meaning and their meaning when referring to God. Such a distinction is vital as these names are described as “the most beautiful names” or “the best of names”. As such, Muslim scholars agree that these names are attributes of perfection and therefore they do not entail any weakness that may be present when applied to non-divine entities. A crucial issue that Muslim scholars face when explaining these divine names is distinguishing semantically between them. In other words, many of these names are synonyms or to be more accurate “near-synonyms”. According to many scholars of Arabic there is no absolute synonymy in Arabic (cf. section 5.4) so there must be a difference between seemingly synonymous items. This can be supported by the often-cited number of divine names which amounts to 99( for example, this is the view of Ibn Ḥazm (d.1064), a famous Andalusian Muslim scholar, in his book *المحلى Al-muḥalā*, n.d, vol6: 282, see also Al-Ṣabḍ al-Jabbār 2012: 60-64 for a full discussion of the number of divine names). There are scholars who argue that the number exceeds this figure (it is, in fact, the view of the majority of scholars as reported by Ibn Taimīyah 1991 vol3: 332) but no scholar has ever excluded any name just because it is synonymous with another name.

It is important to bear in mind the fact that Allah has warned against the misinterpretation of His names:

{وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا ۖ وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ}

[Q7: 180]

**Saheeh International:** And to Allah belongs the best names, so invoke Him by them. And leave [the company of] those who practice deviation concerning His names. They will be recompensed for what they have been doing.

One form of deviation, states Ibn ʿuṭaymīn (1993), is to misinterpret the meaning of a name or to present it in a manner which makes it closely resemble any of His creations. So, accuracy in rendering these names is of utmost importance. This is why a large number of Muslim scholars have contributed significantly to explaining the meaning of these names in Arabic. This can be in the form of dedicated books or books that focus on exegetical interpretation of the Quran.

Starting with God’s greatest name, i.e. Allah, some translators prefer to use the English equivalent and some prefer to transliterate the name. This can be seen in the translation of the following verse, which is used as an opening verse in almost all Quranic chapters.

{بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ}

[Q1: 1]

**Saheeh International:** In the name of **Allah**, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.

**Pickthall:** In the name of **Allah**, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

**Yusuf Ali:** In the name of **Allah**, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

**Al-Hilali and Khan:** In the Name of **Allah**, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

**Arberry:** In the Name of **God**, the Merciful, the Compassionate

**Asad:** In the name of **God**, The Most Gracious, The Dispenser of Grace

The above example shows some translators’ preference for transliterating God’s name while Arberry and Asad use the English equivalent. It may be that the use of the Arabic word ‘Allah’ is felt by these translators to be alienating to the target audience. Another point which is worth mentioning here is that some translators are not consistent in their translation of this name. So, we find that in one context they transliterate the name while in other contexts they use the English equivalent, which seems to suggest that the context has an impact on the strategy they adopt. Moreover, the above example demonstrates formal overloading, which according to Nida and Reyburn (1981), characterises most translations of the Quran. This can be seen in the use of

rare combinations of words and the adherence to the source text syntax (Abdul-Raof 2001).

The aforementioned example contains two other names of God, i.e. الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān) and الرَّحِيمُ (Al-Raḥīm). The translation of these two names has been analysed extensively by Elewa (2015), who discusses their translation in 50 translations of the Quran. He finds out that most translations fail to reflect their common root form, i.e. رَحِمَ (*raḥim*) ‘to be merciful / show mercy’. What is also interesting is the lack of consistency in the translation of these two names by some translators.

Translating God’s names is even more complicated when we come to translating uncommon names. For example, one of the controversial issues is translating God’s name الصَّمَدُ (Al-Ṣamad) to the point that Abdul-Raof (2001: 34) argues that “there is no agreement whatsoever on the meaning of this emotive expression [...] and there is an excessive over-translation”. This name is sometimes cited as leading to an example of what Dickins et al (2017: 4-7) call “exegetic translation”. There is only one verse in which this name is mentioned:

{ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ }

[Q112: 20]

**Saheeh International:** Allah, the Eternal Refuge.

**Pickthall:** Allah, the eternally Besought of all!

**Yusuf Ali:** Allah, the Eternal, Absolute;

**Al-Hilali and Khan:** "Allah-us-Samad (The Self-Sufficient Master, whom all creatures need, He neither eats nor drinks).

**Arberry:** God, the Everlasting Refuge,

**Asad:** God the Eternal, the Uncaused Cause of All Being.

It seems that the translation of this name defies the best of translators. Ali (1983: 1806) states that this name is difficult to translate. Similarly, Asad (1980: 985) explains in a footnote that this name subsumes many meanings and his translation is a mere approximation. AbdelWali (2007) regards the translation of الصَّمَدُ (Al-Ṣamad) as a manifestation of translation loss in the Quran. Translators have failed, he adds, to find a generic name which is parallel to the Quranic word. This clearly shows that translating God’s names might involve what Newmark (1982) regards as loss in semantic content.

Having studied a number of books on God’s names, one can notice two important issues.

First, a significant number of these names are synonyms, not in the sense that they express the same concepts but in the sense that they share important aspects of meaning that render them semantically closely related. In other words, technically speaking, they might be termed near-synonyms. Another important issue that books on divine names address is the multiplicity of meanings that they indicate. In fact, the very nature of God's names makes them noticeably polysemous. That is, the fact that these names when referring to God express attributes of perfection indicates that they are different from when they are used to refer to any non-divine entities. The following paragraphs will address the significance of synonymy and polysemy found in any analysis of God's names and their implications for translation.

Starting with synonymy, one of the features of the Quranic discourse is the presence of (near-)synonymous items. Elewa (2004) in a corpus-based study proves that what many people regard as cases of absolute synonymy are in fact near-synonyms. That is, there is large number of lexical items that despite their apparent identical denotation differ in some aspects when closely examined in relation to the context in which they appear. For example, Elewa (ibid) cites pairs such as *دَنَّبَ* (*danb*) and *إِئْتَمَ* (*'itm*), and *حَسِبَ* (*ḥasib*) and *ظَنَّ* (*ḍann*) which display remarkable semantic similarity, but differ in certain collocational contexts. It is tempting, however, for Quranic exegetes and translators alike to gloss over the fine-grained difference between these near-synonyms.

Such difficulty is compounded when dealing with very sensitive lexical items such as God's names. A large proportion of these names are near-synonyms. This has led lexicographers to discuss these names in great detail. Al Ghamdi (2015) discusses at great length the delicate nature of the differences between near-synonymous root-sharing divine names. Such names include pairs such as *الرَّحْمَنُ* (*Al-Raḥmān*) and *الرَّحِيمُ* (*Al-Raḥīm*) and *الْحَافِظُ* (*Al-Ḥāfiḍ*) and *الْخَفِيفُ* (*Al-Ḥafīḍ*). Although he addresses divine names in general, his analysis is limited to items that share the same root. So, in the case of *الرَّحْمَنُ* (*Al-Raḥmān*) and *الرَّحِيمُ* (*Al-Raḥīm*), he focuses on whether or not translators pay any attention to the difference in their morphological structure. This is based on a well-known principle in Arabic grammar which states that any change in the structure of a word must involve a change in the meaning of that word.

The focus of this thesis will go beyond what Al Ghamdi (ibid) has done. Although this thesis has built on the findings of Al Ghamdi, it will address some general issues that Al Ghamdi has not been able to delve into such as names that are nearly-synonymous while they do not share the same root. Also, Al Ghamdi (ibid) has not spelled out the general strategies (such as using calques and particularizing translations ) adopted by different translators to render divine names.



The current researcher intends to address general strategies that have been exploited by some Quran translators to reflect the true nature of God's names. Moreover, Al Ghamdi (ibid: 180) has minimized the prevalence of polysemic divine names. This has prompted the current researcher to devote a whole section (chapter 6) to address this important issue. This limited focus in Al Ghamdi (2015) has enabled him to cover almost all root-sharing divine names. Considering the general nature of the current researcher's undertaking, covering all divine names in the Quran is an impossibility. Having said that, it is hoped that the specific names selected will truly reflect the different issues that will be in focus. Al Ghamdi (ibid: 282) has spotted many inconsistencies in the translation of divine names. Our findings will be evaluated against his to see whether the same patterns will emerge when a recent translation such as Saheeh International which is the result of a collective effort rather than an individual undertaking is investigated. In the following paragraph we will set out the main issues and points of contention that set this treatise apart from any similar exploration.

While investigating root-sharing divine names in Al Ghamdi's dissertation (2015) is an important aspect of the study of divine names, there is another related issue which has huge implications for translators. This is the fact that many of the names which do not have a common root are (near)-synonyms. For example, الْعَلِيم (Al-ʿAlīm) and الْخَبِير (Al-Xabīr) share many semantic features which make them qualify as (near)-synonyms. According to al-Ġazālī (1987) this pair is (near)-synonymous because the meaning of الْخَبِير (Al-Xabīr) is subsumed under that of الْعَلِيم (Al-ʿAlīm) but is different in that it implies knowledge of the ulterior aspects not just the superficial ones. So, in linguistic terms, الْعَلِيم (Al-ʿAlīm) is a hyperonym while الْخَبِير (Al-Xabīr) is a hyponym. Having established the difference between these items, let us see how some translators of the Quran have dealt with this clear distinction. Consider the following verse which has these near-synonymous items juxtaposed.

{ قَالَ نَبَّأَنِي الْعَلِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ }

[Q 66: 3]

**Saheeh International:** He said, "I was informed by **the Knowing, the Acquainted.**"

**Pickthall :** He said: **The Knower, the Aware** hath told me.

**Ali:** He said, "He told me **Who knows and is well-acquainted (with all things).**"

**Asad:** he replied, "**The All-Knowing, the All-Aware** has told me.

**Abdel Haleem:** replied, '**The All Knowing, the All Aware** told me.'

**Al-Hilali and Khan:** He said: "The All-Knower, the All-Aware (Allah) has told me"

**Arberry:** He said, 'I was told of it by the All-knowing, the All-aware.'

We can clearly see that الْعَلِيم (Al-ʿalīm) and الْخَبِير (Al-Xabīr) are treated as almost absolute synonyms by all the above translators. Their renderings revolve around 'all-knowing' and 'all-aware' for الْعَلِيم (Al-ʿalīm) and الْخَبِير (Al-Xabīr) respectively.

It is Ali's translation which seems to use a different kind of procedure first by transposing the Arabic hyperbolic form الْعَلِيم into a relative clause. Also, he tries to make a slight distinction between the near-synonymous items by adding the intensifier adverb "well" and thus indicating a deeper level of knowledge. However, he tones down the meaning of عَلِيم (ʿalīm) by the use of transposition but seems to compensate for this loss by means of a bracketed exegetical note, i.e. '(with all things)'. Ali, however, does not maintain the use of the intensifier "well" on another occasion in the Quran where the name عَلِيم is found in a different verse. Also, the name الْخَبِير (Al-Xabīr) is translated as "well acquainted", which clearly shows that for Ali, it can be used interchangeably, and thus عَلِيم (ʿalīm) and خَبِير (Xabīr) may be considered absolute synonyms.

This raises the issue of consistency, which is worth considering when discussing synonymy in the translation of divine names. Using the above pair, we can notice that some translators display some lack of consistency when translating near-synonymous items. In a manner which resembles Ali's translation, we can see a similar inconsistency in Al-Hilali and Khan's translation. For example, the name خَبِير (Xabīr) is translated as "all aware" on one occasion and "well-acquainted" on another. Moreover, Pickthall, contrary to what one would expect and contrary to his "almost literal" strategy in translating the Quran (Pickthall 1996: ix) displays a similar inconsistency in translating the name عَلِيم (ʿalīm) using different equivalents on different occasions. While he uses "the knower" in the above verse, he uses "the wise" in another instance:

{ وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِي لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَهَا ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ }

[Q 36: 12]

**Pickthall:** And the sun runneth on unto a resting-place for him. That is the measuring of the Mighty, the Wise.

It's not clear whether the context plays any role in favouring the selection of "wise", which Pickthall usually uses for another divine name, namely الْحَكِيم (Al-Ḥakīm). This inconsistency

suggests that some Quran translators are somewhat inattentive to the need for accuracy when translating semantically related names.

This phenomenon is not limited to the above examples. The following divine names are further cases that can be analysed to reveal different aspects of near-synonymy within God's names. This list excludes root sharing near-synonyms as these have been dealt with in Al Ghamdi (2015).

الرب الاله  
الرَّحْمَنُ الرحيم الرووف الودود البر اللطيف  
العلي الكبير الجبار الملك المتكبر العظيم المجيد  
المتكبر السبوح القدوس السلام  
القوي القدير المقيت القهار الجبار المحيط المتين العزيز  
القيوم الواسع الغني  
الكريم البر الجبار الوهاب  
الخالق الباري المصور  
الرزاق الفتاح المقيت  
المولى المستعان النصير الناصر الفتاح المقيت الرقيب الحسيب الشهيد المهيمن الحافظ الحفيظ الوكيل الكفيل الكافي  
الحليم الغفور العفو الكريم التواب  
السميع القريب المجيب  
الشكور الشاكر الحميد  
الحكيم العليم المهيمن البصير المحيط الخبير الحسيب الحكم  
الحي الوارث الصمد الاخر  
الحق المبين الهادي

The list is not exhaustive and could be further expanded upon a closer inspection of the divine names. It can be noticed that there are some names that appear in more than set. This can be attributed to polysemy, which is the second fundamental issue that has to be analyzed when discussing Allah's names. Therefore, the following paragraph will dwell on the issue of polysemy and the implications of translating God's names which display multiplicity of senses. In the Appendix, I have provided a complete list of God's names with all their meanings and possible English translation equivalents.

An example of polysemy is the divine name المُوَيْت (Al-Muqīt), which is present in two of the above-listed sets. They are as follows:

The presence of the name المُقيت (Al-Muqīt) in two sets suggests that the name is clearly polysemous. According to لِسَان الْعَرَب ('Lisān Al-ʿArab', literally 'The Arabs' Tongue': a comprehensive Arabic Dictionary, Ibn Mandūr 1414AH vol2: 90), المُقيت (Al-Muqīt) is explained as meaning حَافِظ ('ḥāfiḍ', literally, keeper or protector). al-Zajjāj (n.d: 48-49) argues in his book تَفْسِيرُ الْأَسْمَاءِ الْحُسْنَى (An Explanation of the Most Beautiful Names) that it means الْمُقْتَدِر ('Al-Muqtadir', capable or competent) but he is quoted in لِسَان الْعَرَب (Lisān Al-ʿArab) as stating that it means حَافِظ (ḥāfiḍ) based on purely linguistic grounds which are not linked to any exegetical interpretation. These multiple senses of God's name المُقيت (Al-Muqīt) are reflected in the translators' choices to render this name. Consider the following:

{ مَنْ يَسْتَعِزُّ بِشَفَاعَةِ حَسَنَةٍ يَكُنْ لَهُ نَصِيبٌ مِنْهَا وَمَنْ يَسْتَعِزُّ بِشَفَاعَةِ سَيِّئَةٍ يَكُنْ لَهُ كِفْلٌ مِنْهَا وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُقِيِتًا }  
[Q4: 85]

**Saheeh International:** Whoever intercedes for a good cause will have a reward therefrom; and whoever intercedes for an evil cause will have a burden therefrom. And ever is Allah, over all things, a **Keeper**.

**Pickthall:** Whoso interveneth in a good cause will have the reward thereof, and whoso interveneth in an evil cause will bear the consequence thereof. Allah **overseeth** all things.

**Yusuf Ali:** Whoever recommends and helps a good cause becomes a partner therein: And whoever recommends and helps an evil cause, shares in its burden: And Allah **hath power over** all things.

**Asad:** Whoever rallies to a good cause shall have a share in its blessings; and whoever rallies to an evil cause shall be answerable for his part in it: for, indeed, God **watches over** everything.

**Abdel Haleem:** Whoever speaks for a good cause will share in its benefits and whoever speaks for a bad cause will share in its burden: God **controls** everything.

**Al-Hilali and Khan:** Whosoever intercedes for a good cause will have the reward thereof, and whosoever intercedes for an evil cause will have a share in its burden. And Allah is **Ever All-Able to do (and also an All-Witness to)** everything.

**Arberry:** Whoso intercedes with a good intercession shall receive a share of it; whosoever intercedes with a bad intercession, he shall receive the like of it; God **has power over** everything.

We can see the above translators making different judgments about how to render the name مُقَيِّت (Muqīt). While Saheeh International, Pickthall and Asad opt for the first sense, i.e. حَافِظ (ḥāfiḍ), Ali, Abdel Haleem and Arberry choose the sense مُقْتَدِر (muqtadir). Al-Hilali and Khan, as is customary with words denoting more than one sense where they do not see compelling reason to do otherwise, render the name with the two possible senses.

## 1.2 Research Questions

Having explained some of the issues involved in the translation of God's names in the different translations of the Holy Quran, several questions arise. These are:

- (1) What challenges do translators of the Qur'an face when rendering God's names?
- (2) What kind of equivalence do translators adopt in translating God's names?
- (3) How do translators deal with divine names that are seemingly synonymous?
- (4) How do translators deal with divine names that are polysemous?
- (5) Does the background of the translator have any impact on their choice of the best target-language equivalent for any of God's names?
- (6) How effective are linguistic, contextual and cultural analyses of God's names in the Quran in determining the intended meaning/s opted for in translation?
- (7) What translation strategy is favoured by Quran translators to render divine names?
- (8) Are translators consistent in their translation of God's names?
- (9) Where translators are not consistent, what factors (if any) contributed to variable choices?

## 1.3 Introductory Literature Review

A discussion of God's names and attributes is to be found in books that deal with Islamic creed. Especially important is Ibn al-Qayyim (undated), who analyses the similarities and differences between names and attributes. He further shows how God's names and attributes are unique in the sense that they do not involve any kind of weakness or imperfection. Ibn Ṣuṭaymīn (1994) discusses the rules for interpreting God's names and attributes. He lists 81 divine names mentioned in the Quran and 18 names mentioned in prophetic traditions. Also, there are dedicated books that explain God's names in the Quran and prophetic traditions. These books usually dwell on the standard meaning of Allah's names followed by their meaning(s) when they

are used to refer to Allah. For example, al-Ġazālī (1987) is considered one of the most frequently consulted books on the meaning of divine names. Interestingly, he tries to elaborate on the fine aspects of the meaning of divine names. This is an extremely useful tool in our analysis as it covers both synonymy and polysemy, which are two important issues to be treated in the proposed research.

Recently, there has been a significant interest in explaining the meaning of God's names. These recent publications usually adopt a slightly different academic style from that of earlier books. They combine what lexicographers have to say on the derivational roots of divine names with the views of Quran's exegetes. They pay attention to the fine-grained differences between the seemingly identical names. Also, since they survey different sources they give a list of all senses associated with God's names. It is important to note these books are primarily intended to familiarize Muslims with the meaning of God's names which Muslims use in their prayers as well as their supplications (cf. al-Badr 2008, al-Jalīl 2009, Al-Ṣabd Al-Jabbār 2012).

In translation studies, Elewa (2015) in his book on Islamic translation analyses the features of translating theology. He touches on the issue of translating God's names and attributes. He states the conditions that must be kept in mind when translating these names. He concludes his discussion of Islamic theology with a list of 99 divine names and their equivalents in English.

Mohamed (2012) argues for a change in Newmark's (1988) model of translation due to the sensitive nature of translating Allah's attributes. He tries to integrate what he calls an Islamic approach into the semantic-communicative approach proposed by Newmark. That is, any translation that does not adhere to the communicative (i.e. allegorical) or semantic (i.e. involving affirmation) approaches will be considered deviant. These deviant or inappropriate translations are deemed so because they are in conflict with the Islamic principles of interpreting Allah's attributes. His examples generally focus on cases where literal (or semantic) translation does not reflect the true nature of the attribute.

Books that deal with translation problems in the Quran usually make mention of the problems of rendering selected divine names. Finally, there are the dictionaries that deal with Islamic terms. These dictionaries provide Arabic-to-English translations of God's names irrespective of the contexts in which they are mentioned.

## 1.4 Research Methodology

This study will be descriptive in nature. Descriptive translation studies as defined by Holmes (1988: 71) “describe the phenomenon of translating and translation as they manifest themselves in the world of our experience”. Toury (1995: 1) redefined such studies to include “carefully performed studies into well-defined corpuses or set of problems”. In this study, the approach will be used which looks upon the process of translation as one of decision-making in which the translator has always to choose between “a number of alternatives”, as stated by Levy (1967: 1171). Descriptive studies also pay special attention to the notion of norms, which are in the descriptive literature perceived as Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997: 113) indicate, as “reflections of the translation practice which typifies the translations produced by a certain translator”.

Descriptive studies are classified according to their focus which may be product-oriented, function-oriented or process-oriented. This study will be predominantly product-oriented, which means it will concern itself with existing translations. Holmes (2000: 176) explains that in product-oriented studies “the starting point ...is the description of individual translations, or text-focused translation description. A second phase is that of comparative translation description, in which comparative analyses<sup>1</sup> are made of various translations of the same text, either in a single language or in various languages”. The current analysis will also be process-oriented, which according to Holmes (ibid: 177) means it will “concern itself with the process or act of translation itself”. In other words, it will address “the problem of what exactly takes place in the “little black box” of the translator’s “mind” as he creates a new, more or less matching text in another language” (ibid).

This study will put to use ‘translation theory’, which is, according to Holmes (2000), a subdivision of pure translation studies (the other being descriptive translation studies). The theoretical wing of pure translation studies is interested in “ using the results of descriptive translation studies, in combination with the information available from related fields and disciplines, to evolve principles, theories, and models which will serve to explain and predict what translating and translations are and will be”(ibid: 177-178). In Holmes’ view (ibid: 178), the designation ‘theories’ may be something of a misnomer since:

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<sup>1</sup> In this regard, van Doorsaler (1995: 251) looks at how corpus selections are motivated and how randomness can be minimized in the comparative model in translation studies. He (ibid) cites a number of case studies in which the methodological diversity in these studies proves that there “is no established way to make a selection for a translation comparison”.

A good share of them, in fact, are not actually theories at all, in any scholarly sense of the term, but an array of axioms, postulates, and hypotheses that are so formulated as to be both too inclusive (covering also non-translatory acts and non-translations) and too exclusive (shutting out some translatory acts and some works generally recognized as translations) (ibid) .

In our analysis, we shall benefit from various theories from different disciplines. We concur with Farghal and Almannā's view (2015: 14) that a competent translator (or researcher) is not “expected to restrict himself/herself to one translation orientation and/or paradigm, but rather travel among them in search of informed solutions to problems”. In the same vein, Pym (2010: 166) offers this sensible piece of advice:

When theorizing, when developing your own translation theory, first identify a problem — a situation of doubt requiring action, or a question in need of an answer. Then go in search of ideas that can help you work on that problem. There is no need to start in any one paradigm, and certainly no need to belong to one.

The present study will be restricted to a list of selected names of God mentioned in the Quran. These 81 divine names can be obtained using *Ibn ʿuṭaymīn* (1994). Another valuable source is مفردات غريب القرآن “A dictionary of uncommon words in the Holy Quran” by al- ʿaṣṣḥānī. However, the list of items derived from the above sources will be examined first in Arabic dictionaries in order to capture all possible meanings of each name in the Arabic language in general before moving on to the exegetical interpretations of the Quran. Then the translation of these names in a number of the best-known translations will be investigated. These translations are the ones that have acquired popularity not only among researchers but also among different sections of readers.

If this study is to bear fruit, a representative sample of God's names should be selected. Certain guidelines have to be observed in order to pick representative names. We shall take into consideration Luc van Doorslaer's view on representation (1995), which seeks to draw a distinction between quantitative and qualitative aspects of representativeness. Hermans (1999: 70) gives a summary of van Doorslaer's (1995) model of judicious selection;

the quantitative aspect strikes a balance between economy and credibility: the sample should be large enough to be credible in light of the purpose of the exercise, but small



enough to permit appropriate depth. The qualitative aspect is a matter of interpretation and judgement (Hermans 1999: 70).

Although the number of divine names mentioned in the Quran amounts to 81, the study will investigate a reasonable number of names that depict the various strategies employed by translators to reflect the sense(s) of the original text. Also, many names which show a high degree of similarity with other names will be dealt with. Divine names which can have more than one sense will also be scrutinized. Then their translations will be looked to see how translators chose their equivalents. This can be done by examining these names in some of the well-known translations of the Quran. To investigate whether or not these divine names represent genuine cases of disagreement, the list will be investigated in the light of the different exegeses of the Quran to identify the common meanings of these names. The meaning of these names in early Islam can be identified using authentic texts produced during the early centuries of Islam.

Each section of this thesis addressing any issue will start with some theoretical background information. Then this particular issue is going to be analysed in the light of some divine names translations as illustrative examples. The sample of divine names under investigation will not be exhaustive. As van Doorslaer's (1995: 247) has aptly put it that when we are dealing a large corpus (in our case all occurrences of God's names in the Quran), "the scholar need not strive to be exhaustive. In fact, a claim to completeness may even have a negative influence on the depth of the analysis". It should always be borne in mind that this might involve resorting to the random selection principle (cf. *ibid*: 254). However, care has been taken to ensure that randomly drawn samples are "big enough to narrow the gap between 'regular' translational behaviour and possible deviations" (*ibid*: 248).

## 2. Names

### 2.1 Introduction

It is very important to mention at the outset of our discussion of proper names and the nature of naming practices that a lot of ink has been spilt in an attempt to remove the confusion surrounding the concept of names. In investigating names, one can discern some fuzziness and clashing views by looking at the extreme views adopted by philosophers and semanticists like Ryle (1957, cited in Lyons 1977: 222), who argues that “(d)ictionaries do not tell us what names mean - for the simple reason that they do not mean anything”. By contrast, Geach (1980: 53) holds the view that “it is part of the job of a lexicographer to tell us that ‘Warsaw’ is the English word for ‘Warszawa’; and a grammarian would say that ‘Warszawa’ is a Polish word – a feminine noun declined like ‘mowa’”. Commenting on this, Lyons (1977: 222) explains that the situation is more complicated than Geach’s example would suggest. Mussche and Willems (2010: 474-475) argue that traditionally proper names are classified as cultural-specific items or cultural markers. Davies (2003: 72) denies them this status as the translation of proper names poses many problems which are not appropriately addressed in any discussion of culture-specific references.

### 2.2 The Nature of Proper Names

Fawcett (2014: 5) demonstrates how many have a deep-rooted belief in a special link between the signified and the signifier which has culminated in the (over)statement of the comic novelist Terry Pratchett (1989: 132): “All things are defined by names. Change the name, and you change the thing”. In spite of that, Byrne (2011: 16) cites the consensus of onomatologists (scholars of name formation and naming practices) that “proper names can be derived, both semantically and morphologically, from an appellative (or common noun) or some other ‘per-individualizing’ ground form”. Generally, names are of profound importance in the language and as Lehrer (1992: 126) argues, that speakers pass judgements about the appropriateness of names in the same way they judge the grammaticality and well-formedness of other lexical items.

Vermes (2001: 94) explains some inconsistencies in the definitions given to proper names. These definitions do not make clear the distinctions between proper nouns and proper names. In his view (ibid), “(p)roper nouns like ‘Michael’ or ‘Exeter’ form a subclass of the grammatical class of nouns, whereas proper names are simple or composite expressions formed with words from any of the common word classes”. In the words of Huddleston (1988: 96, emphasis original) “(a)lthough a proper name may have the form of a proper noun, as in the case of *John* or *London*, it need not have. Thus, *The Open University* is a proper name but not a proper noun: what distinguishes it from, say, *the older university* is precisely that it is the official name of a particular institution”. Furthermore, “a prototypical proper name is the institutionalised name of some specific person, place, organisation, etc. – institutionalised by some formal act of naming and/or registration” (ibid). Vermes (2001: 94) states that “(a)proper name may of course be constituted of a single proper noun, but it can also be formed with the help of words from any other word class”.

Lehrer (2006: 141,142) sheds light on the English practice of naming in which parents select their children’s names based on personal preferences and some societies take names from the common vocabulary which restricts the use of the name. The reason behind such perceived confusion in the description of proper nouns seems to be the tendency of some authors to “base their definitions on the typical function of these linguistic expressions, which is to refer to, or single out, a unique object or class of objects in the act of communication” (ibid). But as Searle (1975: 138, cited in Vermes 2001: 97) maintains, any name should have a sense and the distinctive description gives rise to that sense. In fact, he further contends that proper names “(f)unction not as descriptions, but as pegs on which to hang descriptions” (ibid). Put another way, Balázs (1963: 51, cited in Vermes 2001: 98) notes that in addition to its stylistic appeal, a proper name may be linked to definition-like synonym. Vermes (2001: 98) draws the conclusion “that proper names are not empty marks for reference, but they may also carry certain added meanings and that although these meanings may be imprecise, they are nonetheless an important and inalienable property of the proper name”.

According to Carrier (1971: 237), John Stuart Mill (1858: 21), is credited with the idea that a proper name denotes an individual having certain unique characteristics but this very name does not connote any quality this individual has. This is echoed by Ryle (1957: 248, quoted in Carrier 1971: 237) who argues that “(p)roper names are arbitrary bestowals, and convey nothing true and nothing false, for they convey nothing at all”. If all names match Ryle’s description, then why, in the field of imaginative literature, do examples abound of many telling (loaded)

names which readily lend themselves to translation? (Vermes 2001: 109). Vermes (ibid: 109-110) cites the example of Shakespeare's play 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' in which "names are not mere tools of reference (in the technical sense of the term), they also convey information about the referents' characteristic features".

Lyons (1977: 221-222) talks about English names as etymologically traceable to some common vocabulary such as the name 'John', which comes from a Hebrew name which roughly means 'God has been Gracious'. He calls this (ibid) the "etymological meaning of the name" and this can be applied to synchronically as well as diachronically motivated interpretation of names. Later, Lyons, however, (1995: 295) argues that names logically refer to entities and in some languages such as English do not have any descriptive content. This might give the false impression that translating names is all plain sailing, but this is not always the case, "inasmuch as it can turn out to be very troublesome in practice and needs very sensitive decision making on the part of the translator within the translation process" (Pour 2009: 1).

Vermes (2001: 100) describes the view that proper names are easy to translate as "too simplistic" because they are names which are descriptive in nature and are not at all some stock names. Some researchers believe that proper names lack meaning, a belief which is supported by the lack of any need to translate them when transferred into another language (Vendler 1975: 117, quoted in Vermes 2001: 90). This argument is supported by the fact that proper names are not normally listed in dictionaries (ibid) (although Collins English Dictionary is an exception) and by the widespread practice of making no changes to them in translation (Sciarone 1967: 86, quoted in Vermes 2001: 90). Lehrer (1992: 126-127) adopts a hybrid position and makes a distinction between "name inventories, such as Paul, Evelyn, George, (which) have no meaning, although their application to individuals (persons, animals, and things) (and which are) strongly constrained by cultural norms...(and) (p)roper names like the Tenth Street Dance Works or the Social Sciences Building (which) appear to have meaning because the names (or at least parts of them) are drawn and/or constructed from the common vocabulary, and those words do have meaning". Lehrer (ibid: 127) hastens to add that it is difficult to distinguish between a pure description and a name which is based on a description.

Proper nouns "can bear many connotative meanings that result from their history, ownership, geographic, social affiliations and so on" (Sato 2016: 1). Lyotard (1992: 319, quoted in Sato 2016: 1) asserts that names function as a "rigid designator" of the textual context. In addition, "(t)hey can act as an anchor that designates the text's identity regardless of whether it is about its genre, theme, or cultural context" (ibid). Gardiner (1954: 30) argues that being a word means

that a proper noun has two sides to it: sound and meaning. He further contends (ibid: 40) that “(p)roper names are identificatory marks recognizable not by the intellect, but by the sense”. However, he makes a distinction between a pure proper name and an impure one with the pure proper name being “wholly arbitrary and totally without significance - unlike Oxford or Mont Blanc” (ibid: 42).

Falih (2009: 42) makes a distinction which is short of being unequivocal between “a) names that are arbitrarily given to people, places, and things in general, e.g: John, Alice, Dr Robert Williams, ...and b) proper nouns - nouns that have been converted into proper names, such as: the Natural Museum, British Airways, the Labour Party, etc.”. According to Vermes (2001: 100), proper names can have both referential as well as attributive functions, and this quality perfectly fits God’s names. So, in this sense, it is better to describe God’s names as ‘proper names’ rather than the more common ‘proper nouns’. When we translate the phrase أسماء الله الحسنى (‘Allah’s most beautiful names’) into English we say ‘names’ not ‘nouns’, despite the fact that the phrase أسماء الله (Allah’s ‘asmā’, God’s names) is capable of denoting both ‘nouns’ and ‘names’ because they are names (‘designations’) and nouns in the grammatical sense of the word. They can also be described as صفات (‘ṣifāt’, qualities or characteristics) but in the grammatical sense they are not ‘adjectives’ since nouns in Arabic grammar behave differently from adjectives. This is a general statement because Arabic grammarians since the time of Sībawayh, according to Naḥlah (1994: 3) have differed over whether adjectives are a separate part of speech independent of nouns or not. Some contemporary Arabic linguists like Ḥassān (1994: 87) criticize the long-held classification of Arabic parts of speech (i.e. nouns, verbs and prepositions) and propose treating adjectives as a separate part of speech based on both their form and function. Having said that, they all agree that differences exist between nouns and adjectives. For example, al-Dīb (2017: 186-188) states that, in light of what Sībawayh has put forward, nouns can be described as fixed, timeless, entities.

Lehrer (1992: 138) reasons that since “(w)ords in the common vocabulary enter into a variety of lexical relationships, such as synonymy, hyponymy, antonymy, etc., it seems that some names do exhibit something like synonymy, in that alternative expressions can denote the same entity. For example, World War II can also be referred to as The Second World War, although Second Street cannot be called Street II”.

Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 86) define proper nouns as “basically names, by which we understand the designation of specific people, places and institutions”. Sometimes it is not easy to distinguish proper nouns from common nouns, for as Särkkä (2007) explains, “(t)here are

borderline cases that could be classified either way. Also, a given noun may change category depending on how it is used... Personal proper names used metaphorically may turn into common names: He thinks he is a Napoleon”. Greenbaum and Quirk note (1990: 87) that names (as a type of proper noun) are marked in writing by the use of initial capitals, a device which can be exploited to make certain concepts such as Nature and Truth stand out. Names are also syntactically different from common nouns in that they cannot, as names in English, be preceded by a determiner or have the plural marker as in ‘John Smith’ not ‘the John Smith’ (where they are preceded by a determiner, e.g. ‘the John Smith that we met yesterday’, they are better regarded as a type of common noun). In some languages like German and Spanish, proper names can be preceded by the definite article, as in *die Anna*, *der Hans* and Spanish *La Señõrita Lopez* (Lehrer 2006: 141-142). Family names can, however, have the above markers as in ‘the Obamas’.

Särkkä (2007) gives a number of ‘co-occurrence’ restrictions that characterize proper nouns such as their tendency not to “accept restrictive adjectives or restrictive relative clauses”. Instances that appear to violate this principle such as the sentence “Old Shakespeare felt the closeness of his death” are dismissed as the proper noun is used, grammatically speaking, as a common noun (ibid). Also, the neutralization of opposition between definite and indefinite is another defining feature of proper nouns (ibid). (i.e. “a given proper noun either invariably takes zero article as in *John*, *London*, or invariably takes the definite article as in *the Strand*, *the Haymarket*, *the Queen Elizabeth*”). Those that seemingly show variance such as “*the John I was talking about* is an instance of John being used as a common noun” or in purely semantic terms “a common noun homonymous with a proper noun” (ibid, emphasis original). Perhaps more relevant to our discussion of the translation of God’s names is the attachment of some epithets in the names of some historical figures such as ‘Richard the Lionheart’. Vermes (2001: 107) comments on such epithets stating that “(h)ere the epithet is clearly a description of some characteristic of the person and is to be treated as such: it needs to be translated into the TL”.

Särkkä (2007) provides an analysis of the internal structure of personal nouns as follows<sup>1</sup> :

- 1- central personal names (those names whose syntactic structure are not further analysable such as *Charles*, *(the) Amazon* ...These “are transported wholesale into the target language”)

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<sup>1</sup> The fourth type which has to do with names that are part of an idiom such as ‘carrying coal to Newcastle’ has been intentionally left out.

2- central personal names plus a descriptor that specifies their semantic category (such as *the Republic of Finland*). Usage can reveal whether a given descriptor is temporary or that “the appellative part is an integral element of the whole name”. Either way, the descriptor part is usually translated.

3. common nouns converted into nouns that have the distinguishing characteristics of proper nouns (such as *Kansallisarkisto '(Finnish) National Archives'*).

It seems that most (if not all) God’s names belong to the third category since they are common nouns or nominalized adjectives which have been turned into names which have the distinguishing features of proper nouns. Falih (2009: 52) explains that nouns which have been converted (partially or completely) into names are characterized by being “so heterogeneous and syntactically varied...problematic and challenging area”. Some of these nouns have been given five different renderings depending on the translation technique utilized. Consider the following example:

Hyde Park حديقة الهايد<sup>1</sup> ، ساحة الهايد، منتزه الهايد، الهايد بارك

In Falih’s view (ibid: 51), one of the contributing factors to incongruence between translators is the absence of an authoritative body to find appropriate equivalents for proper nouns. This “leaves the door open for individual translators to work out what they would think the most suitable, possible translation equivalents (are)”.

It is no wonder, then, that in the translation of God’s names there is “no one single process or technique (that) should be expected to apply evenly and effectively to them all” (ibid). Therefore, “one cannot aspire more than to try to alleviate the ‘damage’ and reduce it to the minimum by adopting and applying one technique to be used systematically wherever and whenever it is possible” (ibid: 51-52).

Vermes (2001: 104-105) distinguishes between “prototypical names (names without a descriptive content), proper nouns, which supposedly lack any logical content but may carry

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<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the most common translation is حديقة الهايد بارك (lit. ‘the Hyde Park park’!). The use of the Arabic حديقة is not intended to be part of the proper name as Professor James Dickins (personal communication) explains that “the Arabic has a ‘classifier’ حديقة, which is there for stylistic reasons, and also to explain to the reader that this is a park. ‘Hyde Park’ is very well known in Britain, and the fact that it is a park is evident from its name. There is therefore no need for a separate translation (in English) for حديقة.”

several assumptions in their encyclopaedic entries...(and) composite names made up of words from any of the lexical and grammatical word classes: nouns, adjectives, adverbs, even verbs, prepositions, articles, auxiliaries, and so on”. Mussche and Willems (2010: 477) describe prototypical names as conventional names which are usually morphologically non-transparent while (composite) names “present properties that can be interpreted as descriptive features, recalling other words or conferring additional discourse functions”. They argue (ibid: 479) that the two types of names are difficult for a translator to tell apart.

Algeo (1973: 10) argues that it is a universally acceptable that names, syntactically, function like nouns but morphologically they are not always nouns (even some nouns, ironically, are not sometimes morphologically nouns<sup>1</sup>). This means that names do not always have the same patterns that other nouns have. Algeo (ibid: 12-13) lists the most prominent linguistic characteristics of names in English:

ORTHOGRAPHIC: Proper names are capitalized.

MORPHOSYNTACTIC: Proper names have no plural forms.

Proper names are used without articles.

Proper names do not accept restrictive modifiers.

REFERENTIAL: Proper names refer to single unique individuals.

SEMANTIC: Proper names do not impute any qualities to the objects designated and are therefore meaningless.

Proper names have a distinctive form of definition that includes a citation of their expression.

## 2.3 Common Techniques for Proper Names Translations

Zarei and Norouzi (2014: 159) argue that there no hard-and-fast rules for proper names translations and “(t)here is no flexibility about how to translate a name. ...Translators

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<sup>1</sup> There are some names with verb forms in Arabic “such as بحیی and the Yemeni city تعز. The capital of Chad انجمينا (‘N’Djamena’) means ‘we rested’ in Libyan Arabic, while there is a suburb of Khartoum called زفلونا (‘Zagalona’) ‘they threw us away’” (James Dickins, personal communication).



do not always use the same techniques with all the proper nouns of a particular text that they are translating.” Palumbo (2009: 42) argues that an important aspect which translators should exercise is taking control of every stage of the translation process even “down to micro-level decisions regarding, for instance, how foreign names should be represented or transliterated”.

Sato (2016: 1) argues that “(t)here are many factors that affect translation of proper names: phonological, orthographical, morpho-semantic, and pragmatic idiosyncrasies; the accessibility to the target language audience such as recognizability and memorizability”.

Vermes (2001: 2-11) considers the different techniques (or operations) proposed by different scholars for translating names. Despite the elaborateness of their contributions, Vermes (ibid: 2) notes that “none of them is consistently systematic or complete”. Here is a summary of these strategies:

(1) **transference**. This refers to “leaving the name unchanged”. For example, “geographical names which are either without an identifiable or relevant logical content” are usually transferred unless a recognized translation exists” (ibid: 112, 131). Dickins et al’s notion of (2017: 291) ‘cultural borrowing’ which they define as “taking over an SL expression verbatim from the ST into the TT” with some or no alteration, corresponds to Vermes and Newmark’s (1988) transference.

(2) **substitution**. This designates “the translation (that) uses the target language equivalent of the name (German ‘Hans’ for English ‘John’, for example) if the target language offers a conventional equivalent( (2001: 8,113). Dickins et al (2017: 42) argue that the use of a standard indigenous equivalent should be the translator’s first port of call unless there are some ulterior motives for not doing so (such as the “need to introduce a greater degree of exoticism into the TL text than would be conveyed by the use of the standard ...TL equivalent”). In addition, Falih (2009: 52) suggests that some recognized equivalents should be best avoided if they have become obsolete or have fallen out of favour such as the use of الفُرس (‘al-Furs’, the Persians) to refer to Iranians. Similarly, Lyons (1977: 222) explains how the existence of a well-established equivalent does not always warrant its use. He adds (ibid) that “(a)n Englishman named James will not normally be addressed or referred to in French as Jacques, but as James: the very Englishness of his name, as it were, is an essential part of it”. Also, the name will clearly sound French and will be subjected to the French phonological system as such it becomes integrated as a French word (ibid).

(3) **transliteration or naturalization.** “SL graphological units<sup>1</sup> are replaced by TL graphological units” (Catford, 1965: 66).

(4) **(semantic) translation.** This is a common process by which “the denotative meaning and perhaps some connotative meanings of the original are rendered in a target language form”. For example, “(t)itles are mostly translated, obviously, because a title is normally descriptive of its referent and must therefore carry logical information” (Vermees 2001: 8, 131).

(5) **modification or total transformation.** This denotes the practice of “choosing for the SL name a TL substitute which is logically, or conventionally, unrelated, or only partly related to the original” (ibid: 115). This is “generally made necessary by the absence of some encyclopaedic assumptions in the TL which the name carries with it in the SL, and the absence of which from the target text would result in the loss of some relevant contextual implications in the given context” (ibid: 129).

(6) **zero translation (or omission)** This involves “leaving out the name or part of it” (ibid: 115). For Baker (2011: 43), omission “may sound rather drastic, but in fact it does no harm to omit translating a word or expression in some contexts” if no vital meaning is conveyed by the omitted item. However, for Levý, the famous Czech translation scholar, any contraction or omission is ‘immoral’, and the translator is responsible for “finding a solution to the most daunting of problems” (cited in Bassnett 2002: 31).

(7) **supplementation** This is carried out by incorporating an added element or a parenthetical note (ibid: 9).

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<sup>1</sup> This is not to be confused with Catford’s graphological translation in which the “SL graphology of a text is replaced by equivalent TL graphology” (1965: 62-65). The displayed image (see below) shows an exaggerated form of graphological translation in which some Arabic letters of the word عربي are superimposed on their English equivalent. This “translation does some slight violence to Arabic writing conventions, but apart from that, the translation equivalences can all be justified by relation of English and Arabic letters to similar features of graphic substance” (ibid). This technique is rather limited in its applicability since the straight lines, sharp angles, curves and circles of the two languages are difficult to reconcile.

*Arabic Arabic*

(8) **generalization**. This is done when names which have narrow meanings are turned into names with broad meanings.

Similarly, Coillie (2014) expands the list and dwells on the various strategies to translate names discussing their relative merits and/or demerits. Here is a summary of his ten strategies:

**(1) Non-translation, reproduction, copying**

Translators “leave foreign names unchanged” which “can have an alienating effect on the reader”. Also, the loss is greater when names are supposed to carry certain connotations (ibid: 125).

**(2) Non-translation plus additional explanation**

“The translator can add explanations, either in the form of a note or in the text itself”. This has the advantage of narrowing the gap between the target reader and source-text reader. The translator has to take a prudent approach not to make their explanations “too obtrusive or unwieldy”. Explanation of the connotation of a name adds to the target reader’s knowledge of another language but if a pun is involved any explanation diverts the attention and the witty play on words is no longer amusing (ibid: 125-126).

**(3) Replacement of a personal name by a common noun**

The translator “replace(s) a proper name by a common noun that characterizes the person. Quebecois pop singer Roch Voisine becomes a ‘handsome male singer’ in the Dutch translation of Frank Andriat’s ‘La Remplaçante’”. This is used when the translator tries to maintain contextual equivalence but may be at a loss for target language names that evoke source language associations, ibid: 126).

**(4) Phonetic or morphological adaptation to the target language**

Phonetic adaptation or transcription pays attention to sounds rather than letters and morphological adaption focuses on morphological patterns in the target language regardless of their correspondence to sounds. This has the advantage of making names easier to read but it conceals the meaning of transparent names (Balci n.d: 9-10).

#### **(5) Replacement by a counterpart in the target language or exonym**

An exonym is a name “bestowed from the outside, and in a language from the outside” (Woodman 2007: 11). Examples are ‘Egypt’ in English for the Arabic مِصْر (Miṣr) or التِّمَسَا (Alnimsā) in Arabic (ultimately<sup>1</sup> from Turkish Nemçe, Abdur Rahim 2011: 212) for Austria . Dickins et al (2017: 42) refer to these target language counterparts as ‘standard indigenous equivalents’. Many exonyms are, to a greater or lesser degree, recognisable as forms of the original endonym such as English ‘Munich’ for German ‘München’ (endonym is “ a name used by a group of people to refer to themselves or their region (as opposed to a name given to them by others), Nordquist 2020<sup>2</sup>,. For example Syrians refer to their capital as الشَّام (Al- šām), which is usually a name designated for the whole area of ‘Greater (historical) Syria’. Using exonyms has the advantage of “integrat(ing) the names into the target language culture, enabling them to function in a comparable manner” (Coillie 2014: 127).

#### **(6) Replacement by a more widely known name from the source culture or an internationally known name with the same function**

Accordingly, the “function of the name remains roughly the same. However, the translator picks a relatively more famous and international name without losing the ‘foreign feeling’ of the name” (Balcı n.d: 10).

#### **(7) Replacement by another name from the target language (substitution)**

This is the same as the previous strategy but the functional equivalent is sought in the target language. Likewise, when using this strategy, the translator has to bear in mind the “referential semantic elements and connotations relevant to the context”. Also, the translator must be wary of introducing unintended effects (Coillie 2014: 127). When we replace English ‘Adam’ with Arabic آدَم (Ādam), we are substituting the English name with its Arabic functional match.

#### **(8) Translation**

This is used with names with specific connotations by reproducing these connotations in the target language. The translation evokes the same images and the

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<sup>1</sup> We might beg to differ with this view and point to its ultimate Proto-Slavic origin in which the word meant something like “someone unable to speak [Slavic]”, [cf. <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Reconstruction:Proto-Slavic/n%C4%9Bm%D1%8C%D1%8C>].

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from [<https://www.thoughtco.com/exonym-and-endonym-names-1690691>]

ensuing effects in the target language. So, “the functions are preserved” (Coillie 2014: 127-128). This method can improve the readability of a text because it is not “too foreign” for the target audience (Balcı n.d: 11)

#### **(9) Replacement by a name with another or additional connotation**

This is done when unintended effects would emerge if literal translation was applied. “The new name sometimes brings some other of the person's characteristics to the fore” but “the translator who adds a connotation to a name that is originally meaningless takes things one step further” (Coillie 2014: 128-129)

#### **(10) Deletion**

This is used as a last resort in cases where it is impossible to salvage the significance of the name especially when it involves an artistic play on words and the retention of the name might disrupt the flow of the text (Coillie 2014: 129 and Balcı n.d: 12). Särkkä (2007) considers the replacement of a name by a paraphrase as akin to deletion but is used to mitigate the effects of name-deletion.

Lyons rightly claims (1977: 223) that “there is no single principle which determines their (i.e. names’) translation from one language into another. Even institutionalized or recognized equivalents might be unique in their reference. He cites the example of French (ibid) in which ‘Londres’ will be the recognized equivalent for London, the capital of Great Britain. Other namesakes or cities bearing the same name (e.g. ‘London’ in Ontario, Canada) will not be rendered by ‘Londres’ in French.

Vermes (2001: 137) argues that processing effort plays a huge role in adopting a certain technique in translating names and “a reasonable translator will consider a different solution only when the gains in effects would probably outweigh the losses caused by the increase of processing effort”. Falih (2009: 52) argues against the undue attention given to technical aspects in translating names at the expense of seeking a more accurate, well-established translation equivalent.

It is important to bear in mind that there is no one uniform way of translating names across different cultures. Lehrer (2006: 144) gives the example of ‘White House’, the United States presidential residence, which “is translated into French as *La Maison Blanche* and German as *Weisshaus*. But in Japanese, it is only transliterated into Japanese orthography”.

In a nutshell, the decision-making process involved in translating names is of a quite complicated nature. A number of factors control this decision. The overriding factor seems to be “the role (the meanings, referential as well as conceptual) of the proper name in the SL culture, and in the SL text... (and) (i)n this process there are no automatic solutions, in the sense that each translation situation requires an individual solution” (Vermees 2001: 117,118).

## 2.4 Arabic Translation of الأَسْمَاء (al-’asmā’) or Proper Nouns

Arabic grammarians disagree on the derivation of the word اسم (‘ism’, name or ‘noun’). Ibn al-Anbārī (2003 voll: 8) explains that the Basra School of Grammar believes it is derived from سُمُو (‘sumū’, lit. ‘highness’ or ‘elevation’) while the Kufa School derives it from the word وَسْم (‘wasm’, ‘brand’ or ‘mark’). Interestingly, Byrne (2011: 15) suggests a similar ‘uncertain’ derivation for the Hebrew term for a name שֵׁם (*shem*). He illustrates (ibid) that “it is linked with the root ‘to be high’” or from a root meaning “to brand or to mark”.

Translators from or into Arabic differ in their treatment of proper names. This is partially dependent on the type of name in question. Falih (2009: 44-45) gives a summary of the main strategies used:

- 1- **wholesale transportation of proper names** either by transliteration or transcription (such as John جون and Marble Arch ماربل آرج).
- 2- **Arabization** by imposing the Arabic phonological/orthographic patterns on imported names (such as Spain اسبانيا and Switzerland سويسرا<sup>1</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> It is doubtful, I presume, that these are Arabic patterns since they do not conform to any known morphological template. James Dickins (personal communication) has furnished me with a more fitting example, “dating from Arab Spain, is the name طُلَيْطِلَة (‘ṭulayṭilah’, Spanish ‘Toledo’ from Latin ‘Toletum’ – Latin was spoken in Spain before it developed into Spanish). The word ‘Toletum’ is apparently of ultimate Celtic origin; <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Toledo#Etymology>]; [https://www.etymonline.com/word/toledo#:~:text=city%20in%20Spain%2C%20famous%20from,%2C%20from%20to%20hill.%22].

Arabic طُلَيْطِلَة (ṭulayṭilah) shows a number of elements of Arabization: 1. Its recognisably diminutive (تَصْغِير) pattern 2- فُعَيْلَة. The use of the ة, where the Spanish has a final ‘o’ (and the Latin a final ‘um’); 3. The ‘reduplicative’ pattern in which ط, ل are repeated (cf. أَلْف and أَلْف).”

**3- a mixture of transportation and translation.** This is usually applied to extended proper names (central personal names plus a descriptor such as Queen Elizabeth (الملكة اليزابيث)). Falih (ibid: 46) notes that not all descriptors (accompanying epithets or titles) are translated. Common cases of transliterated or transcribed descriptors include ‘Dr.’<sup>1</sup> الدكتور, ‘Lord’<sup>2</sup> اللورد, ‘Sir’ السير, ‘Senator’ السيناتور, and ‘General’ الجنرال. Other descriptors can be either transcribed or translated and are equally admissible as a translation couplet<sup>3</sup>, such as ‘Prof. Crystal’ البروفيسور كريستال or الأستاذ الدكتور كريستال, ‘Captain Cook’<sup>4</sup> القبطان or الكابتن or الرائد برادلي or الميجور ‘Major Bradley’ and ‘الريان كوك’. Falih (2009: 49-50) notes that some descriptors receive a seemingly baffling treatment. For example, the descriptor ‘new’ in ‘Papua New Guinea’ can be either transcribed or translated whereas the ‘new’ in ‘New Zealand’<sup>5</sup> cannot be translated.

**4- replacement with target language recognized equivalents** which bear no resemblance to source language names (such as ‘February’<sup>7</sup> شباط, ‘Bible’<sup>6</sup> الانجيل).

**5- word-for-word translation** as applicable to ordinary words (such as ساحل العاج for ‘Ivory Coast’ and جمهورية افريقيا الوسطي for ‘Central African Republic’).

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<sup>1</sup> If Dr. refers to a doctor of medicine (MD), in contrast to a Ph.D doctor, the descriptor can be translated as الطبيب (Medical Doctor).

<sup>2</sup> Sometimes this is translated as النبل (‘al-nabīl’, the honorable).

<sup>3</sup> ‘Translation couplet’ is a term used by Newmark (1988: 83) to “refer to the combination of two translation procedures for one unit”. In this context, it refers to two translation procedures which are equally applicable whether or not they are used in harness with each other”.

<sup>4</sup> قُبطان (qubṭān) is an Arabic loanword from Turkish ‘kaptan’ (ultimately from Latin caput ‘head’) (Abdur Rahim 2011: 163).

<sup>5</sup> A possible explanation is the integration of ‘new’ into the name and the awkwardness of detaching it. In ‘New Guinea’, however, the descriptor is felt to be more genuinely descriptive of that country and as such ‘real’ descriptor.

<sup>6</sup> الإنجيل (Al-‘injīl) is derived from the Greek word εὐαγγέλιον (euangélion), which means الخُلوَان (al-ḥulwān) or البشارة (‘al-biṣārah’, a gift given to someone who brings good news’ or simply ‘good news’). However, it has become fully integrated into Arabic that it has a recognised Arabic word pattern (‘ifṭīl’).

<sup>7</sup> شَبَاط (šubāt) is a Syriac name for a month in the Assyrian calendar which is commonly used in Levantine Arabic. شَبَاط (šubāt) is the Arabized form of the Syriac عَصِد (transliterated šbāt) (cf. <http://www.assyrianlanguages.org/sureth/dosearch.php>).

Falih (2009: 45) asserts that the practice of transferring names from English into Arabic is characterized by tremendous variation and inconsistency and no strategy seems to be operational on all names of a particular type let alone names of different types. For example, some personal names of prophets have conventional or recognized equivalents in Arabic such as ‘Abraham’ إبراهيم, ‘Joseph’ يوسف, and ‘David’ داود. A different procedure (transcription or transliteration) is used when the same names are used to refer to non-sanctified individuals such as ‘David Hume’ ديفيد هيوم, ‘Abraham Lincoln’<sup>1</sup> ابراهام لينكون, and ‘Joseph Conrad’ جوزيف كونراد. In a similar vein, Falih (ibid: 48) explains how descriptors in geographical names are usually translated such as ‘North Korea’ كوريا الشمالية and ‘South Korea’ كوريا الجنوبية but, quite ironically, when these same descriptors are applied to the names of US States, such as Dakota and Carolina, the descriptors are transcribed/transliterated. This might be linked to Falih’s argument (ibid: 48), that the less familiar the name, the more susceptible to inconsistency in its rendition and more likely to pose some difficulty for the translator. An example to consider, Falih (ibid) adds, is the discrepancy among translators in the transfer of ‘Papua New Guinea’ into Arabic, which yields غينيا الجديدة and بابوا نيو غينيا, غينيا بابوا الجديدة, بابوا غينيا الجديدة.

Transliteration of Arabic names which might appear to be a straightforward process strikes us as a bit complicated. Aziz points out (1983: 83) that translators look down on transliteration of proper names as a task which “does not merit much thinking” and this has led to whimsical and haphazard representation. Dickins et al (2017: 42) discuss at length the practice of transliterating Arabic names into English, which exemplifies the intricate nature of cultural transportation. Using a system-based transliteration in the view of Dickins et al (2017: 42) has the advantage of “allow(ing) the reader to reconvert the English back into Arabic script”, but such a style is usually confined to academic circles. Also, Dickins et al (ibid) criticize transliteration systems as they “may give a stronger sense of the exotic than is appropriate for the context” (see ‘Foreignizing Translation’; section 4.7).

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<sup>1</sup> Although the second ‘l’ in Lincoln is a silent (empty or dummy) letter in English, some transliterate it in Arabic as لِنْكُولِن (Linkūlin). This is reminiscent of what Dickins et al (2017: 42) refer to as an ‘ad-hoc approach’ to transliteration, in which the transliterated form is identical or bears strong resemblance to the forms it assumes in English. However one might argue that لِنْكُولِن (Linkūlin) is the transliterated form because it focuses on the *letters* of the original form rather than لِنكون, which can be described as the transcribed form since it tries to mirror the *sounds* of the word (to a reasonably satisfactory degree).



The second type of transliteration is referred to by Dickins et al (ibid) as the ad-hoc approach, in which ordinary letters are used and no strange symbols are involved such that “the transliterated form looks more like an English word”. A caveat regarding this approach is that “the transliteration adopted may suggest a pronunciation of the word in English that is very far from the pronunciation of the Arabic original” arising from the differences between the two phonological systems (ibid). A lesser-known transliteration approach briefly discussed by Dickins et al (ibid) is ‘transliteration-type equivalents’ such as ‘Amman’ for عَمَّان (ʿammān). This category seems to be inclusive of names which have standard equivalents in the TL which emulate their transliterated forms. Matthews (2007: 2), commenting on the variation in transliteration strategies, argues that “(m)uch like translation there are typically many acceptable answers, for example English transliterations of مُحَمَّد (Muḥammad) include Mohamad, Mohamed, Mohammad, Mohammed, Muhamad, Muhamed, Muhammad, Muhammed”. Stalls and Knight (1998: 34) comment on this variation stating that “(t)here are many complexity-inducing factors. Some English vowels are dropped in Arabic writing (but not all). Arabic and English vowel inventories are also quite different – Arabic has three vowel qualities (a, i, u), each of which has short and long variants, plus two diphthongs (ay, aw), whereas English has a much larger inventory of as many as fifteen vowels and no length contrast ... English P and B collapse into Arabic b; F and V also collapse to f.” There are many advocates of the transliteration of names such as Pym (2004: 90-92), who ostensibly argues that it yields “absolute equivalence” or “exact quantitative equality between input and output” and concludes “(p)roper names are untranslatable simply because they do not have to be translated. Exact quantitative equality should thus be analyzed as a special kind of translation”.

An issue which might crop up here and requires careful consideration has to do with the religious ruling on using the Latin alphabet to transliterate the Quran. In a paper, the Council of Senior Scholars (2002: vol 7, 392-394) lists their reasons for the prohibition of Quran transliteration, which is based on the practice of Prophet Muhammad and his rightly guided successors in using the Arabic alphabet to write the Quran. In addition, using Latin (or Romanized) letters is matter of conventional practice which is subject to change and replacement by other alphabetic systems might lead to loss or addition of some letters and one of the important aspects of Islam is the preservation of its Holy Book. This will possibly lead to the rise of new versions (e.g. Hebrew, Syriac) under the pretext of sparing hardship and making it easier to read. A similar ruling was issued by al-Azhar in Egypt (quoted in Wāṣil (2012: 293), which cites the lack of correspondence between Arabic and Latin letters (which might lead to a change in meaning) as a valid reason for outlawing Quran transliteration. It is interesting to note

that scholars in former times did not discuss this issue as al-Zarkašī (vol1 1957: 380) points out, further commenting that he inclines towards forbidding it.

Wāṣil (2012: 353- 364) discusses the two positions on Quran transliterations and concludes that whatever benefits transliteration is likely to bring about are outweighed by its harmful effects<sup>1</sup>. It can be argued, however, that using a standardized system for transliterating (or transcribing, to be more accurate) Arabic can offer a partial solution to the above problems but it has to be said that the existing systems are not always reader-friendly and are only in vogue among some academics. Al-Jabari's finds (2008: 210) that the overuse of transliteration adversely affects the comprehensibility of some Quran translations, and "fails to transfer any meaning" and only "produces nonce-forms".

From a pedagogical and practical perspectives, Dweik and Al-Sayyed (2016) discuss the barriers that translators face and the strategies they use when they translate proper nouns from Arabic into English. Their study reveals the following obstacles (ibid: 186-187):

1. lack of adequate knowledge of religious, historical and political entities and their respective names.
2. being torn between two (or more) possible equivalents. (for example, choosing between 'International Bank'<sup>2</sup> and 'World Bank' as the established equivalent for البنك الدولي)
3. dictionaries being sometimes of no avail in finding a suitable TL equivalent
- 4- lack of expertise in dealing with general translation issues especially those related to proper nouns.
- 5- poor researching skills
- 5- the existence of more than one viable strategy for translating proper nouns and the ambivalence and inconsistency that ensues from this.

Dweik and Al-Sayyed's (2016) study sheds light on common trends among translators of Arabic proper nouns. Translators in their study show a preference for fusing two translation procedures (such as 'transliteration + glossing', 'recognized translation + glossing',

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<sup>1</sup> His original phrase is *در المفاصد مقدم على جلب المصالح* which is a principle in Islamic Fiqh which can be translated as 'warding off harm takes precedence over bringing about (or realizing) any benefits'.

<sup>2</sup> 'World Bank' is the established name of this financial institution. Nonetheless, since the lending arm of the World Bank is the International Bank (cf. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/about>), 'International Bank' is also loosely applicable.

‘transcription + recognized translation’). Using a recognized equivalent or transliteration is the second most popular method.

Before we delve into the subtleties of the translation of God’s names, we need to remind ourselves that we can benefit from many theoretical assumptions put forward by prominent translation theorists such as the limits of context in determining meaning. According to Newmark (1988: 134), context has little to do with translating proper names owing to their fixed nature and this principle indicates that translators have some liberty to translate God’s names out of context or as Newmark (*ibid*) puts it “a translator is not always justified in demanding to inspect the micro- or macro-context before he translates”. This is important to bear in mind as one might be tempted to think that we are focusing on translations without reference to context.

## 2.5 Allah الله vs God

More specifically, perhaps there is no other Arabic proper name whose transfer into English has triggered more heated debates than الله (Allah). The controversy can be traced down to the root of this name. Names in Arabic in terms of morphological derivation are of two types: **جَامِد** (jāmid), non-derived (original or non-generated, having fixed forms and referring to an entity such as **رَجُلٌ** ‘rajul’), and **مُسْتَق** (muštaqq) derived (through affixation, templatic derivation, etc. such as **عَالِمٌ** (ʿālim), **عَلِيمٌ** (ʿalīm), **مَعْلُومٌ** (maʿlūm), these all being derived from **عَلِمَ** ‘ʿalim’) (Fāriḥ 2019: 39). There is a difference of opinion as to whether الله is derived or not. The group that supports its non-derivativeness believes that it is a proper name used to refer to the Deity and its morphological structure is not further detachable or analyzable into any other “minimal distinctive unit of grammar” (see ‘morpheme’ in Crystal 2008: 313). al-Qurṭubī (1964 vol1: 103) explains that the name الله is like the names given to created beings (such as **عَمْرُو** ‘ʿamr’ and **زَيْدٌ** ‘Zayd’) and the **أَلِف** (ʾalif) and **لَام** (lām) are not the definite article and cannot be detached from it as they constitute an indelible part of the stem of the word. According to Al-Ṣabḍ Al-Jabbār (2012: 75), the evidence that lends support to this view is that it is unacceptable to omit **ال** when used with the vocative particle **يَا**<sup>1</sup> as we would normally do with other names such as **الرَّحْمَنُ** (Al-Raḥmān) (بِالرَّحْمَنِ not يَا رَحْمَن). Also, “(t)his word does not have a dual, plural form or possessive, feminine suffixes, which could be attached to it” (Brakhw 2014: 56). Another corroborating

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<sup>1</sup> Its closest English functional equivalent is the particle ‘O’ before a noun which is used sparingly to archaize speech and is offered as a substitute in English translations of languages that utilize the vocative case. But English has no such vocative article in normal communication (cf. Daniel and Spencer 2009: 626-634).

evidence, he (ibid) adds, is the fact that الله is not descriptive in itself (indicative of any quality) but can be described and given an attribute. So we say المَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ ('Al-Malik', 'Al-Quddūs', which are usually translated as 'The King' and 'The Holy' respectively) are two of the names (or attributes) of الله but we cannot say that الله is one of the names of المَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ (Al-Malik, Al-Quddūs).

A counter-argument against this view is proposed by Hasan (2014), who argues that the name الله can be used in a descriptive sense as in { وَهُوَ اللَّهُ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ } [And He is Allah , [the only deity] in the heavens and the earth, Saheeh International Q 6: 3]. Another piece of evidence is their claim that it is an abstract noun اسمٌ مُجَرَّد (ism mujarrad) devoid of any specific reference to an attribute (Hasan 2014). In line with this view, Abdel Haleem (2010: 16) asserts that "Allāh is the name of God in the absolute sense, the only 'personal' name. All other 'beautiful' names are adjectives or attributes". There are some Muslim scholars who subscribes to the non-derivativeness of the name such as al-Šāfi'ī, al-Ġazālī and the famous Arabic grammarian Ibn Mālīk. The other divergent group, however, holds the view that الله is a derived name. They differ among themselves as to as the stem of this name. Some scholars say it is derived from الإِلَهِ ('al-'ilāh', god or that which worthy of being worshipped). The initial هَمْزَةٌ ('hamzah', glottal stop) has been elided for ease of articulation and the first لام (lām) has been merged with the second لام (lām)<sup>1</sup>. The resulting form is الله, (Al-ʿabd Al-Jabbār 2012: 75). Ibn al-Qayyim (n.d: vol. 2: 250) states that this is the right position and it is the view of Sībawayh and the majority of his disciples.

There are two other possible roots put forward by al- 'aṣfahānī (1412AH: 82-83). The first is that الله (Allah) derives from إِلَهِ ('ilah), which means to wonder or speculate because a servant of Allah is left bewildered when he or she reflects on Allah's attributes. A second possible derivation is the verb لَاه يَلُوهُ لِيَاهًا 'yaḥtajib', which means 'to become impossible to see) in reference to the fact that the Quranic verse [Q6: 103] states 'no eyesight can perceive Him'. Another proposed derivation cited by Hasan (2014) is that it is taken from أَلَهُ الرَّجُلُ يَأْلُهُ إِلَيْهِ which means 'to rush to Him in a state of panic and the subsequent giving of refuge by Him'. A final proposal is made by Al-Ḥussain (2008: 82) the مُحَقِّق ('muḥaqqiq', annotator or editor) of al-

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<sup>1</sup> Although إدغام is usually translated as 'assimilation', what happens here does not meet the conditions of assimilation postulated by Crystal (2008: 39): "the influence exercised by one sound segment upon the articulation of another, so that the sounds become more alike, or identical". Here we can loosely refer to it as a 'merger' of successive sounds.

Jurjānī's exegesis, who suggests that it derived from *لاه يليه* meaning 'to rise'. Thomas (2006: 171) points out that most Arab philologists "regarded it as a contraction of *al-ilāh*" (the God).

Ibn al-Qayyim's (n.d : vol 2: 249 and vol 1: 22) asserts that *الله* is a name that encompasses all of His names and exalted attributes<sup>1</sup> and the lack of consensus over the origin of the name is purely theoretical as these diverse roots are simply associated with the name *الله* and as such the name *الله* has not, in actuality, emanated from them. Put in linguistics' terms, these hypothetical roots are cognate with the name.

Nonetheless, the debate on the origin of the name has some ramifications for the translation of the name. Advocates of the non-derivativeness of the name *الله* vehemently oppose its translation into English as 'God'. For example, Şawaḍ (2001) criticises Asad's use of 'God' as an alternative to 'Allah', as *الله* is a proper name and proper names, in his view at least, customarily remain unchanged when transferred into another language. The practice of non-Muslims in translating the name, he explains (ibid), could be interpreted as a form of aversion to Islam. So it is not befitting for a Muslim (like Asad), who has let go of his previous religion and its peculiar means to refer to the Deity, to employ terms which do not belong to his new faith. Al-Nadawī (1417AH: 111) recommends Pickthall's faithful translation since he does not use English 'God' because in his view it cannot encompass the full denotation of the Arabic *الله*. Mohammed (2005), on the other hand, commends Abdel Haleem's opting for 'God' and refusing to follow the much prevailing practice of using 'Allah'. He (ibid) calls it "an astute choice" and "a functional translation", which in his view debunks the misconception that "Muslims worship a different deity than the Judeo-Christian creator". But it has to be pointed out that Abdel Haleem's choice of God to translate *الله* is somewhat perplexing because he uses the same word to translate *إله* ('ilāh), albeit with a small 'g', as 'god', as can be seen below; thus rendering them indistinguishable in pronunciation (though not in writing):

{أَجْعَلِ الْآلِهَةَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا}

[Q38: 5]

**Abdel Haleem:** How can he claim that all the **gods** are but one **God**?

But when *الله* (Allah) and *إله* ('ilāh) cooccur in close proximity as in the following verse, he uses the alternative term 'deity' to translate *إله* ('ilāh). This is, in the opinion of Benothman

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<sup>1</sup> In linguistic terms, *الله* is a hyperonym of all the other divine names as Dickins (personal communication) has concluded.

(2011: 282), a better match for إله ('ilāh) than 'God' which is nonetheless the familiar equivalent for الله (Allah) in English:

{إِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ}

[Q37: 35]

**Abdel Haleem:** Whenever it was said to them, 'There is no deity but God,' they became arrogant.

Ayoub (1984: 40) argues that those writing about Islam in western countries and using 'Allah' to refer to the deity are committing an error of judgment. Rather, "one should employ whatever name for God is appropriate in the language one is using" (ibid). This argument is reiterated by ElShiekh and Saleh (2011: 145), who claim that the use of the transliterated form 'Allah' might have the adverse effect of creating the false impression that Islam is a pagan religion and this is why translators with a hostile attitude towards Islam use 'Allah' thereby "implying that Allah is not God capital 'G' but only the god of Muslims". Murata and Chittick (1994) give a similar explanation that non-Muslims when hearing this word, "naturally think that it means that Muslims believe in a god, Allah, just as the ancient Greeks believed in Zeus, many Hindus believe in Vishnu, and every tribe has its own god. To think of Allah in these terms is to imply that the Jews and/or Christians believe in the real God, but Muslims have their own local god, or a false idea about God".

However, al-Xaṭīb (2002: 41) argues against the use of 'God' because there is no equivalent for الله in English, especially if we adopt the view that the name does not originate from any word. On that account, Muslim scholars delivering mixed Arabic-English Friday sermons occasionally use original Arabic words (including 'Allah') to "escape the confines of the TT ... (which is) an acknowledgement of the lack of complete equivalents in English" (Elimam 2019: 110). Even if the derivativeness of the name is acknowledged, al-Xaṭīb (2002: 41) explains, English 'God' or Spanish 'Dios' cannot embrace the multiple meanings associated with the name. Consequently, he suggests (ibid: 41-42), transliterating the name and adding a bracketed explanation within the text or in the footnotes. Pickthall, similarly, in the introduction to his translation of the Quran explains his decision to "retain the word Allāh, throughout, because there is no corresponding word in English. The word Allāh [...] has neither feminine nor plural and has never been applied to anything other than the unimaginable Supreme Being. I use the word 'God' only where the corresponding word *ilāh* is found in the Arabic" (1994: 31).

El-Magazy (2004: 72) argues that in consideration of the distance between the SL and TL cultures translating or naturalizing a name (like الله 'Allah') has the disadvantage of masking its identity. Another convincing reason to use the transliterated form is that other religions have their own doctrine of the Deity which sometimes are irreconcilably incompatible with Islam, such as the notion of the Trinity in Christianity, which contradicts the Muslims' basic belief system. So the use of the transliterated form compels the TL readers to seek the correct understanding of the name and this undertaking, after all, is in a good cause (ibid). Brakhw (2014: 56) calls the use of 'God' misleading for Muslims who believe in one Supreme Being, which is at variance with the Christians' trinitarian belief. Watt (1994: 4) objects to the use of 'Allah' by Muslims wishing "to distinguish their religion from Judaism and Christianity by saying they worship not God but Allah" putting forward the claim that a worshipped entity "is not a conception but a being". In fact, here the concept is inextricably linked to the being and that is why Muslims venerate the name in its original Arabic form and use it in their prayers and is considered the greatest name to be invoked in times of difficulty.

Elewa (2015: 26) states that if the translation of the name الله "would lead to infringing established worldviews and concepts, s/he (i.e. the translator) would resort to transliteration , however transcription would add some sort of uniqueness and exoticism". Put differently, translating the name narrows the gaps between two cultures and is associated with domestication while transliteration recognizes the diversity of the two cultures and is associated with foreignization (ibid). Not only that, Elewa points out (ibid: 27) that to dissociate from any misrepresentation and to emphasize the uniqueness of some religious figures, some Muslim translators purposefully avoid using some recognized (transliterated) English forms and choose instead to transliterate them in a way that best matches their pronunciation in Arabic such as the name of Prophet نوح 'Nuh' or 'Nooh' as a replacement or a supplement for the more recognized form 'Noah'(e.g. Al-Hilali and Khan use both 'Noah' and 'Nooh'<sup>1</sup>). In consideration of the Muslim belief that the Bible underwent many alterations, Kargozari and Akrami point out (2016: 202) that some translators use the strategy of borrowing in the absence of a "precise equivalent in the target language" as in their transliteration (or transcription) of the Quranic term انجيل as 'Injil' or 'Injeel' (the English functional equivalent of which is 'Gospel').

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<sup>1</sup> al-Nadawī (1417AH: 29-30) attributes the adoption of these recognized forms to the influence of orientalist since these Biblical names are different from their Arabic counterparts in pronunciation and spelling. Compare for example 'John' with the Arabic يحيى (Yahya). Using Biblical equivalents is, according to El-Magazy (2004: 78) the norm rather than the exception. El-Magazy (ibid) intimates that this reflects the influence of early translations of the Quran which were done by Christian missionaries and were earmarked for a Christian readership.

In addition, some translators prefer to keep using ‘God’ instead of ‘Allah’ arguing that TL readers might erroneously assume that الله is the God of Muslims and Arabs only and is not the God that everyone else worships (ibid). In the introduction to the independent revision of Yusuf Ali’s translation (1991: vii), the editors explain that some Arabic words cannot be translated correctly. Accordingly, they have replaced Ali’s original ‘God’ and ‘regular charity’ with ‘Allah’ and ‘zakat’ respectively. In translation terms, this is a case of linguistic untranslatability arising from what Catford (1965: 96) calls ‘oligosemy’, which emerges “if an SL item has a particularly restricted range of meaning” and it is not “possible to match this restriction in the TL”. Parrinder (1965: 13) points out to the deceptive “sentimental associations of Allah in the European's mind, and the notion that he is speaking about another God”. But considering the inimitable nature of the Quran, al-Xaṭīb (2002: 42) urges translators to adhere to the original text with all its terms lest they fall into giving disingenuous misrepresentation of Islam. Even some Christians, Arabs and non-Arabs alike, dispute the use الله or its transliterated form ‘Allah’ in Bible translations. This stems from the confusion surrounding the name الله. Some Christians think Allah is the same God as that of the Bible. Some believe Allah is a god but not God. Some cannot settle on who Allah is.

Thomas (2006: 171) explains how Arab Christians used the word ‘Allah’ well before the advent of Prophet Muhammad and contends that “Allah has been used continuously in Arabic translations of the Bible from the earliest known versions in the eighth century to this day. Thomas (ibid: 172) cites a Pakistani Christian scholar by the name of F.S. Khair-Ullah, (“note the use of Allah as an element in his compound name”, (ibid) who asks Christian writers not to refrain from the use of ‘Allah’ in Urdu to facilitate understanding. Nonetheless, not all Christians agree. Moshay (1994: 146) in a book which contains baseless vitriolic attacks on Islam and the prophet of Islam states that the use of ‘Allah’ as an alternative to ‘God’ should be avoided at all costs for the simple reason that Allah cannot be referred to as ‘the Father’ explaining that “(i)f a Muslim says, ‘Our Father who is in heaven’ his own heart will rebel against it immediately. His response “(f)or those who contend that ‘Allah’ is simply the Arabic translation of the name of the LORD, we say it is not ‘simply’ so. ‘Allah’ is more than a translation”. Moshay cites as evidence a Christian authority who makes the unfounded claim<sup>1</sup> that ‘Allah’ is not one of the

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<sup>1</sup> Another false claim (1996: 147) is that “Isa (or Essa) the penultimate prophet and messenger of God in Islam is not the same as ‘Jesus Christ’ as he is known in Christianity. In his view, because Muslims use ‘Essa’ or ‘Isa’, which is different from ‘Jesus’ (in orthographic configuration), then they are two different persons. By analogy, someone might erroneously assume that ‘Egypt’ and ‘Miṣr’ مِصْر are two different countries or that



aliases of God. Responding to the rejection of the use of ‘Allah’ by many Christians, Stone (n.d.) points out that Muslims reject the use of ‘God’ because they believe Jesus Christ is a prophet not a God and similarly Jews do not believe he is a God.

Parrinder (1965: 13) argues that differences exist between Muslims and Christian in their apprehensions about the deity and many other religious terms. He (ibid: 13-14) seems to suggest that since many translators have almost no qualms about rendering “‘Isa as Jesus, Maryam as Mary, Injil as Gospel, and Naṣārā as Christians”. So why should they shrink from rendering ‘Allah’ as God? One can argue that analogical reasoning does not carry any weight when matters related to the Deity are discussed. In other words, it is an unfair comparison since these religious concepts are fundamentally disparate.

Thomas (ibid: 172) notes that even some Muslim scholars have used الله (Allah) in their Bible citations in Arabic such as “al-Ṭabarī<sup>1</sup>(who), quoting the words of Jesus in [John 10: 36], has “Allah sent me into the world””. Thomas (ibid: 173), despite his initial making light of the disparity between the major religions with regards the concept of الله, goes on to conclude that “(t)he use of the same word for the supreme being by people of various religions need not mean that they all have the same views about deity. Each religion defines the meaning of the supreme being according to its own convictions”. Therefore, he ( ibid: 174) points out to Bible translators that “(i)t is a standard principle of translation to use the words and expressions in common use, and that the same principle also applies to the word for the deity” and despite the use of ‘the

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Latinized *Averroes* is different from its romanized counterpart ‘Ibn Rušd’ ابن رشد. Also, it is unanimously agreed that Jesus is ultimately (through Greek) from Hebrew ישוע (hence the use of يسوع in Arabic Bibles). Abu Saʿdah (n.d: vol 2: 270) explains why the Quran uses عيسى and not يسوع as he is known among Arab Christians and in fact everyone at the time of Quran’s revelation. First, generally speaking, the Quran does not use an Arabized (naturalized) form if Arabization distorts the meaning of the original name. Put differently, if the Arabized form suggests a meaning for the name which is different from its meaning in the source language, Arabization (or naturalization) is avoided. In Arabic, the name يسوع means ‘to perish, to be lost’ الهالك السائع, which is the opposite of its meaning in the Hebrew form ישוע. Using a derogatory name is not befitting for any individual let alone an honorable prophet of God. So Abu Saʿdah (n.d: vol 2: 270) suggests that in the Quran the name يسوع is changed through metathesis but since there is no morphological pattern that matches عوسي (i.e. يسوع in reverse) it is changed to عيسى to evoke the opposite sense of the then prevalent form يسوع.

<sup>1</sup> al-Ṭabarī (839–923 CE; 224–310 AH) was a well-known Iranian scholar, historian and commentator on the Qur'an whose pioneering Quran exegesis influenced many subsequent Quran exegeses (cf. al-Dahabī 1985 vol 14: 270-282).

elohim' and 'theo's in the Bible, the acceptance of the name 'Allah' among Arabic speaking Christians clearly sanctions its use. Kenneth Cragg, a Christian scholar (1964: 36) argues that "(s)ince both Christian and Muslim faiths believe in one supreme sovereign Creator-God, they are obviously referring when they speak of Him, under whatever terms, to the same Being". He (ibid) goes on say that their apprehensions are different and "(t)he differences, which undoubtedly exist, between the Muslim and the Christian understanding of God are far-reaching and must be patiently studied".

Von Stosch (2015: 123) illustrates that "(f)or Elah there are several definitions: Somebody, in whom people can find refuge, somebody who affects people, or a being which exists in secrecy.' None of these definitions has any specific Islamic connotation". Having considered whether or not the name Allah should be used as a translation of God, he concludes that (ibid: 133), this "depends on the context in which they are used. Translation has to focus on target groups and on certain situations to be clear and to make sense". He further declares (ibid) that "(t)ranslation can only have benefits if we are aware of its losses". In his view, using 'God' rather than 'Allah' in translated material facilitates communication and debate but "(o)n the other hand, the common translation can be a loss of differentiation. It can disguise differences and lead to a superficial harmony". But it should be noted, as ElShiekh and Saleh (2011: 146) conclude, that it cannot be categorically established that the use of transliterated religious terms (including 'Allah') has a negative or positive effect upon the addressees. They also claim (ibid) that the use of transliterated religious terms may signal segregation and repudiation of assimilation. Although they seem to base their assumptions on aspects of tolerance and rejection of zealotry, they further conclude that using a translated equivalent does not always indicate broadmindedness or even acknowledgement of the supremacy of the other language(ibid). This has some resonance with the findings of Mussche and Willems (2010: 485), who conclude after analyzing the translation of a corpus of key names in Harry Potter into Arabic that transliteration "has a foreignizing effect" while procedures such as replacement, omission and translation do not result in domestication but rather achieve what is termed 'neutralization' (cf. O'Sullivan 2000: 237) where "foreign elements of the source text are levelled out" giving rise to unmarked forms.

Mohler (2016) proposes a middle-ground approach stating that in 'Arabic-based' languages which lack a generic reference to the Deity, the use of the name 'Allah' in opening remarks might be tolerated by Christians but later they have to switch to 'God' because in his view the use of the name 'Allah' has the inevitable effect of making Christians embrace Muslims' belief

about the Deity. Analogous to Mohler’s proposition is a fatwa<sup>1</sup> published on the well-known website Islamweb.net (<https://www.islamweb.net/en/fatwa/86082/translating-allah-as-god>), which states that “(t)he Name ‘Allaah’ can be translated as ‘God’ for new Muslims who do not know (the)Arabic language, just as we translate for them the meanings of the Quran and Ahadeeth in order to teach them the religion of Islam”. But the fatwa declares that in normal circumstances or when engaging in extended translations of the Quran or Hadeeth or Islamic books the use of ‘God’ must be avoided. The fatwa reads “it is an obligation to leave the name of Allaah in its original form as it is pronounced ‘Allaah’. This is because, the name Allaah is the proper name of our Lord, Allaah. Besides, the Name Allaah demonstrates all His other Beautiful Names”.

The debate over whether to use ‘Allah’ or ‘God’ has some repercussions in the ongoing discussion over whether some transparent place names and culturally specific Islamic terms should be translated or transliterated. For example, Abdul Raof (2001: 35-36) discusses how Quran translators have differed over whether to translate or transliterate certain names with transparent meanings such as سلسبيل (literally ‘smoothly flowing’, figuratively ‘palatable’; cf. al-Qurṭubī 1964, vol 19: 143) in the following verse:

{عَيْنًا فِيهَا تُسَمَّى سَلْسَبِيلًا}

[Q76: 18]

[(The water of) a spring therein, named **Salsabil**] (Pickthall)

[whose name is "**Seek Thy Way**"] (Asad)

The majority of translators have shown a preference for transliterating the name. Asad has opted for translation, without providing an explanatory footnote, which he sometimes does with names (despite the need for this explanation to specify who is addressed and the command’s significance, i.e. you should strive to reach this spring). Abdul Raof (2001: 36) argues that “(s)ince they are names, the best Qur'an translation strategy is to transliterate them and supply the target language reader with informative footnotes to illuminate the fog of Arabic”. Sometimes in translation ‘more is less’. Translation of Quran place names can lead to the radical dissimulation of their identify as Ali’s translation of الحجر (al-Hijr) in the following table demonstrates:

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<sup>1</sup> A فتوى (usually transliterated ‘fatwa’) is a ruling or consultation given by a Muslim scholar on issues that are of a religious nature.

|                      |                              |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
|                      | [Q80 :15] الْحَجْر (al-Hijr) |
| Asad                 | Al-Hijr                      |
| Pickthall            | Al-Hijr                      |
| Ali                  | the Rocky Tract              |
| Abdel Haleem         | al-Hijr                      |
| Saheeh International | Thamud <sup>1</sup>          |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | Al-Hijr (the rocky tract)    |
| Arberry              | El-Hijr                      |

Ali discloses in a footnote (1987: 752) the indigenous name but that should be ideally inserted within the text and any discussion of the import of the geographical name should be left in the margin, as other translators such as Asad and Abdel Haleem have rightly done. Better still Ali could have reaped the benefits of both tactics by making the two versions seamlessly interfused, as Al- Hilali and Khan have done. What Ali does is akin to someone saying “I visited the fast-flowing river” in reference to ‘London’<sup>2</sup>, the English capital.

Kargozari and Akrami (2016: 200) cite other instances of clearly transparent (nick)names such as أَبُو لَهَب (Abū Lahab) which Ali renders using a calque: ‘Father of Flame’. In a footnote, Ali explains (1978: 2026) that “Abu Lahab, ‘Father of Flame’, was the nick-name of an uncle of the holy Prophet, from his fiery hot temper and his ruddy complexion”. Asad translates لَهَب أَبُو (Abū Lahab) rather idiomatically, as ‘of the glowing countenance’, thus missing its significance as an epithet. Pickthall, Saheeh International, Abdel Haleem, Al-Hilali and Khan and Arberry transliterate the nickname, thus emphasizing its nature as a sobriquet.

Proponents of translating Islamic terms argue that transliteration “may suggest a pronunciation in English which is different from the pronunciation of the Arabic<sup>3</sup> Original”

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Thamud’ is the name given to the inhabitants of that region (north of Medinah). Thus this rendition represents a modulating (change of perspective) approach.

<sup>2</sup> There is uncertainty as to the origin of the name ‘London’, but the Museum of London website seems to be positive that “philologists now equate the name with the Indo-European word ‘plowonida’, meaning ‘fast-flowing river’ and referring to the Thames”.

<sup>3</sup> It is important to point out to the confusion in the literature surrounding this term. Newmark (1988: 81) points out that some authorities downplay its significance as a translation procedure. Also, for him (ibid), transliteration is an umbrella term which subsumes transcription. The term ‘transliteration’ is used quite loosely here. In fact, our

(Hassan 2016: 120). For example, in the name ‘Allah’, the double consonant letters are supposed to represent the Arabic geminated consonant  $\text{ʾll}$  /l/ a phenomenon which does not exist in English<sup>1</sup>. Another shortcoming in the transliterated form is the presence of final /h/, which, in English does not appear in syllable-final positions. The picture becomes even more complicated if we consider the variation in the pronunciation of initial and middle ‘a’. Parrinder (1965: 13) expresses the reservation that “for English-speaking people to insist on using only the word Allah can be quite misleading. The thin English pronunciation makes it most unintelligible to an Arabic-speaking Muslim”.

Kharusi and Salman (2011: 3) lament the situation, stating that “one would hope for a one-to-one mapping of the graphemes, though this is not possible in Arabic-English transliteration”. However, “the absence of phonetic equivalences in one of the two languages can be addressed by the use of special symbols, diacritics, and combinations of letters to change the sound value of the letter”, writes Hassan (2016: 121), but the problem is not resolved root and branch due to the sense of the exotic that the transliterated form (e.g. ‘Allah’) gives, according to Hassan (ibid). Hassan (ibid) further explains that this exoticism can be interpreted to be an expression of alienation but “this argument focuses only on the perception of non-Muslim readers of Islamic religious texts in English, which might be negative for reasons other than the insistence on transliterating Islamic religious terms and ignores other advantages that the transliteration of Islamic religious terms may yield”.

According to Hassan (ibid), another advantage of using ‘Allah’ and other religious transliterated forms with no direct equivalent is that it facilitates back-translation from English into Arabic. Indeed, as Shuttleworth and Cowie point out (1997: 14), the test of back-translation can be a useful tool to “illustrate the sometimes vast structural and conceptual differences which exist between SL and TL”. So, the reversible nature of transliteration makes it easy to

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discussion seems to better fit Catford’s (1965: 56) notion of ‘phonological translation’ in which “SL phonology of a text is replaced by equivalent TL phonology. The grammar and lexis of the SL text remain unchanged”. This example with the Arabic name خالد might explain the difference:

| transliteration | transcription | phonological translation |
|-----------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| Khalid          | /xæ:lɪd/      | kalid                    |

<sup>1</sup> Gemination occurs marginally in English “across a morphological boundary from the concatenation of two morphemes” in words such as ‘guileless’ and ‘fish shop’ (Ben Hedia 2019: 5).

‘retranslate’ ‘Allah’ or other culturally sensitive lexemes back into Arabic. ‘God’, as a supposed translated equivalent of الله, if back-translated into Arabic, would yield الله (Allah) and إِلَه (Al-’ilāh) as two possible matches.

Some translators accept only الله as the Arabic equivalent of ‘God’ and brush aside إِلَه (Al-’ilāh) as a valid translation of ‘god’ with a small ‘g’. While this differentiation is possible in English “this will not be possible in a language such as German where all nouns are capitalized, and in this case the German word ‘Gott’ will be used to refer to both Allāh الله and ilāh إِلَه” (ibid: 122). To illustrate, if Pickthall had used ‘God’ and not ‘Allah’, he would have found it difficult to make a distinction between إِلَه (’ilāh) and الله (Allah). Instead he consistently renders الله as ‘Allah’ and reserves ‘god’ (or ‘God’ if the referent is Allah) for إِلَه (’ilāh). Consider the following verse in which Prophet Muhammad is told to address the people of the Scripture:

{وَالْهِنَا وَالْهَهُمَّ وَاجِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ}

[Q29: 46]

“Our God and your God is One, and unto Him we surrender” (Pickthall, 1994: 287).

Also consider the awkwardness of the following translation by Arberry in which إِلَه (’ilah) and الله (Allah) are translated using god and God respectively:

{مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ}

[Q6: 46]

“who is a **god** other than **God**”

The first ‘god’ qualifies for capitalization (because Allah is the referent) on a par with the second ‘God’. Commenting on Arberry’s rendition, El-Magazy (2004: 81) argues that it is baffling, especially for listeners when the translation is read out aloud (e.g. in religious speeches). Thus, the use of ‘God/god’ as a rendition for both words confuses the issue and loses the impact of the original. Murata and Chittick (1994: 46) find no issue with this repetition and argue that “it does not sound totally unreasonable to claim that Moses and Jesus taught that ‘There is no god but God’”. For many, however, the situation could be salvaged by replacing ‘God’ with “Allah”. Khattab (2015: 123), a modern Quran translator, in a recent Quran translation resorts to what can be referred to as modulation (i.e. “a change in the point of view”, Vinay and Darbelnet 1995: 36), or generalization, by translating the first part ‘god’ as “who else”. Asad sets them apart by diverging his renditions (see Divergence; section 4.6). So, ‘deity’ is used for إِلَه (’ilāh) and ‘God’ for الله (Allah).

In addition, using a transliterated form facilitates conventionalization (“a gradual process in which a word progressively permeates a larger and larger speech community”; Kemmer 2019). It is indisputable that English readily accepts new words in its dictionaries, or as Crystal (2010: 267) brands it, it is an “insatiable borrower”, as attested by the number of loanwords which “make up a huge proportion of the words in any large dictionary of English”, according to Durkin (2014: 4). Hassan (2016: 122) argues that translators should integrate specialized terms and concepts into English by purposefully transliterating them instead of “using existing English words with partially equivalent meanings”. This is what has happened with many Islamic terms such as ‘Allah’, ‘minaret’, ‘jihad’ and ‘niqab’ among many others which have been incorporated into many English dictionaries. Larson (1998: 187) categorizes loan words into two types: “borrowed words which have been assimilated into the receptor language prior to the translation process (such as the German ‘Kindergarten’, English ‘kindergarten’) and those loan words which are completely new to the receptor language speakers). The question is ‘has the word ‘Allah’ fully blended in?’. This is difficult to judge and its inclusion in standard dictionaries is no guarantee of TL readers’ cognizance of its meaning. Bassnett warns (2002: 32), however, that any attempt “to impose the value system of the SL culture onto the TL culture is dangerous ground”. There is always the uncertainty that Armstrong expresses (2005: 143) about whether these imported words will become permanent words or they “may prove ephemeral”.

It seems very probable that the translators’ choice between ‘Allah’ and ‘God’ depends largely on the target audience. Some translators have explicitly mentioned this reasoning such as Ibrahim and Johnson-Davies in their translation of An-Nawawi's Forty Hadiths<sup>1</sup> (lit. ‘40 prophetic traditions’) asserting that “(o)n the question of whether to translate Allah as God or retain the word in its Arabic form, we decided on the word Allah because it is in general use amongst Muslims, whether or not they are speaking Arabic. Were it not for this consideration the word Allah would have been rendered as God. So the preference for ‘Allah’ over ‘God’ might have some affective meaning attached to it. Put differently, this selection possibly involves “an emotive effect worked on the addressee by the choice of expression and that forms part of its overall meaning” (Dickins et al 2017: 99). El-Magazy (2004: 81) points to difference in the connotations of ‘Allah’ and ‘God’, as their superficial similarities embody Larson’s (1984: 95) statement that “words in one language may look like they correspond to words in another

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<sup>1</sup> This collection contains 42 hadiths (despite the name) and “incorporates a comprehensive selection of well-authenticated Hadith on the most important aspects of religious knowledge” (Ibrahim and Johnson-Davies: 2002). Very few hadiths, however, have disputed authenticity.

and may even have the same central and contrastive components of meaning and yet not equivalent”. This heeding by a translator of target audience’s expectations is in line with Gutt’s (1992: 10-12) claim that “the success of a translated text is crucially dependent on the expectations of the target audience...(and) the degree that his meaning is consistent with the principle of relevance for his audience”.

El-Magazy (2004: 79) offers a compromise for all names which have Biblical equivalents by suggesting a combination of transliteration and a supporting translation. This gives the best of both worlds as it caters for the needs of target readers “in addition to its accuracy and faithfulness to the original text”. However, he makes an exception in the case of the name الله, which has to be transliterated as a result of the difficulty of making إله (’ilāh) and الله (Allah) clearly distinct if ‘god’ and ‘God’ respectively are used to render them. This can be overcome if Al-Hilali and Khan’s strategy is adopted who, according to Al Ghamdi (2015: 196, 194), have made the two near-synonymous names recognizably separate by combining transliteration with translation for the name إله (’ilāh) and maintaining the use of the transliterated form ‘Allah’ for الله, as can be seen below:

{إِنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ}

[Q. 20: 98]

**Al-Hilali and Khan:** Your **Ilah (God)** is only **Allah**, the One (La **ilaha** illa Huwa) (none has the right to be worshipped but He).

Similarly Saheeh International reserves the use of ‘Allah’ for الله and use ‘deity’ and ‘god’ (‘god’ is used sparingly by them and, quite unexpectedly, with a small ‘g’ even though it refers to Allah) as two equivalents for إله (’ilāh) as the translation of the above verse shows.

**Saheeh International:** Your **god** is only **Allah**, except for whom there is no **deity**.

Al Ghamdi (2015: 195), detects inconsistency in other translators’ renditions such as those of Pickthall and Ali, who “treat the terms Allāh and ilāh as complete synonyms (by transliterating Allāh and rendering ilāh as ‘Allāh’) and use them interchangeably (as in Q21: 108)”.

Abdul Majid Daryabadi, whose Quran translation and critique “is a testament to his sound, sterling scholarship, his discerning familiarity with the Orientalist discourse, his painstaking



attention to detail and his sharp critical eye”, gives a succinct summary of the position of those who object to the use of ‘God’ as a good translation of الله (Kidwai 2018: 89). Daryabadi states:

“The word Allah is incapable of translation. It is not a common noun meaning ‘a god’ or even ‘God’. It is a proper noun par excellence. No plural can be formed from it, and it is, according to the best authorities on the Arabic language, without derivation. The word connotes all the attributes of perfection and beauty in their infinitude, and denotes none but the One True and unique God[...] The English word God, which is “the common Teutonic word for a personal object of religious worship [...] applied to all superhuman beings of heathen mythologies who exercise power over nature and man” (Entry for ‘God’, 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica) [...] is hardly an approximate substitute” (Daryabadi 1991: 2).

To conclude, it is reasonable to cite Abdul-Raof (2001: 165), who presents a fair and judicious compromise, demanding an introductory explanation “at the very beginning of the translation of the Qur’an to avoid any possible wrong presuppositions and not to get mixed up with the concept of ‘God’ in other religions. Dickins et al (2017: 40) offer the related suggestion that such explanations should be easily located at the end of a book in the form of a glossary or alternatively should accompany the text as footnotes.

## 2.6 The Translation of الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān) and الرَّحِيمُ (Al-Raḥīm)

The other two names that have received comparable attention to الله in many Quran translation studies are الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān) and الرَّحِيمُ (Al-Raḥīm). They come conjoined at the beginning of each chapter of the Quran apart from one (i.e. al-Tawbah; the ‘Repentance’ Chapter). A Muslim recites the opening chapter (i.e. al-Fātiḥah) which contains this pair of names in their daily prayers 17 times a day. There are many proposed explanations for the differences between الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān) and الرَّحِيمُ (Al-Raḥīm). One such explanation is based on intratextual evidence that الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān) encompasses all-inclusive mercy which only suits the Majesty of Allah whereas الرَّحِيمُ (Al-Raḥīm) refers to an exclusive type of mercy for the believers. Another more

tenable explanation speaks of الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān)<sup>1</sup> as the source of mercy while الرَّحِيم (Al-Raḥīm) involves dispensing His mercy (al-Jalīl, 2009: 119-120). Asad and Abdel Haleem seem to lean towards this interpretation as can be seen below:

{ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ }

[Q1: 1]

| Translator   | الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān) | الرَّحِيم (Al-Raḥīm)   |
|--------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Asad         | The Most Gracious       | The Dispenser of Grace |
| Abdel Haleem | The Lord of Mercy       | The Giver of Mercy     |

Elewa (2015: 172-177) investigates their matches in about 50 translations and finds out that ‘Merciful’, ‘Compassionate’, ‘Gracious’ and ‘Beneficent’ are the common renditions. Most translators are heedless of the common origin of the two names. Both are derived from the same root رَحِمَ (*r-ḥ-m*) and are intensive forms صَيَغَ مُبَالَغَةً<sup>2</sup> (*ṣiyaḡ mubālaḡah*). As Abū Bakar Ṣaṭā (1997: vol 1, p. 17) explains that مُبَالَغَةً (‘mubālaḡah’, lit. ‘exaggeration’ or ‘overstatement’) in الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān) and الرَّحِيم (Al-Raḥīm) is used in the grammatical sense of the word مُبَالَغَةً (mubālaḡah) to express strength or the large number of its parts and not in the rhetorical sense of according an extra significance to entities beyond what is rightfully theirs, since Allah’s attributes know no bounds and also there is nothing unobtainable for Him. Ali and Yasin (2014: 5) explain that “a pattern like raaHim ‘forgiving’<sup>3</sup> shows that the event takes place once, while

<sup>1</sup> al-Jalīl (2009: 118) mentions the agreement of Muslim scholars on الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān’s) Arabic origin and pattern (*faʔlān*). This does not rule out the possibility that it is related to a cognate form ‘Raḥmānān’ used in South Arabia (Yemen, etc.) by Christian and Jews in pre-Islamic Arabia. Some researchers point to a “bilingual inscription written in Akkadian and Aramaic which was found in the Tell Fekherye in northeast Syria” (Kościelniak 2011: 67).

<sup>2</sup> Some authors translate صَيَغَ مُبَالَغَةً (*ṣiyaḡ mubālaḡah*) fairly literally as ‘hyperbolic forms’, such as Abdul-Raof (2001: 41), who further (ibid) makes the inaccurate claim that الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān) is a hyperbolic form while الرَّحِيم (Al-Raḥīm) is not. Arabic Rhetoricians like Abū Hilāl al-Ṣaskarī (1952: 365) define مُبَالَغَةً (mubālaḡah) as stretching the meaning to its utmost limits and not being confined to its reduced levels. Ibn al-Qayyim (n.d: 106) explains that المُبَالَغَةُ (al-mubālaḡah) involves choosing between two morphologically related forms with the form that has more letters signifying magnification in its denotation.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Forgiving’ is commonly used to translate the name غَافِر (Ġāfir), but to translate الرَّحِيم (Al-Raḥīm) and غَافِر (Ġāfir) using the same word obscures their differences. Indeed, forgiving sins is one of the manifestations of His mercy but this conveys the impression that the authors treat them as absolute synonyms, which is not the case. So it might be more appropriate in this context to use ‘Merciful’ for الرَّحِيم (Al-Raḥīm).

the hyperbolic pattern raHeem ‘forgiving a lot’ indicates overacting and the recurrence of the event”.

Of the 50 translations investigated by Elewa (2015: 176) only a handful of them reflect their common root derivation, such as Saheeh International who translate الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān) and الرَّحِيمُ (Al-Raḥīm) as ‘the entirely Merciful’, and ‘the especially Merciful’ respectively. Abdel-Haleem (2011: 16) speaks in support of his decision not to adopt the widely accepted renditions since “Raḥmān and Raḥīm derive from the same root, translating them into two words with different roots, like ‘Compassionate and Merciful’ loses the connection”. He explains his departure from the common rendition of Raḥmān as ‘the Merciful’ in favor of the more specific “Lord of Mercy” because Raḥmān involves ‘majesty’, mightiness’ in addition to being merciful, while Raḥīm evokes the inherent nature of this attribute and his renditions are intended to cover these aspects (Abdel Haleem 2004: 3). Watson (2007: 28-29) comments on Abdel-Haleem’s translation (cited above) as reflecting the common origin of the two words (this is also applicable to Asad and Saheeh International), but argues that Abdel Haleem “loses completely the hyperbolic meaning of the two words”.

In the words of Benzinger (1971: 2), in English, intensification is signaled in various ways: “among them are hyperbole and exaggeration, inherently intense words, profanity and obscenity, exclamations, symbolic forms, repetition of words and sounds, multiplication of synonyms, onomatopoeic forms, stretch forms, shifted word order and other grammatical transformations, stress and pitch, redundant prepositions and adverbial particles, intensive personal pronouns, genitive forms with own, and qualifiers”. Even the use of the English superlative does not have a comparable effect to that of the Arabic intensive morphological patterns. As Ali (1987: 3) asserts, in الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ (Al-Raḥmān Al-Raḥīm) “(t)he Arabic intensive form is more suited to express Allah's attributes than the superlative degree in English. The latter implies a comparison with other beings, or with other times or places, while there is no being like unto Allah”. In so doing, he casts doubt on the accuracy of his own renditions of الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ (Al-Raḥmān Al-Raḥīm). This flies in the face of Benzinger’s (1971: 8) assertion that “when a word is used as an intensive qualifier, the attention of the listener is focused on the idea being intensified rather than on the literal sense of the intensifying word. When one says that he is ‘awfully tired’, he is drawing attention to his fatigue rather than to an aura of wonder suggested by awe”.

Rippin (2004) expresses the view that Abdel Haleem’s rendition “has the merit of using ‘mercy’ in both instances, (but it) does seem like rather a mouthful in comparison”. Al Ghamdi (2015: 204) seems to concur with Rippin’s view, stating that “the use of six English words to

correspond to two Arabic terms is lengthy and, therefore, makes it too different from the Qurānic style and tone”. Also, as El-Hadary (2008: 267-268) indicates, there is the element of regeneration in الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān) and consistency in الرَّحِيم (Al-Raḥīm) which “cannot be captured in translation”. Watson (2007: 27) criticizes the prevalent use of ‘beneficent’ and ‘compassionate’ as can be seen in some of our selected translations:

|                           | الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān) | الرَّحِيم (Al-Raḥīm)                  |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Pickthall</b>          | the Beneficent          | the Merciful                          |
| <b>Al-Hilali and Khan</b> | the Most Beneficent     | the Most Merciful                     |
| <b>Arberry</b>            | the (All)Merciful       | The (All <sup>1</sup> )-Compassionate |

Watson argues (ibid) that it seems to be, “etymologically, unjustifiable since the word beneficent comes from the Latin ‘benefacere’, to ‘do good’, which is more akin to the word إحسان (‘iḥsān) in Arabic, and the word compassionate comes also from a Latin root ‘compator’ meaning to ‘suffer with’, whereas the most common meaning given for الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān) is ‘He whose mercy encompasses everything’”. Other nuances of meaning which are difficult to transfer include the restrained use of الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān), a divine name which can only be used to refer to Allah (along with other names such as الله (‘Allah’), الأَحَد (‘Al-’aḥad’, the One), الخَالِق (‘Al-Xāliq’, the Creator), and الرَّازِق (‘Al-Rāziq’, the All-Provider) (Ibn Kaṭīr, AH 1419, vo1 : 40), whereas رَحِيم (raḥīm) can be used to describe the non-Divine as the author(s) of Saheeh International explain (1997: 1): “Raḥmān is used only to describe Allah, while raḥeem might be used to describe a person as well. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم (May Allah’s blessings and peace be upon him) was described in the Quran as Raḥeem. Raḥmān, by contrast, is above the human level (i.e., intensely merciful)”.

The aforementioned important aspects of the names الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān) and الرَّحِيم (Al-Raḥīm) has led Watson (2007: 28) to conclude that the “two terms, then, exhibit a high degree

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<sup>1</sup> Arberry does not show consistency in his use of the intensifier ‘All’ with الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān) and الرَّحِيم (Al-Raḥīm). He does not use it in the بِسْمَلَة (‘basmalah’, an incipit for بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ - the phrase recited before the beginning of each chapter or Surah in the Quran, which is translated roughly as “In the name of Allah, the most Gracious, the Most merciful”). On other occasions such as [Q1: 3] the intensifier ‘All’ is used. As Al Ghamdi (2015: 205) points out, Pickthall and Ali, like Arberry, have also provided inconsistent translations of الرحمن (Al-Raḥmān) and الرحيم (Al-Raḥīm). On one occasion, Pickthall, for instance, inconsistently and unjustifiably renders الرحمن (Al-Raḥmān) as ‘Lord’ (see Q.19: 87). In some Qurānic contexts, Ali confuses the two Divine Names and treats them as complete synonyms (i.e. he uses their renderings interchangeably).

of untranslatability and the subtlety of their meanings can only be conveyed very approximately. Even scholars of Arabic, both ancient and modern, disagree as to the precise meanings of the two terms”, and this, in his view, typifies the untranslatability of the Quran. Not only do الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān) and الرَّحِيمُ (Al-Raḥīm) constitute a translation problem, but the authors of Saheeh International in their preface to their translation (1997: v-iv) give this blanket judgement about the translation of God’s names and attributes:

their translation is surely an impossibility, for even in Arabic they cannot represent more than an approximation limited by human understanding. To any description given by Allah of Himself in human terminology, the mind is required to apply the concept of absoluteness and perfection befitting Him.

Even some analysts of Quran translations acknowledge, quite rightly, that “the names of attributes of Allah are one of the most difficult names to translate into English” (Brakhw 2014: 55-56).

## 3. Selected Quran Translations

### 3.1 Introduction

“Those who can, write; those who cannot, translate; those who cannot translate, write about translation”. These words by Newmark (1995: ix) have some resonance here and conceal some truth. Are we better equipped to evaluate different Quran translations than their respective translators? Another pertinent question which might be raised is why Muslims do not pick up one of the English translations of the Quran and endorse it just as Christians did with the King James Version (also known as the Authorized Version) of the Bible, which has wielded strong influence on English-speaking readers. As Crystal (2010: 1) notes, “Winston Churchill called it a ‘masterpiece’, uniting English-speaking peoples everywhere”<sup>1</sup>. The answer is found in Pickthall’s (1931: 423) statement that “No non-Arab Muslims [...] ever had the least idea of elevating a translation of the Scripture (i.e. the Quran) in their language to the position of the English translation of the Bible among English-speaking Protestant Christians – that is to say, of substituting it for the original.” In the same vein, Pym (2018: 104) declares unequivocally “translations are supposed to be temporary; they do not last as long as originals”. That is certainly why Ali’s translation does not now enjoy the same popularity that it used to have when it was hot off the press.

We shall now embark on a brief introduction to the translations that have been selected for analysis together with their authors as it is often argued that the choices made by translators are influenced by their doctrines and outlooks. Hatim and Mason (1997: 122) argue that “the translator, as processor of texts, filters the text world of the source text through his/her own world-view/ideology, with differing results. Lane-Mercier (1997: 44) argues that translation produces different types of meaning. “Such meaning is indicative, amongst other things, of the translator’s position within the socio-ideological stratifications of his or her cultural context, of the values, beliefs, images and attitudes circulating within this context, of the translator’s

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<sup>1</sup> Crystal (2010: 3) seems to cast doubt on what he perhaps regards as the somewhat exaggerated influence of the King James version arguing that “evaluating the notion of ‘influence’ proves to be remarkably difficult”.

interpretation of the source text as well as of his or her aesthetic, ideological and political agenda, and of the interpretive possibilities”. The translator assumes the role of a mediator, and mediation is tied to the translator expertise and competence. According to Ghazala (2002: 6), the translator’s background plays a role in the translation of Islamic terms and the closer the translator is to Islam and Arabic, the better they are equipped to render Islamic terms. We must not forget Quran’s translators are bound by the ST at the linguistic, textual and register levels and the Quran is not some authorless text (or has a dispensable author) to which a translator can apply what House calls (1997: 163) a ‘cultural filter’. Put another way, what Palumbo describes as “a motivated intervention on the ST aimed at adjusting the translation in terms of the usage norms and the stylistic conventions prevalent in the TL community” is clearly out of the question.

It is somewhat comforting to know that the influence that Quran translators exert seems to be lessened by the awareness of many of their readers of some of their deliberate interventions and occasional interpolations and their realization that what they are reading is the translator’s own inferences and inklings as Elimam’s survey results seem to suggest (2017: 64,65). Therefore, any translation has to be presented as (more or less) a translation and this characterizes all timeless texts that are of some historical significance (cf. House’s notion of ‘overt translation’; House1997: 66-69). Inaccurate renditions are not the direct result of linguistic differences between the SL and TL but according to Al-Jabari (2008: 217) are attributable to the “weakness of the translators themselves”. Also, translators inevitably have to rely on books of exegeses (*tafsirs*<sup>1</sup>) in translating the Quran, since, as Elimam (2014: 128) notes, “most translators are not Qur’anic scholars but rather linguists who refer to the available *tafsirs* for meanings of the aayahs and attempt to put these meanings across in the translation”.

Some translators reveal their sources in their introductions, such as Ali (1937: xii, v), who cited the numerous *tafsirs* (more than 15) in Arabic, Persian and Urdu to which he referred to in his translation, and which “belong to different schools of thought. He declares; “(i)n translating the Text I have aired no views of my own, but followed the received Commentators. Where they differ among themselves, I have had to choose what appeared to me to be the most reasonable opinion from all points of view”. He also explains that “(t)he wide compass of the Quran makes it necessary to consult works of reference on almost every conceivable subject... (E)ssential kinds of books could be (a) Previous Commentaries, (b) previous Translations, (c)

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<sup>1</sup> “A *tafsiir* contains an explanation of any ‘unfamiliar’ words in an aayah, the context in which it was revealed, reference to any relevant saying(s) by Prophet Muhammad and any legal ruling based on it” (Elimam 2014: 128).

Dictionaries and General works of reference” (ibid: xvi). Similarly, Abdel Haleem (2005: xxxv, xxxvi) points out that he made particular use of three famous tafsirs in disambiguating some passages in the Quran. Relying on guesswork might lead to “comic results that would have been easily avoided had he (i.e. the translator) but consulted a tafsir or Qur'anic lexicon” (Burman 1998: 731). In fact, as al-Nadawī (1417AH: 11) points out, a literal translation<sup>1</sup> that exhausts all the lexical, structural and stylistic elements in the Quran is impossible both from an Islamic perspective and from a rational one because experience has proved that a literal translation which preserves all the nuances of meaning cannot be done between languages, as attested to by the number of attempts by Arabic men of letters who have translated Shakespeare and comparable attempts by English writers to translate ‘Arabian Nights’”. He goes on to argue (ibid: 12), quite rightly, that Quran untranslatability is axiomatically known to be true and trying to ascertain it is like stating the obvious.

The reliance on external sources and the fact that “the Quran is the literal word of God, while a translation is the word of man” (Elimam 2014: 129) have led to “translations of the Qur'an often explicitly stat(ing) that they are not, in fact, translations per se, but rather interpretations of the holy text. To signal this, they feature words like ‘message’, as in Muhammad Asad’s *The Message of the Qur'an* (1980), ‘meaning’, as in A. Y. Ali’s *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an* (1934-7), or both ‘meaning’ and ‘interpretation’, as in Hilali and Khan’s *Interpretation of the Meaning of The Noble Quran* (1977)” (ibid). Or perhaps, as Mustapha puts it (2011: 226), “(t)he Qur’ān in translation is thus considered an aid to understanding, but is not in itself ‘holy’ ....(and) to this day, when al-Azhar and similar bodies in the Islamic world grant permission for a translation of the Qur’ān to be published it is explicitly stated that the work concerned is a translation of the ‘meanings’ of the Qur’ān”. Even Abdel Haleem who calls his rendition of the Quran ‘a new translation’ criticizes those who translate the Quran without providing any marginal explanation because they want to let the Quran speak for itself. Abdel Haleem calls this view ‘ridiculous’ since the Quran that speaks for itself is the original Arabic Quran and not a translated version written in some foreign language in some foreign culture (cited in Benothman 2011: 73). Watson (2007: 5) gives the testimony that Quran translations

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<sup>1</sup> al-Marāḡī (1936: 34-35) adopts the Hanafī position on the permissibility of literal transfer of the Quran (misattributed to Abu Hanafī as he is reported to have changed his stance (cf. Abdullah 1403AH: 90 and Abī Zahrat 1970: 415) but on the condition that the verses which are to be translated should have only one sense on which all Quran exegetes agree. This makes many verses untranslatable as Quran exegetes do not even agree on the meaning of oft-repeated verses, such as بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ (whose translation is discussed in various parts of this thesis). This seemingly contradictory rule appears to yield a catch-22 situation.



into English “are invariably exegetical in nature and accompanied by copious footnotes” and this is attributed to the inimitable nature of the Quran, hence, Watson (ibid) explains, the reason for its untranslatability.

Without going into the subtleties of the term, ‘translatability’ here must be understood along the lines of Pym and Turk (1998: 273) as “the capacity for some kind of meaning to be transferred from one language to another without undergoing radical change”. Pym and Turk focus more on the kind of meaning involved while the key notion here seems to be the resultant change. So, this idea of translatability is reminiscent of Frawley’s notion of exactness in translation (1984: 163) which only “occurs in rare and trivial cases”. Similarly, Dickins et al (2017: 128) call it a fact “that exact synonymy between ST words and TL words is relatively rare”, which is one of the chief reasons for the inevitable translation loss. Many subscribe to Nida and Taber’s (1969: 4) notion of translatability when they declare that “(a)nything that can be said in one language can be said in another, unless the form is an essential element of the message”. This has to be read in conjunction with their proselytizing injunction (ibid: 12) that “the translator must strive for equivalence rather than identity”. The idea is not new and has been observed by the likes of Roman Jakobson, who argues (1959/2000: 115, 116) that “(a)ll cognitive experience and its classification is conveyable in any existing language” and “(l)anguages differ essentially in what they must convey and not in what they may convey”. However what proponents of exact equivalence<sup>1</sup> sometimes fail to see are the important changes needed to reproduce the message in the TL, which run counter to the idea of absolute equivalence (i.e. translatability). In other words, they pay more attention to the matter rather than the manner of equivalence, the transfer of which is beyond the reach of translators.

When we discuss Quran translatability, we are not making the claim which Steiner (1998: 264) labels as ‘absurd’ that no translation is ever perfect; nor do we wholeheartedly subscribe to the view that translation is impossible because there is no absolute correspondence between the ST and TT. Absolute concordance cannot be attained, argues Steiner (ibid), even between thought and speech. With the Quran we are dealing with another level of translatability which is better termed ‘inimitability’. In the context of the Quran’s inimitability, al-Xattābī: (1976: 27) concludes

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<sup>1</sup> It is quite comforting to know that translation theorists today have settled on considering ‘equivalence’ “an approximate concept” as reported by House (2015: 7). This is commensurate, she remarks (ibid: 6), with its Latin origin which signifies “equal value and it is not at all about sameness or worse still, identity”.

“فتفهم الآن واعلم أن القرآن إنما صار معجزاً لأنه جاء بأفصح الألفاظ في أحسن نظوم التأليف مضمناً أصح المعاني“

[translated by Watson 2007: 26]:

“(t)herefore you should now understand and know that the Quran is an inimitable miracle because it came with the most eloquent of expressions, in the most beautiful forms of composition, containing the most authentic meanings.”

Watson (2007: 27) attests to this and further adds that “(r)egardless of one’s views on the doctrine of divine word and the superiority of the Arabic language, it is not difficult to uphold the idea that the Arabic Quran cannot be reproduced in another language while maintaining an equivalent effect”. Byrne (2011: 92) admits that one needs not read the Quran to reach this conclusion and just the mere listening to recitation of the Quran makes it clear “first, how beautiful the text sounds and, second, how it would not sound as ‘complete’ when translated and recited in any language other than Arabic”. Jakobson (1959: 238) hints at the idea that nothing is untranslatable apart from poetry in which the verse form contributes to the overall meaning of the meaning. The Quran’s form is neither prose nor poetry and by way of analogy having a distinctive form with its links with the embedded meanings which are unlikely to be recreated in the TL. This makes it more untranslatable than poetry. Irving (1985: 27) expresses a similar view of the Quran’s untranslatability, which is validated by his experience of discovering new meanings and fresh interpretations each time he revisits the Arabic text. As Watson (ibid: 44) puts it in his concluding remarks “(d)octrine aside ... the Quran does exhibit a high degree of untranslatability and the most that translators can aim for is ‘creative transposition’. Even this would require a great deal of sensitivity and creativity on the part of the translator and is by no means an easy task”.

Having established that Quran’s translations are characteristically exegetic in nature, it is befitting to summarize the main differences between ‘translation’ and ‘interpretation’ as given by al-Zurqānī (1943, vol. 2: 114-117), since many consider any Quran translation a form of interpretation, such as Byrne (2011: 93) who sees “the very act of translating the Quran from Arabic is interpreting it”:

- 1- Unlike interpretation, which is inextricably linked to its origin, translation is an independent practice intended to replace the original ST.
- 2- It is not permissible to digress in a translation to maintain faithfulness in contrast to interpretations in which this is perfectly allowed if not desirable.

- 3- In a translation, it is customary to be faithful to all the meanings and aims of the original, but an interpretation is based on perfect (succinct or discursive) representation of the original text.
- 4- In a translation, there is traditionally the assurance that the translator's words and intentions mirror those of the original author's but an interpreter may not always give such assurance. Thus, we may find that some translated works are not explicitly identified as such but rather presented as some sort of original piece of writing. In this way, we find the contemporary 'Bible' in English, but no mention is made of its status as a 'translation'. No exegetical work can drop the name of the book on which it is based.

One aspect of the translations we are about to investigate that merits special mention is the question of their general orientation according to well-known dichotomies in translation studies such as Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence and Newmark's semantic and communicative translation. This is one of most elusive questions to answer as most Quran translations seem to display jumbled features that can fit into many conflicting orientations. al-Ṣubayd (2002: 15) notes that translations in circulation today have a mixture of predispositions to different translation categories. To illustrate, Brackw (2014: 115) classifies certain aspects of Al-Hilali and Khan's translation as representative of communicative or dynamic translation because they explain implicit meanings. We know that in dynamic translation, the response of the receptor elicited is "like that of the original receptors" (Nida and Taber 1982: 200). Does that fit into Al-Hilali and Khan's translation? Rather, Al-Hilali and Khan make every attempt to preserve the 'formal' features of the ST by not frequently joining or splitting sentences, with paramount "concern for accuracy" and adherence to the original wording of the ST (Nida 1964: 165,159). Clarifications of implicit meanings (which characterize their translation) are important due to the disparity between the ST and TT stylistic patterns (ibid: 166). So it might be more reasonable to conclude that Quran translations can be put on clines rather than subjected to clear-cut distinctions. We are in fact dealing with tendencies rather than categorical dichotomies.

It is worth mentioning at the start of our critique of some notable translations of the Quran that inaccurate or wide-of-the-mark renditions are not always deliberate. El-Magazy (2004: 59) attributes these errors to misunderstanding of the ST, unsuitable TT equivalents or omissions due to the absence of a TL match.

Abdul-Raof (2001: 9) points out that untranslatability between languages is the result of differences in syntactic, semantic and pragmatic aspects between languages, which in turn put

an extra burden on translators. Translators also differ in their general translation competence levels and in particular what Pym (2003: 489) calls ‘minimalist competence’, which is the translator’s ability to produce a series of viable TL equivalents for a given ST item at their disposal and efficiently choose one viable match which is unequivocally admissible.

Our selected Quran’s translations include translations into the translator’s mother tongue (direct translation) and from the translator’s mother tongue (i.e. Arabic) into their non-native language or what is termed ‘inverse translation’. Palumbo (2009: 38) argues that direct translation is the ideal state of affairs, but he takes exception to “translated texts having an eminently informative purpose”, which is one important function of Quran translations. It is difficult to establish whether direct Quran translations have been superior to inverse translations because they are characterized by being individual endeavors which make them more liable to human frailties.

### 3.2 Pickthall (1930)

Pickthall’s translation has been chosen for investigation in this thesis due to its popularity among Quran translation researchers. It has been studied by, among many others, Abdella (2003), Al Ghamdi (2015), Aghajani and Aldoo (2018) and Aghajani and Jalali (2019). In 1921, the famous English fiction writer E.M. Forster describes Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall as “the only contemporary English novelist who understands the Nearer East” (Clark 1986: 1). Pickthall’s translation of the Quran acquired so much fame that it was translated into Turkish<sup>1</sup>, Portuguese, Urdu, and Tagalog. It was only later that it lost some of its appeal “owing to its archaic prose and lack of annotation” (Albarakati and Saleem 2019: 24).

Pickthall’s was a Muslim convert whose work, unlike that of his (mainly non-Muslim) predecessors, “reflect[s] a more mature and scholarly effort” (Kidwai 1987). He was a literary figure who put his elegant English to good use by translating the Quran (al-Nadawī 1417AH: 109,110) and scholars specializing in Quran’s translation agree that no translation matches Pickthall’s surpassing style, fluency of language and careful abidance by the creed of the majority of Sunni Muslims(cf Kidwai 2017 and Alam 1991-92: 305-306).

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<sup>1</sup> Pickthall himself was fluent in Turkish and Urdu in addition to Arabic.

One of the outstanding characteristics of his translation is his scrupulous adherence “to the original in elegant, though now somewhat archaic English” (Kidwai 1987). Robinson (1997: 261) describes this adherence as representing an appealing but “fairly literal rendering of the Arabic” which is not devoid of some inaccuracies. al-Nadawī (1417AH: 111) explains that inaccuracies and errors can be attributed to misunderstanding of the syntactic structures: the type of errors which characterize any human endeavor. Similarly, Abdel Haleem (2004: xxviii) points out that “(a)lthough his (Pickthall’s)language may now seem almost artificially archaic, his translation keeps close to the original Arabic, and is still very popular among Arabs and Muslims”. According to Fawcett (2014: 75) in the vast majority of cases there is no grounds (or effect) for translating an earlier text with an earlier version of the TL and unless their command of that version is outstanding, the style will be awkwardly artificial or as he puts it, rather blatantly, “risible pastiche”. Clearly, Pickthall’s competence in Arabic and Islam in general surpass those before him and he has every right not to be content with the (mis)representation of the Quran by earlier translators.

Pickthall keeps annotations to an absolute minimum which, according to Kidwai (ibid), has led to loss of appeal to uninitiated readers of the Quran. However, al-Nadawī (1417AH: 111) seems to disagree with this view stating that Pickthall’s translation is self-explanatory and does not require any additional annotations.

### **3.3 Yusuf Ali (1939; revised edition 1987)**

Ali’s translation has been studied extensively by Quran translation researchers, which is indicative of its popularity among readers and researchers alike. For example, Iqbal (2000), Abdella (2003), Hassan (2014), Kalajdzisalihović (2011), Al Ghamdi (2015) and Aghajani and Jalali (2019) have all selected Ali’s translation for critical appraisal. Abdullah Yusuf Ali was an Indian-British Quran translator who mastered Arabic and English at an early age. Ali’s ‘The Holy Qur’an Translation and Commentary’ has been in vogue for quite some time and is even regarded by some “as the most popular translation” for obvious reasons such as his beautiful command of the English language as well as the fluidity of his translation (Kidwai, 1987). This is disputed by Elimam (2014: 132), who argues that Ali’s translation is not as smooth as other translations (such as Abdel Haleem’s) because Ali tries to replicate “the feel of the Qur’anic style” by using free verse form which is both a merit and demerit since this style fills the English

reader with awe but this comes at the expense of not giving a word-for-word rendition (al-Nadawī (1417AH: 116). Ironically, this might be the incentive that led many participants (mainly Muslims) in Elimam’s survey (2017: 67) to pick Ali’s translation to top their lists of recommended translations for non-Muslims. Irving (1992: xxii) describes the momentary literalness of Ali’s rendition while occasionally going into the extremes of over-translation. Irving (ibid) is critical of Ali’s embellishments, which make his translation “overladen with extra words which neither explain the text nor embellish the meaning”. The supplementary material and the copious notes he provides are of immense value but they are tainted with “the pseudo-rationalist spirit of his times” on matters beyond human perception such as jinns, hell and heaven (Kidwai 1987<sup>1</sup>). This seems to run counter to al-Nadawī’s (1417AH: 113) assertion that there is no interpretation of any verse on which he does not rely on recognized exegetes.

Ghazala (2002: 8) mentions that what characterizes Ali’s translation, as well as Pickthall’s and Al-Hilali and Khan’s translations, is their word-for-word<sup>2</sup> adherence to the Quran and the filling of any semantic voids. El-Hadary (2008: 119) explains that this strict adherence accommodates the different needs of target readers and “is not without good reasons”. Ali’s translation is, however, “more of a paraphrase than a literal translation, yet it faithfully represents the sense of the original” (Kidwai, 1987). Al-Nadawī (1417AH: 113, 7) explains that Ali’s free style is an attempt to mirror the grandeur of the original Arabic, but criticizes his idiomatic paraphrasing because this has given him the liberty to foreground some elements and background others (i.e. hysteron proteron) in order to maintain rhythmic structures in his translation, and, as Abdul-Raof (2001: 43) indicates, “he has not been successful in preserving the unique Qur'an-bound hysteron and proteron style”. Quite surprisingly, on certain occasions he preserves the Quran’s word order, but “to the detriment of the target text syntax and style (ibid) as in the Quranic phrase, {تسع وتسعون نعمة} which he translates by retaining the original

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<sup>1</sup> Ali is the descendant of a Bohra family (Bohra is Gujarati (a province in India) word ‘vyavahar’ meaning ‘to trade’ [https://www.britannica.com/topic/Bohras]. There are Sunni Bohras (like Ali), Shiite Bohras (followers of the Tayyibi Ismailis; a distinct sect within Shia Islam [https://ismailmail.blog/2017/08/23/branches-of-shia-islam-ismailis-twelveers-and-bohras/]) as well as Hindu Bohras. This confusion has led some researchers to erroneously point to some Shiite Bohra affinities. (cf. al-Nadawī 1417AH: 113).

<sup>2</sup> Apparently, Ghazala does not refer here to that extreme version of literal translation which involves respecting ST wording regardless of TT syntactic conventions. What he seems to suggest is a faithful representation of the TT which does not leave any word or concept (whether clearly stated or implied) untranslated (cf. Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997).

word order: [nine and ninety<sup>1</sup> ewes], [Q38: 23]. This freedom with the Quranic word order is even more prominent in Abdel-Haleem who takes uncalled for liberty, and as such “the significant role of word order, however, is diminished in the target text because of the change in word order” (Abdul- Raof 2001: 44). A Quran translator should not exploit the freedom that other translators have. The disparity in poetic license can be picked out when we listen to Imams delivering Friday sermons and engaging in self-translation. Elimam (2019: 102) concludes that in the corpus of selected bilingual (Arabic-English) split Friday sermons “the imams seem to have more liberty in self-translating their own words but less liberty in translating quotes from the Qur’an and the hadith, for instance”.

In as far as diction is concerned, Ghazala’s asserts (2002: 9), Ali’s translation, like Pickthall’s, has made use of words which are considered obsolete today (such as ‘hath’ and ‘thine’), probably to copy the style of the English translations of the common Bible translations of the time. Abdel Haleem comments (2004: xxviii) on Ali’s translation; “(i)t is an extremely useful work, especially his notes and indices, for those who want a fuller and more guided understanding of the background and text of the Qur’an. His language contains poetic features and archaic words that make the style outdated” – though, as Larson (1998: 145) points out, there is an upside to the use of obsolete English words (such as ‘thee’ and ‘thou’) in that they have religious overtones. The practice of using archaisms was rightly abandoned later in favor of simpler diction. Ali’s translation as well as Al-Hilali and Khan’s differ markedly from Pickthall’s translation in that they tend to explicitate more.

Although Ali is known for neutralizing many cultural-laden lexemes, he sometimes suddenly veers off and plunges into unadulterated foreignization as can be gleaned from opting for ‘borrowing’ in the translation of the Qur’ānic verse below (Ali 1934/1987: 52)

{وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ ۖ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا ۗ قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي ۖ قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ}

[Q2: 124]

(And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands which he

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<sup>1</sup>Prof. James Dickins (personal communication) notes that until recently this usage was common and he remembers quite vividly his grandfather saying things like “Five and twenty past five”, where people nowadays say “Twenty-five past five”. Dickins also points out to another piece of evidence for this in the traditional children’s song (nursery rhyme), which contains the line, “Four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie”.

fulfilled. He said: "I will make thee an **Imam** to the Nations." He pleaded: "And also (**Imams**) from my offspring!" He answered: "But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers.") [Q2: 124].

Just as Pickthall's translation has influenced many subsequent translations (including Ali's translation), Ali's translation has also been influential and many researchers have detected some aspects of Ali's style in some ensuing translations. For example Al-Amri (1433AH: 39) pinpoints Al-Hilali and Khan following in the footsteps of Ali in some specific renditions.

### 3.4 Arberry (1957)

Arberry's translation enjoys popularity among academic researchers due to its fairly unbiased nature. Arberry's translation has been exhaustively investigated to determine its merits and demerits (e.g. Abdella 2003, Hassan 2014, Al Ghamdi 2015, Abdul-Ghafour 2017, Aghajani and Aldoo 2018 and Alqahtani 2020). The present researcher finds this popularity to be a compelling reason to choose Arberry's translation for analysis. Elimam's (2017: 64) analysis demonstrates a high esteem for a translation that reads well irrespective of the native language of the translator and reveals, less surprisingly perhaps, an overwhelming preference for Quran translations done by a Muslim translator. Granted that, two-thirds of Elimam's survey even shun any translation done by followers of other religious orientations (e.g. Shi'i or Sufi). With this in mind, the only non-Muslim translator in our list is Arberry. A.J. Arberry, an Orientalist and Professor of Arabic, is one of very few non-Muslims whose translation of the Quran is, to a large degree, not characterized by a biased or offensive and hostile attitude. Al-Nadawī (1417AH: 36) points out that the common tendency in Quran translations written by orientalists is the absence of any real academic endeavor to understand the meaning of the Quran, the translators being more interested in separating their people from the Quran and the biography of Prophet Muhammad. He adds (ibid: 43) that one of the rare exceptions is Arberry. The rampant misrepresentation of the Muslims' Holy Book has led Pickthall to argue (1997: vii) that "no Holy Scripture can be fairly presented by one who disbelieves its inspiration and its message". Similarly, Mustapha, in his discussion of the legitimacy of translating the Quran (2011: 226-227), cites the view of many scholars, who believe that if it is to be translated at all, the Qur'ān can only be translated by a Muslim because it "is essentially a form of exegesis, or



at least is based on an understanding of the text”. Speaking of which, there is a tendency among some commentators on Quran translations done by non-Muslims to ascribe their inaccurate renditions to lack of or minimal recourse to exegetical references in the same way Arab translators’ inexact matches are attributable to their English incompetence.

Arberry's ‘The Koran Interpreted’ no doubt stands out above the other English renderings by non-Muslims in terms of both its approach and quality. El-Hadary (2008: 127) commends Arberry’s translation because he “shows great respect towards the language of the Qur'an, particularly its musical effects. His careful observation of Arabic sentence structure and phraseology makes his translation very close to the Arabic original in grammatical terms i.e. he adopts a literal translation approach where the SL grammatical structure is maintained in the TL”. This orientation, El-Hadary continues (ibid), with the absence of any commentary can make the TT “confusingly unidiomatic” for uninitiated readers (i.e. it does not have “the same meaning as the source and is not “expressed in the natural form of the receptor language”, Larson 1998: 11). Additionally, the translation is not altogether free from mistakes of omission and mistranslation” (Kidwai 1987). Despite his careful renditions (Elimam 2014: 1 32 calls the translation “almost word-for-word”), some oversight seems inevitable as can be seen in the omission of the last part [مع الراكعين] (i.e. with those who bow) of this verse:

{يَا مَرْيَمُ اقْنُتِي لِرَبِّكِ وَاسْجُدِي وَارْكَعِي مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ}

[Q3: 43]

[Mary; be obedient to thy Lord, prostrating and bowing before Him]

Al-Nadawī (1417AH: 61) comments that errors do occur even on the part of this Muslim enthusiast but it is clear that they are not made maliciously as they were in some other translations.

Perhaps few translations of the Quran merit the epithet ‘formal translation’, a term used by Nida to describe those translations in which “features of the form of the source text (wherever possible) have been mechanically reproduced in the receptor language”. One of these is Arberry’s translation, which heeds “the message itself, in both form and content” (Nida 1964: 159) almost verging on literalism. In fact, for some critics, a translation that does not contain any digressive remark is characteristically literal in nature (al-Subayd 2002: 19).

Elimam (2014: 132) describes Arberry’s translation as one loyal to the source text but sometimes this comes at the cost of conveying the correct meaning. It is one that “tries to emulate

the quality of the original. It does so with some success” and it has influenced subsequent translations with similar aims (Mustapha 2011: 229). Arberry’s attention solely centres on the text of the Quran. Elimam (2014: 132) illustrates how this is reflected in the absence of commentaries, in-text glosses or footnotes, which results in a relatively concise translation (Arberry’s word count is about 150,000 while Al-Hilali and Khan’s is 200,000 excluding footnotes). Someone might even suspect that Arberry has not made any use of exegetical materials since his translation is devoid of any explicit notes, but as Ilyas (1981: IV) has found out, “the later translators (M. Ali, Pickthall, Bell, and Arberry) seem to have been influenced by the additional commentaries of AlRāzi, AlTabari, and Abū-Ḥayyan”.

### 3.5 Asad (1964/1980)

Asad’s translation has received a lot of attention from translation theorists and researchers. Many Quran translation analysts (such as Iqbal 2000, Kalajdzisalihović 2011 and Permana and Citraesmana 2017) have subjected the unique aspects of Asad’s innovative style to scrutiny. This is indicative of the popularity of his translation and its influence on subsequent translations. There are some criticisms levelled at Asad’s translation which have undermined its popularity among some readers which we will briefly touch upon in the coming paragraphs.

Muhammad Asad’s ‘The Message of the Quran’ is a unique translation of the Quran “couched in chaste English” (Kidwai, 1987). Mohammad Asad was a famous Muslim thinker, adventurer, writer, linguist and translator of the Quran who descended from a family of Jewish rabbis (Hasan 1998: 10). Al-Nadawī (1417AH: 122-123) states that no doubt Asad is a مُجْتَهِد (‘mujtahid’, literally meaning ‘diligent’ but more idiomatically referring to someone who engages in ‘independent’ undertaking) translator who is not restricted by any previous translation and who can defend (occasionally wide of the mark, admittedly) his innovative renditions. On numerous occasions, he departs from using the conventional equivalents of many Quranic expressions such as the use of ‘those who deny the truth’ as a replacement for the more common ‘disbeliever’, as a translation of كَافِر (kāfir). This departure, regrettably, goes one step further to include many unorthodox views from the perspective of mainstream Islam or ideas that many Muslim theologians would disapprove of, to put it mildly, such as translating حَمِيم (ḥamīm) as ‘burning despair’ rather than ‘scalding water’ (Abdel Haleem 2005: xxix) and

translating يُهَاجِر ('yuhājir', lit. emigrate<sup>1</sup>) as “forsake the domain of evil”. Adopting more or less pseudo-rationalist views leads Asad to deny some events such as “the throwing of Abraham in the fire and Jesus speaking in the cradle” and to deny the existence of some historical figures mentioned in the Quran such as لُقْمَانَ (Luqmān) and ذُو الْقُرْنَيْنِ (Dū al-Qarnayn) (ibid). For this reason, Robinson (1997: 269, 276) identifies him as an “enthusiastic allegorizer” and a “scientific rationalist”.

The question is: does this affect his translation of God’s names. The answer is a resounding ‘yes’. As Al-Amri points out (1433AH: 65), aberrant doctrines can lead the translator to adopt new senses. The translation of God’s name الصَّمَد (Al-Ṣamad) by Asad as “the Eternal, the Uncaused Cause of All Being” is a sense not found in any of the recognized exegetes<sup>2</sup> and smacks of a Mu'tazilite disposition. To say the least, it is a departure from mainstream (Sunni) exegesis which is bound by the “the exoteric meaning” of the Quranic expression (Abdul-Raof 2012: 4). El-Magazy (2004: 9) notes that when Asad changes the meaning, he supplies the reader in a footnote with the ‘literal’ meaning and this is what he has done with the name الصَّمَد (Al-Ṣamad). He defends his choice (2003: 1124), stating “this rendering gives no more than an approximate meaning of the term *as-samad*, which occurs in the Quran only once, and is applied to God alone. It comprises the concepts of Primary Cause and eternal, independent Being, combined with the idea that everything existing or conceivable goes back to Him as its source and is, therefore, dependent on Him for its beginning as well as for its continued existence”. However, one might beg to differ with Asad and somewhat concur with Longfellow’s position (as cited in Gutt 2000: 69) that “the business of a translator is to report what the author says, not to explain what he means; that is the work of the commentator”. Furthermore, we must remember

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<sup>1</sup> As an Islamic term, it “means migrating from a land of persecution and disbelief to a land of belief (normally to find freedom to practice Islam)” (Saleh 2011: 82).

<sup>2</sup> A more comprehensive match is found in Al-Hilali and Khan, who provide the reader with the major senses of the word الصَّمَد (Al-Ṣamad): “As-Samad (the Self-Sufficient Master, Whom all creatures need. He neither eats nor drinks”. Dickins et al (2017: 6) describe Al-Hilali and Khan’s rendition as “an exegetical gloss”. If their translation is felt to be cumbersome, we should compare it with Turner’s “exegetically-led reading” (Turner 1997: xvi): “The cosmos is a manifestation of His eternal names, for He is mirrored in all things in a most subtle manner, and He is free from all wants and needs”. Turner’s rendition resembles that of Asad’s in that it is a blend of improvisation and allegory and Al-Hilali and Khan’s in their elaboration. The exegetical nature of Turner’s translation has led the likes of Prof. James Dickins (personal communication) to consider Turner’s translation of the Quran to be “in many respects, a translation of Muhammad Bāqir Behbūdī’s tafsir of the Quran (written in Persian), rather than a translation of the Quran itself”.

that “it is beyond his remit as a translator to impose these (i.e. his own personal) views on the translated text” (El-Magazy 2004: 70).

Asad’s digressive footnotes give us a peep into Asad’s choices especially those where he seems to veer away from accepted understandings. Footnotes in the translation of religious scriptures in general and in Asad’s translation in particular help occasionally abate the situation and “provide the target reader with a more accurate historical and exegetical perspective” (Beekman and Callow 1974: 209).

Someone might defend Asad’s translation as exegetical (i.e. “the TT is an explication, and usually an expansion, of the contents of the ST”). Indeed, as Dickins et al (2017: 4) point out, the “translator’s experiential baggage becomes obvious in exegetic translation” but the translator is bound by the ST lexical choices and he or she is not allowed to put forward any new sense. Also, al-Ṭabarī (2001: 89) stipulates that a Quranic exegete is not allowed to seek an interpretation outside of the statements of the early righteous predecessors and Muslim scholars. More specifically, al-Qurṭubī (1964 vol: 1, 34) states that whoever is not governed by the manifest exegetical interpretations of the Quran and attempts to extrapolate meanings from his understanding of Arabic will be prone to make many errors of judgement. Even on practical grounds, it is inconceivable, Burman (1998: 728) declares, for any translator to think of translating the Quran without consulting exegetical references, so much so, he continues (ibid), that some even “incorporate exegetical material directly into their versions”.

There are Quran translators who take on a faithfully literal approach to some verses which are of metaphorical nature. Asad is the total opposite in this respect in that he opts for hypothetically analogical reinterpretations for bona fide (real) figures and events. Paradoxically, he chooses a ‘too’ literal interpretation, which no exegete would approve of such as translating الأَعْرَافُ (‘al-’aṣrāf’, in this context it denotes an ‘overhanging or elevated place’, in Arabic مَكَانٍ مُشْرِفٍ ‘makān mušrif’) as “persons who [in life] were endowed with the faculty of discernment” (Ṣawād 2004, which also has a detailed analysis of similar errors). This seems to be based on the meaning of the root عَرَفَ (‘ṣaraf’, lit. know). Some give him the benefit of the doubt being an Austrian convert but as Abdel Haleem (2005: xxix) indicates, Asad is “one of the most original translators, who did the background research for himself in the original lengthy Arabic exegeses”. Robinson (1997: 267) points to the influence of “Mu’tazilite leanings” (the Mu’tazila were “A sect of Muslims who called to the imposition of human rationalization on theological issues, such as predestination, Divine attributes, the Qur’an, etc”); Saleh 2011: 166). The evidence

can be found in his “replace(ment) (of) the divine throne titles with abstract expressions such as ‘in awesome almightiness enthroned’ (Q.27: 26 etc.”, (ibid).

Having said that, Asad’s translation has exerted tremendous influence on subsequent translators. Abdel Haleem expresses his mixed reaction to Asad’s translation, stating that “(h)is language and choice of words too are original, but he inserts many bracketed explanatory words which, though useful, make his sentences cumbersome”. A similar reaction is found in Kidwai (1987), who remarks that Asad’s is a “highly readable translation [which] contains useful, though sometimes unreliable background information about the Qur’anic Suras and even provides exhaustive notes on various Qur’anic themes”. These bracketed explanations are, however, less numerous and shorter than those in Al-Hilali and Khan’s translation.

### **3.6 Al-Hilali and Khan (1974/1996)**

This is a concerted attempt to faithfully replicate the grandeur of the Quran in English carried out by Muhammad Taqi A-Din Al-Hilali, an Islamic scholar from Morocco, and Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Pakistani-born physician who was fluent in Arabic. They wrote their translation with a view to correcting the mistakes of previous translations, which they attributed to translators’ nescience or insensitivity to the peculiarities of the Arabic language (Al-Sahli 1996: 261). Numerous researchers have been interested in assessing the points of strength that have led to Al-Hilali and Khan’s translation enjoying such widespread circulation. This interest can be seen in the many academic works (e.g. Al-Sahli 1996, El-Zawawi 2014, Jassem 2014, Al Ghamdi 2015 and Alqahtani 2020) which have examined translation issues in Al-Hilali and Khan’s translation.

Appiah’s (2000: 427) concept of thick translation in the translation of literature is consonant with Al-Hilali and Khan’s translation. According to this concept, an ideal or “academic” translation should aim to “locate the text in a rich cultural and linguistic context”. The way to do this according to Appiah (ibid) is by providing “annotations and [...] accompanying glosses”.

A feature of Al-Hilali and Khan’s translation that cannot fail to attract the attention of any casual reader is their (slightly) excessive recourse to transliteration. Ghazala (2002: 7) laments the tendency of some translators, who find it so easy to transfer ST Islamic terms into the TT using the Latin alphabet that they sometimes borrow ST general terms which are in no way

exclusive of the SL (such as مُنَافِقٌ ‘munāfiq’ and فَاقِرٌ ‘faqīr’ for a hypocrite and a poor person respectively) and whose TT equivalent is readily available. Why, he (ibid) adds, resort to obscurity when you can be easily understood even if these terms are accompanied by parenthesized explanation? He argues (ibid) that some translators hope that by doing so they will promote the use of ST terms to be later incorporated into the TL culture – a noble goal, though this is not the way to achieve it. However, these ‘ordinary’ words are fashionable among people who wish to code-switch or incorporate Arabic words in their speech for one reason or another.

Al-Aamri (1433AH: 25) describes Al-Hilali and Khan’s translation as having all the hallmarks of recognized books of exegeses, representing a faithful abridged English version of Ibn Kaṭīr, al-Ṭabarī and al-Qurṭubī’s exegeses. One of the criticisms levelled at Al-Hilali and Khan’s translation is its ‘interpretative’ nature. It is true that Al-Hilali and Khan rely heavily on books of exegesis, as can be inferred from the subtitle of their translation, but we must not forget that “all experience including sense experience is interpretative” (Zelechow 1993: 122). Denying this, Zelechow (ibid) warns, will lead to “the repudiation of translation in favour of the dream of perfect translatability, entailing an identity between subject and object, thought and being, literal reading and perfect transferability between language”.

Echoing Dickins et al (2017: 56), Al-Hilali and Khan’s translation can be said to represent a mode of translation called exegetic translation. According to Dickins et al (ibid: 4, 292) exegetic translation “involves explicitly invoking considerations from outside the text in one’s reading of it” or it is “a style of translation in which the TT expresses and comments on additional details that are not explicitly conveyed in the ST<sup>1</sup>”. As Mustapha (2011: 229) explains, being a source-oriented translation (as most translations of the Quran are), this naturally necessitates the use of extensive notes throughout the text. Quran translations of this nature should offer literal equivalents followed by some clarifications or provide transliterated forms followed by lengthy or concise illustrations, Ghazala points out (2002: 22). Some renditions of Islamic terms in Al-Hilali and Khan are reminiscent of Dickins et al’s (2017: 49) description of

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<sup>1</sup> According to Ghazala (2002: 22), exegetic translation is more befitting to translate books on فقه (Islamic Jurisprudence: “(t)he science of religious law in Islam that, in its widest sense, covers all aspects of religious, political and civil life”; Bakkour 2012: 450), because the nature of such books permits or tolerates some elaborations on the ST. Books of تَفْسِيرٌ (‘tafsīr’ or ‘tafsir’, Quranic commentary or exegesis: books that “explain the meaning of Qur’anic text and / or comment on it”, Saleh 2011: 230) allow such freedom. These books of تَفْسِيرٌ *tafsir* (intralingually, rather than interlingually) have a similar role to that of the exegesis process as outlined by Larson (1998: 53): “to determine the meaning which is to be communicated in the receptor language text”.

exegetic translation, in which a TT match is “like a dictionary entry, a paraphrase that defines the term [...] for which there is no conventional lexical equivalent in English” Also, Al-Hilali and Khan’s translation is perhaps a perfect embodiment of what Beekman and Callow (1974: 60) describe as ‘exegetical fidelity’. This is the “principle of basing a translation strictly on a correct understanding of the original message” which can be inferred “by means of a careful study of ST and of reference works such as lexicons, grammars and commentaries” (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997: 53).

Ghazala (2002: 9) argues that Al-Hilali and Khan use explicitation occasionally to an excessive degree. Such prolonged explanations (at least in the view of some critics) have turned some parts of their translation into expositions. The position that Al-Hilali and Khan adopt seems to be an answer to a dilemma that translators often face. To illustrate, Hasan (2013: 92) argues that the translator is torn between the target text readers’ expectations of appreciating the Quran as a linguistic miracle, and as “a carrier of the divine meanings” as revealed to Prophet Muhammad. Hassan believes (ibid) that target readers of the Quran will opt for the latter and this seems to be the model that Al-Hilali and Khan adopt in their translation.

To conclude, it has to be said that Al-Hilali and Khan have catered for the various needs of their readers. One clear example in which they show such subtlety is given by Hasan (2013: 258), who commends their way of informing the reader of multiple senses or interpretations through footnotes or paraphrasing, as can be seen for example in their translation of the word إِمَامٍ (‘imām) in the verse:

{يَوْمَ نَدْعُو كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ}

[Q17: 71]

(And remember) the Day when We shall call together all human beings with their (respective) **Imam (their Prophets, or their records of good and bad deeds, or their Holy Books like the Quran, the Taurat (Torah), the Injeel (Gospel), etc.)**.

### 3.7 Saheeh International (1997)

This is a recent Quran translation that has gained considerable popularity in a short period of time. Many recent comparative studies of Quran translations have selected Saheeh

International for critical analysis sometimes alongside other longer-established translation (e.g. Pickthall and Ali). We find scholarly works (e.g. Kalajdzisalihović 2011, El-Zawawi 2014, Mahammedi 2015, Omar 2015, Maharani 2017, Harley 2021 and Alshahrani 2020) devoted to investigating the qualities that set Saheeh International apart from other translations. For this reason, it has been chosen here to represent more recent endeavors at Quran translation to see whether the authors of Saheeh International have benefitted from the experience of their predecessors.

Written by three American women but sometimes attributed solely to Aminah Assami (Umm Muhammad), an American convert, Saheeh International is regarded by some scholars and researchers as the most accurate and attentive-to-detail translation in circulation (cf. Maharani 2017: 14; Omar 2015; Harley 2021: 4; Alshahrani 2020: 23). This new translation is often paired with Al-Hilali and Khan's translation in its perspectives and *modus operandi*. Elimam (2017: 70), in his critique of various English translations, has, not surprisingly, grouped Al-Hilali and Khan and Saheeh International together. He cites as evidence for this decision the words of an authority who maintains that Saheeh International's translation is "the most thorough and systematic revision of Al-Hilali and Khan's". Careful reading of both translations does not conclusively corroborate this assertion, unless by 'revision' they mean that the translator/revisor has "reconsider(ed) and amend(ed) something, especially in the light of further evidence" (Al-Quṣayrī, definition of 'revise'), in our case Al-Hilali and Khan's translation. Put differently, it is unlikely that they mean that the Saheeh International translators have made occasional amendments while as much as is viable keeping the original intact. Saheeh International's version seems to build on previous translations. This is how a famous Islamic bookstore<sup>1</sup> reviews Saheeh International:

"this is a simpler, clearer, and easier to read translation than many of the popular ones which proceeded it. Saheeh International reviewed each verse in Arabic with reference to several works of Arabic Tafseer and grammar, choosing contemporary wording and carefully placing them in an order similar to that of the original Arabic whenever possible ... the scholars and translators of Saheeh International have paid careful attention to authentic sources of Hadeeth and Tafsir and have made comparisons with previous classic English translations. The result is a highly accessible and reliable work that can be used by anyone wanting to study the authentic meanings of the Holy Quran".

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<sup>1</sup> <https://kitaabun.com/shopping3/quran-arabic-with-english-meanings-saheeh-intl-small-p-170.html>



In the introduction, the translators point out to their intention to not intervene, so as to “let the Quran speak for itself, adding footnotes only where deemed necessary for explanation of points not readily understood or when more than one meaning is acceptable” (1997: ii). Consultation of previous translations has probably made them acutely aware of the likely denotational conflict between contemporary Arabic usage and Quranic usage, and translators’ oversight in relying on contemporary dictionaries. They state “care was taken to avoid using the definitions of modern Arabic dictionaries, upon which contemporary translators frequently depend. These are often variant with the language of the Quran, reflecting a degree of change which has crept into the understanding of certain concepts with the passing of time. Instead, we kept the classical definitions” (1997: iv). This awareness of previous translations’ imperfections has made them occasionally outperform other translations in terms of accuracy and scholarly consistency.

### 3.8 Abdel-Haleem (2004)

Recently, there has perhaps been no other translation that parallels that of Abdel-Haleem in the number of scholarly attempts to uncover its relative strengths and weaknesses. Many contemporary researchers (Kalajdzisalihović 2011, Hasan 2013, El-Zawawi 2014, Al Ghamdi 2015, Mahammedi 2015, and Alqahtani 2020; to cite only a few examples) find Abdel- Haleem to be particularly appealing. This has prompted the present researcher to choose Abdel-Haleem’s translation for analysis.

Abdel-Haleem’s is an Egyptian-born professor of Arabic at the University of London whose recent translation of the Quran (2004) has been “met with satisfaction” (El-Zawawy 2014: 213). Hasan (2013: 11) defends his preference for Abdel-Haleem’s translation because “Abdel-Haleem has shown a remarkable ability to contextualize the Qur’ānic verse within the cultural background in which the Qur’ānic verse was used”. Elimam (2014: 132) commends the smoothness of Abdel Haleem’s translation which “prioritizes natural target language expression”. Similarly, Al-Amri (1433AH: 26) praises the flow of his style but finds fault with his reaction to some sensitive issues which were touched upon in his translation and Benothman (2011) alludes to the influence of “ western ideas embedded in western studies of the Muslim creed”. Also, Benothman (2011) points to Abdel Haleem’s reliance on books of exegetes that adopt “an opinionated interpretation of the Quran” in stark contrast to the likes of Al-Hilali and Khan who have made use of traditional (or orthodox) exegeses. In addition, Benothman (ibid: 151) disapproves of Abdel Haleem’s utilization of *المُعْجَم الوَسِيط* (Al-muḥjam Al-wasīṭ), a

contemporary Arabic dictionary, since it is not considered a basic reference for those investigating linguistic issues in the Quran. As Fatani (2005: 665) notes, “the definitions of modern Arabic dictionaries...are often at variance with the language of the original”.

Abdel-Haleem indicates at the outset of his translation (2005: xxxv) that he strives to keep commentaries to a minimum “(i)n order not to overburden or overzealously guide the reader with extensive commentaries”. Therefore, “footnotes are meant to be minimal, and to explain allusions, references, and cultural background only when it was felt these were absolutely necessary to clarify meaning and context. Sometimes the footnotes explain reasons for departing from accepted translations, give alternatives, or make cross-references” (ibid).

In dealing with multiple senses, Hasan (2013: 258) comments on Abdel-Haleem’s way of selecting just one sense as being sometimes justified by what Abdel-Haleem calls Quranic intertextuality<sup>1</sup> (i.e. “different parts of the Qur’ān explain each other”; Abdel-Haleem 2004/2008: xxx).

Abdel-Haleem describes his ‘new’ translation as “intend(ing) to go further than previous works in accuracy, clarity, flow, and currency of language”. As for his translation of God’s names, Benothman (2011) concludes “Abdel Haleem's work was found to be sound regarding his translation of verses relating to the Names and Attributes of Allah”. In addition, Abdel Haleem “gave special attention in his translation to using multiple meanings for one word” and “tried to avoid any transliterations or literal translations from the Arabic source, so that the meanings of the Qur’anic verses are preserved” (ibid).

After this brief survey of some notable English translations of the Quran, it is important to conclude with the claim made by Kidwai (1987) that English translations of the Quran still lag behind other major Muslim languages such as “Persian, Turkish and Urdu, which have thoroughly exhausted indigenous linguistic and literary resources to meet the scholarly and emotional demands of the task”. As a result, it is incumbent on Muslims to produce “a dignified and faithful expression in the English language that matches the majesty and grandeur of the original” (ibid). Although this is difficult to verify, it is redolent of the lack of satisfaction with current translations of the Quran, however numerous.

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<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it is more appropriate to call this ‘intratextuality’ since the prefix ‘intra-’ means ‘within’ in contrast to ‘inter-’, which means ‘between’ or ‘among’ (OED).

## 4. Translation Strategies

### 4.1 Introduction

Translation strategies are part and parcel of the translation process. God's names are often categorized as culture-bound terms and as such it is difficult to discern whether we are dealing with a problem or difficulty – in the sense that a problem is more objective and is tied to cultural or linguistic issues while a difficulty is more subjectively dependent on the individual translator (Palumbo 2009: 37). To tackle these potential problems (or difficulties), we resort to such techniques in the absence of a complete match between languages, noting, as Larson (1989: 202) seems to suggest, rather bluntly, that “there is more mismatch than match”. However, Ghazala (2002: 2) points out that Islamic terms are translatable no matter how culturally embedded they appear to be and he seems to take no exception to that. This is based on a general principle, he explains (ibid), that nothing in any language cannot be translated into another. Divergence lies in the particular strategy used and whether TT terms express the intended meaning with precision. Also, Ghazala argues that some strategies are disputed as involving ‘translation’ (such as paraphrase) and deemed more or less ‘explanations or annotations’ but this is a too strict view of what translation is all about. Translation, in Ghazala's view (ibid), should be understood as the best version (or equivalent) in the TT of a ST item, be it an exact equivalent or an explanation. Strategies employed by different translators seem to be perceptive (consciously or otherwise) of the rules laid out by different authors. Huber (2000: 50) stresses the importance of terms having certain characteristics when ascribed to God. He explains (ibid) that they must have positive connotations and a “horizontally analogical meaning” at the human level of significance and should be capable of expressing different graduations of significance. The task of describing God is not all plain sailing – so much so that Byrne (2011: 18) compares it to “recounting a colour to a blind person”. There is always the risk of anthropomorphism or attributing human characteristics and qualities to God and the limitations of language can be a contributing factor (ibid).

It is very important before embarking on exploring some common strategies in translating God's names to point to an important distinction found in the literature between local strategies and global ones. Local strategies are akin to Newmark (1988: 81) calls ‘procedures’ while the

global orientation is his whole-text ‘translation method’. Similarly, John Kearns (2009: 283) states that “local strategies relate to the translation of particular language structures and lexical items, while global strategies operate at a more general level”. On the other hand, for Munday (2012: 22) the term ‘strategy’ is reserved for “an overall orientation” while a ‘procedure’ is a specific ephemeral technique. Since the boundaries are blurred, we have purposefully dispensed with this duality in categorization.

We are dealing with the rendition of God’s names which can fit into Vinay and Darbelnet’s (1995: 352) definition of translation unit as “the smallest segment of the utterance whose signs are linked in such a way that they should not be translated individually”. Koller (1979, quoted in Palumbo 2009: 141), points out that the greater structural differences between two languages the more likely they are to require longer units of translation. Although these translation units are difficult to specify syntactically and semantically (cf. Kenny 2009) and since our focus is on the individual word level, our discussion should relate more to local strategies than to global ones. Considering the authoritative status of the Quran, our selection of the word level is in line with Newmark’s (1988: 66) view of text authority, which states that “the more authoritative the text, the smaller the unit of translation”. There is a caveat for picking out small units for translation as Barkhudarov makes the claim that the smaller the unit, the more literal the outcome (1993; quoted in Chesterman 1997: 12).

We must mention incidentally that the translation of God’s names into English often entails word-for-phrase equivalence and that what Catford (1965: 24) calls a ‘rank-bound translation’ (ranks being grammatical units such as sentence, clause, group, word and morpheme) is difficult to maintain with the translation of almost all of God’s names into English because most of God’s names are prefixed by the definite article ال (in accordance with the requirements of Arabic grammar), which corresponds to English ‘the’, so الْخَالِقُ (Al-Xāliq) and الرَّزَّاقُ (Al-Razzāq), for example, are translated as ‘The Creator’ and ‘The Sustainer’ respectively. This makes it in the words of Catford (ibid: 25) ‘unbounded translation’ but not to such an extent as to warrant to use of Catford’s (ibid) somewhat misleading concept of ‘free translation’ or a translation that “shunts up and down the rank scale”. No matter what someone’s stand on the ideal unit of translation, Newmark aptly describes (1988: 66-67) what happens during the translation activity in which “all lengths of language can, at different moments and also simultaneously, be used as units of translation”.

In discussing translation strategies we are faced with two important hurdles. These come into the way of any researcher in translation theories in general and translation terminology in

particular. These are explained in detail in Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997). The first has to do with the selection criteria, since “no reference work can hope to be completely exhaustive” (ibid: xi) and this necessitates consulting a number of references on any issue. Also, decisions have to be made “about including or excluding a particular term”, “which sources should be used?” and “whose pronouncements on a given term should be considered most definitive?” (ibid: xii). Last but not least, there is the issue of fuzziness in the delineation of these translation procedures because “terms which are seemingly intended to contrast with each other in reality usually represent different tendencies, or different positions on a cline, rather than being polar opposites” (ibid: xii). This partly stems from the fact that “the terminology of Translation Studies does not break down into uniform, discrete units” which means that the “(u)sage of a particular term will vary among writers. For example, some writers treat word-for-word translation as distinct from literal translation, while others consider it as a special type of this latter category” (ibid: xii) (emphasis original).

We will soon uncover the uncertainty (or indeterminacy) of many terms in translations studies and this was, early on, alluded to by Nida (1969: 488) who considers “so called scientific models” to be indispensable for comprehension. In our discussion of the different translation procedures we need to move away from subjective evaluation of ST and TL equivalence. To do this, Hatim and Munday (2004: 31) recommend the use of some kind of evaluator known in translation studies as a ‘tertium comparationis’ which is an intermediate form independent of source and target texts “to gauge or assist transfer of meaning between ST and TT”. To this end we have decided to use Leuven-Zwart’s concept of ‘architranseme’ (1989,1990) in which the dictionary meaning of the ST word is used as ‘denominator’ or ‘comparator’ to independently assess the closeness of ST and TT units. Finally in addition to the enormous benefits of different identified translation techniques we must always be attentive to criticism levelled at them. For example, in his critique of the different translation taxonomies, Fawcett (2014: 50) cites many authorities who dispute some strategies (such as transliteration and calque) as really being translation techniques. Also, most of the categories (or strategies) we are about to discuss are, in the words of Fawcett, (2014: 50,51) “after-the-event” reflections or just “fancy names” and as such do not act as foolproof signposts to guide the translator.

## **4.2 Calque / Loan Translation / Through-Translation**

Vinay and Darbelnet (1995: 32-33) define this as a process “whereby a language borrows an expression of another, but then translates literally each of its elements ... which can fill a lacuna

without having to use an actual borrowing”. They (ibid) distinguish between a lexical calque which does not violate TL structures and structural calque which “introduce a new construction into the language”. Crystal (2008: 64) illustrates the concept in linguistic terms stating that “the morphemic constituents of the borrowed word or phrase are translated item by item into equivalent morphemes in the new language”. In other words, “the source pattern is taken into the target text but fleshed out with target forms” (Malone 1988: 26). Meriläinen et al (2016: 106) analyze the process of loan translation stating that “what is transferred from the model language to the recipient language is the semantic content, not the actual phonological form and ...the process involves translating, i.e., replacing the words or morphemes of the model language with their equivalents in the recipient language.

Thus, in the case of Arabic, for an expression to be considered a calque it should undergo “literal translation before being implanted into Arabic” (Elewa 2014: 81). Elewa (ibid) calls this phenomenon “semantic borrowing” whereby “a concept that does not exist in the Target Language can be borrowed literally and be aligned with another domestic concept”. Calques are found in great numbers in “common collocations, names of organizations and components of compounds” (ibid: 346). These calques introduce a new mode of expression or a new construction in the target language (ibid). A calque may originate as a translation error being “influenced by the linguistic make-up of the original text at the morpho-syntactic, lexical, stylistic or typographical level”, or what is commonly referred to as ‘interference’ (Palumbo 2009: 62-63).

Calques have contributed to the development of many languages. Katamba (2005) considers loanshifts (=calques) a rich source of English vocabulary. He contrasts loanwords with loanshifts as two subdivisions of borrowing as a word formation process. “A loanword is a word belonging to one language which is IMPORTED or ADOPTED by another ... (while) a loanshift involves taking on board the meaning represented by a word in a foreign language, but not the word form itself” (ibid: 134, emphasis original). Katamba (ibid: 136) adds that one factor that triggers such borrowings in English is “to provide a word that meets a need for a word where no suitable English one exists”. Fawcett (2014: 35) suggests that translators have a tendency to make use of borrowings more readily than calques because there seems to be no clear guidelines for the use of calques.

Dickins et al (2017: 37) note that a calque may be “unidiomatic in the TL because it is modelled on the structure of an SL expression”. They (ibid) refer to calqued expressions “as

momentary foreignness” (ibid). In time what were originally calques may “become the standard TL cultural equivalents of their SL models” (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997: 18) (cf. Dickins et al 2017: 37-38). Dickins et al warn against the excessive use of calques as some translators might fall into the trap of “mar(ring) the TT with bad calques” (Dickins et al. 2017: 38). Having said that, “it is conceivable that in some TTs the calque – and ensuing exoticism – may actually be necessary, even if its effects need to be palliated by some forms of compensation. (ibid). By ‘exoticism’, Dickins et al. mean an extreme form of source language translation bias “that constantly uses grammatical and cultural features imported from the ST with minimal adaptation, thereby constantly signalling the exotic source culture and its cultural strangeness” (ibid: 36). Dickins (manuscript b) states that we can “regard ‘exoticism’ as a hyperonym of ‘calque’ ... (and) that exoticism is a general orientation throughout a text, whereas calque is “a momentary foreignness”.

Dickins (ibid) divides calques into grammatical calques and ungrammatical ones. “In the case of ungrammatical calques the foreignising element is structural. That is to say, it is either morphological (a matter of the way in which morphemes are put together to make words), or it is syntactic (a matter of the way in which words are put together to make phrases)” (ibid). In short, ungrammatical calques “are ungrammatical (non-lexicalized) and semantically anomalous” (ibid). But we have to be careful when we introduce grammatical calques since in Baker’s view (2011: 94) “grammatical rules are more resistant to manipulation by speakers” than new lexical items, though they occasionally may gain acceptance in restricted circumstances such as creating special effects. Also, Larson (1998: 10) notes that the literal translation of the form of one language would either result in an unnatural form or distort the meaning, for meaning “must, therefore, have priority over form in translation”. In addition to what we can refer to as ‘absolute’ calques, calques can turn into what Dickins et al. (2017: 38) calls “quasi-calques in the TL. So, in addition to ألقى أضواء على for ‘to shed/throw light on’, forms are encountered such as سلط الأضواء على. It is, however, impossible to say in English ‘shed lights on’. In using calque, it is clearly important to get the form right. A failed calque may sound endearing (as does a lot of ‘foreignerese’), or it may jar with speakers of the TL. In either case, it is likely to distract from the intended message”. Someone might wonder why some people or translators prefer calques or borrowings despite their oddness in the target language. Romaine (1995: 59) notes that readers “react negatively to borrowing and prefer to calque instead, since that allows the morphology and phonology of the recipient language to be preserved”.

Newmark (1988: 84, 85) suggests that “in theory, a translator should not ‘initiate’ a through-translation” (i.e. calque) and these “should be used only when they are already recognized

terms”. It seems that using calques violates one of Tytler’s (1978: 9) laws of translation which states that “the Translation should have all the ease of original composition”. In other words, when translators use calques, they have chosen “to confine themselves to a literal interpretation” and have not “adapted their expression to the idiom of the language in which they wrote”. It is typical, however, argues Palumbo (2009: 78), for translations to have “untypical constructs” which violates Tytler’s law of translation and the hypothesis that translated texts exploit TL features more than comparable non-translated texts. As a procedure for translating names, Nord (2003: 194) defines calques as literal renditions of SL names which “preserve their semantic strangeness but lose their foreign look”.

It seems that many of God’s names are frequently translated using calques. But it can be argued that names have a special character in the language and that their unusual syntactic structures are somewhat tolerated. As Lehrer (1992: 133) points out, some names have unconventional aspects and this “can be seen in ones with unusual syntactic combinations, or even outright syntactic violations: The Who, Faster Pussycat ...”

Calques, however, feature prominently in the translation of many of God’s names. They are mostly structural calques and we can see this in the translation of many oft-repeated God’s names such as السَّمِيع (Al-Samī‘) and البَصِير (Al-Baṣīr) usually calqued as “The Hearing” and “The Seeing”. These renditions of God’s names can be dubbed ‘translationese’ since they typify what Hatim and Munday (2004: 12) refer to as “a stilted form of the TL calquing ST lexical or syntactic patterning”. Here is how this happens. In English, adjectives generally premodify nouns or act as complements (Quirk et al 1985: 402-403) but can nonetheless occasionally function as the head of a noun phrase. The “adjectives as noun-phrase heads, unlike nouns, do not inflect for number or for the genitive case and they usually require a definite determiner” (ibid: 421). These nominalized adjectives refer to certain classes of people such as ‘the old’, ‘the rich’ etc. Quirk et al (ibid: 421-424) give three templates for these adjectives. The first type is known as “the innocent” type which has a generic reference and takes a plural verb. The second is “the Dutch” type which is restricted to some nationalities (or demonyms). Then there is “the mystical” type in which certain abstract adjectives (such as ‘best’, ‘unknown’) are the head of a noun phrase. None of these types can accommodate the seemingly unnatural renditions “the seeing” “the hearing”. The fact that their constituent parts mirror their Arabic mould<sup>1</sup> gives rise to what amounts to calqued versions of these names. It is also quite probable that they were

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<sup>1</sup> These newly conceived phrases observe intra-systematic restrictions, mutatis mutandis, such as definite article detachment in English.



coined on the model of the biblical divine epithet ‘the Almighty’ (ironically, itself is a loan translation of the Latin word ‘omnipotēns’<sup>1</sup> “based on analysis of its component parts omni- ‘all’ and potēns ‘powerful, mighty’”, Durkin 2014: 4).

The contrived calques reveal ‘derivational gaps’ in the TL, a term which Lehrer (1970: 257) uses to designate constructions composed of productive stems and affixes which may be combined in a standard manner but have not yet been exploited by native speakers. For Newmark (1995: 123), these “SL syntactic structures inappropriately superimposed on TL” are examples of interference that a good translator should be sensitive to. Martin Luther (cited in Bassnett 2002: 56) lays emphasis on the overriding sway of meaning over grammatical considerations and asseverates that “grammar is necessary for declension, conjugation and construction of sentences, but in speech the meaning and subject matter must be considered, not the grammar, for the grammar shall not rule over the meaning”.

In a nutshell, in a sacred or sensitive text (such as the Quran), it is sometimes incumbent upon the translator, Hatim and Munday (2004: 272) point out, not only to preserve the meaning of what is said but also how it is said. The use of calques in translating God’s names signifies the preservation of the structures of transparent divine names. In view of the fact that God’s names can be categorized as ‘nominalized adjectives’, this makes transferring them even more laborious since adjectives (and adverbs) on the testimony of Newmark (1996: 57) “have the least accurate correspondences” compared to nouns and verbs. Extreme caution should be exercised when using calques to render divine designations since Benjamin (1992: 79) protests that “a literal rendering of syntax completely demolishes the theory of reproduction of meaning and is a direct threat to comprehensibility”. Having said that, House expresses the view (2015: 55, 66) that if a text holds a high status in the SL, it should “remain as intact as possible” and be treated like a quotation. Calqued divine designations clearly reflect that and have made the ST shine through.

### 4.3 Compensation

Primarily, this term is employed apropos of any technique purposed as “a lexical by-pass strategy such as paraphrasing or explanatory translation” where it is “the only compensatory way out open to the translator” (Wilss 1982: 104). “While stylistic, text-specific devices seem

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<sup>1</sup> The word was later borrowed into English.

to fall comfortably within its remit”, Harvey weighs in (1995: 69), “the larger issues of the mismatch between social and cultural practices go well beyond it and threaten to make the concept too general to be of any pedagogical use or theoretical value”. This restrictive view that Harvey (1995: 77) puts forward, which concerns itself with stylistic aspects of transfer that have text-specific relevance, has not achieved as wide a circulation as the one we will delve into shortly. Nevertheless, Harvey’s approach has some bearing on polysemy and synonymy as stylistic devices put to good use. Also, it has the advantage of curbing Newmark’s (1988: 90) too general view of compensation as any course of action to tackle translation ‘loss’ as on this account “the floodgates are open and both loss and compensation get washed away as useful descriptive terms” (Harvey 1995: 71).

Since loss is inevitable and to alleviate certain losses in the translation process, translators may choose to resort to a translation technique which has come to be known ‘compensation’ proper which entails “a free, conscious, careful, ad-hoc choice” not dictated by TL structures, Dickins et al (2017: 290). This happens when a less unacceptable element is introduced (or omitted) to voluntarily make up for a more unacceptable loss of ST effects (ibid: 48). This seems to lend tacit support for Max Eastman’s contention (1936) that “almost all translations are bad”. If a translation procedure is imposed on the translator (be it compression, omission or, needless to say, expansion) then the concept of compensation does not apply (Dickins et al (2017: 56). Sometimes the insertion of some elements involves a certain form of loss (such as economy and less precise meaning) but this outweighs another greater loss (such as message content or idiomaticity) (ibid: 48-49).

We have to note that we are not dealing with what Pym (1992: 281-282) classifies as binary errors (right versus wrong choices). Rather, compensation involves non-binary errors which are often “graced with wavy or straight underlining and the need for further discussion (of the type “It’s correct, but...””. This non-binarism fits the comparative nature of our analysis of the different renditions of God’s names because in Pym’s view (ibid: 282) this kind of analysis “requires that the target text actually selected be opposed to at least one further target text which could also have been selected, and then to possible wrong answers”. Later on, once compensated elements become standardized (e.g. incorporated into bilingual dictionaries), the relative loss they may bring about does not constitute a case of compensation but of constraint (ibid: 49-50).

Dickins et al (ibid: 51-56) suggest three types of compensation. The first is compensation by splitting with “ST features being spread over a longer length of TT” (ibid: 55). If it involves a textual effect such as “making explicit what is implicit in the ST or making implicit what is

explicit” (ibid: 22), we have a second type of compensation: compensation in kind. Finally, compensation in place is a form of compensation which “involves a TT textual effect occurring at a different place” (ibid: 291). Distinctions between these categories are not always clear-cut and certain cases of compensation might involve more than one category (ibid: 53). It is important to note that what we have seen is a narrow view of what compensation is like and there is a broader view of compensation suggested by Vinay and Darbelnet which encompasses all their methods of translation.

Examples abound which illustrate the use of compensation in the translation of God’s names. We can see compensation in kind in the use of English comparative and superlative forms to communicate the intensive (or expansive) nature of God’s names. So, the names الْعَلِيِّ (Al-ʿalī) and الْعَظِيمِ (‘Al-ʿaḍīm’, they are, arguably, a doublet, two near-synonyms<sup>1</sup>) are translated as follows:

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
|                      | [Q2: 255]{ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمِ } (Al-ʿalī, Al-ʿaḍīm) |
| Asad                 | He alone is truly exalted, tremendous                         |
| Pickthall            | He is the Sublime, the Tremendous                             |
| Ali                  | He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory)                   |
| Abdel Haleem         | He is the Most High, the Tremendous                           |
| Saheeh International | And He is the Most High, the Most Great                       |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | And He is the Most High, the Most Great                       |
| Arberry              | He is the All-high, the All-glorious                          |

Asad tries to communicate the (the implicit) quintessential nature of the of God’s name الْعَلِيِّ (Al-ʿalī) by using the intensifiers ‘alone’ and ‘truly’. Pickthall’s translation (i.e. “the sublime”) seems to circumscribe the absolute nature of God’s physical elevation as well as the characteristically supreme nature of His attributes. Ali, Abdel Haleem<sup>2</sup>, Saheeh International, and Al-Hilali and Khan use the superlative form in an attempt to compensate for the loss of the categoric nature of His ‘Highness’ in الْعَلِيِّ (Al-ʿalī). But the aforementioned translators give the other root-sharing name الْأَعْلَى *Al-ʿaḥḥā* (in which the focus is God’s unparalleled exquisiteness in

<sup>1</sup> In Larson’s view (1998: 172) the two pairs ‘holy and righteous’ and ‘strangers and foreigners’ are doublets. By analogical reasoning, the pair الْعَلِيِّ (Al-ʿalī) الْعَظِيمِ (Al-ʿaḍīm) clearly qualifies as a doublet.

<sup>2</sup> One cannot but notice Abdel Haleem’s conformity with other Quran’s translators, which calls into question Shah’s (2010: 9) assertion that Abdel Haleem “has not relied on any previous translations”.

relation to other beings) the same rendition “the Most High”<sup>1</sup>, which gives the false impression that the two names are absolute synonyms. Arberry keeps the two clearly distinct by translating الْعَلِيِّ (Al-ʿalī) with the descriptor ‘all’ to convey the plenary nature of God’s elevation in both status and physical presence which partially compensates for the loss of the comprehensive nature of His highness.

In the above example making the implicit explicit embodies Dickins et al’s (2017) concept of compensation in kind. Asad and Pickthall’s rendition of these names of God makes the two English near-synonymous corresponding names indistinguishable and to collocate them in this way makes it unclear for the English reader as to “whether the purpose is emphasis or distinction”, as Newmark (1995: 104) has succinctly summed up similar instances. Another example is cited by Al Ghamdi (2015: 212), in which Ali attempts to compensate for the loss of the intensive and perpetual sense of God’s forgiveness implicit in the meaning of the name الْعَفَّارُ (Al-ʿaffār) by paraphrasing the name and adding the descriptive phrase “again and again” as the translation of the following verse illustrates:

{وَأِنِّي لَعَفَّارٌ لِّمَن تَابَ}

[Q20: 82]

Ali: I am (also) He that **forgives again and again**

Vinay and Darbelnet (1995: 199) comment on the benefits of these compensatory measures as permitting “the conservation of the integrity of the text while leaving the translator complete freedom in producing the translation”.

It has to be said, by way of conclusion, that many translators find themselves in a quandary as they are faced with the often-unpleasant option of excessive resorting to brackets to compensate for potential losses of meaning, which in turn can be bothersome to many readers since they break up the flow of the text. Yet many target readers readily embrace them as practically ‘Hobson’s choice’ in the final analysis, and in their words “without them a lot of the meaning will be lost” (Elimam 2017: 68,69).

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<sup>1</sup> ‘The Highest’ (or the most High) is one of God’s names mentioned in the Bible (Luke 1: 36) and is commonly translated into Arabic as الْعَلِيِّ (Al-ʿalī).

## 4.4 Consistency

Although it is not commonly listed as a translation strategy despite having an impact on the decisions made by translators, if we adopt the view of strategy as “connot(ing) a teleological course of action undertaken to achieve a particular goal in an optimal way” (Kearns 2009: 282), consistency certainly merits the status of a translation procedure in its own right.

Guillou (2013: 10) illustrates how writers are given mixed messages with regards their choice of words: “(o)n one hand they are encouraged to vary their use of words (and) (o)n the other hand they are encouraged to use the same words (only changing the determiner) when referring to the same entity a second time”. It is true, as Merkel (1996: 1) points out in translating technical texts manually that “it is very difficult to produce consistent translations of recurrent stretches of text”. This situation is aggravated “if several translators work on different sections of the same document simultaneously...and it may be too time-consuming or practically impossible to identify recurrent units in the source text manually” (ibid).

Nida and Taber (1982: 15) make a distinction between verbal consistency and contextual consistency. Verbal consistency (also described by Larson (1998: 162-163) as ‘real concordance’<sup>1</sup> or more loosely ‘formal correspondence’) is a “far sounder principle” and means “always translating one word in the source language by a corresponding word in the receptor language” (Nida and Taber 1982: 208,15). Contextual consistency (called ‘real concordance by Larson (1998: 162), on the other hand, means “translating a source language word by that expression in the receptor language which best fits each context rather than by the same expression in all contexts” (Nida and Taber 1982: 199). They call for dynamic equivalence rather than identity, which sometimes entails departures from verbal consistency, and contextual consistency should always be given priority (ibid: 12, 14). For some researchers such as Hasan (2013: 275) adopting verbal consistency and the lack of contextual consistency which he believes characterizes previous translations of the Quran has obscured the specific senses of polysemous words in the Quran.

Wade (2003: 58) argues that lexical consistency or the lack thereof has been instrumental in assessing Bible translations “with regard to the degree of literalness of the translation, the

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<sup>1</sup> Larson (1998: 162) contrasts ‘real concordance’ with ‘pseudo concordance’ which is the repeated use of the same word or expression in a document to refer to different concepts.

number of translators...”. Tarnócz (1966) argues that whatever strategy a translator adopts in translating names, they have to remain consistent throughout a translation (cited in Vermes 2001: 3). Vermes further explains (ibid: 138) that an important factor that greatly influences the translator’s decision to employ a certain strategy in translating names “is the need to maintain consistency in the translation on three different planes: with prevailing practices (standard usage, norms) in the TL, with characteristic solutions across texts and with solutions within the given text”. In fact, investigating the translation of names in an English- to-Arabic context for example, reveals, however, great variation and inconsistency in the transfer strategy adopted (cf. Falih 2009: 45).

Robinson (1996: 4) notes that Quran translations are not consistent and translators “often translate an Arabic word or phrase in a variety of different ways, which makes it difficult for the reader to appreciate the structural unity of individual surahs and of the Qur’an as a whole”. Abdel-Haleem (2005: xxxi) argues that a translator ought to recognize “when it is appropriate to be consistent in the translation of a repeated term, and when to reflect the context” because “forcing upon a word one single meaning for the sake of consistency results in denial of the context and misrepresentation of the material”. Ghazala argues (2002: 10) that some Quran translators strive hard to maintain consistency in the translation of Islamic terms with varying degrees of success. For example, Pickthall in his translation of صلاة (ṣalāh) oscillates between ‘worship’ and ‘prayer’ but constantly renders زكاة (zakāt) as ‘poor-due’<sup>1</sup>. Al-Hilali and Khan, on the other hand, maintain consistency in translating Islamic terms by transliterating them and then providing some clarifications in parenthesis or glossing them in the footnotes (ibid). Ali, within close proximity, gives two renditions for the title of العزيز (‘Al-ʿazīz’ – a modern day equivalent would be ‘prime minister’ as suggested by Abu-Mahfouz, 2011: 74). In [Q12: 30] he uses “(great) ‘Aziz” which is a combination of a (doctored) transliterated form and a near (cultural) equivalent whereas in [Q12: 78] he turns the title into a descriptive phrase “exalted one”. This, in the view of Abu-Mahfouz (2011: 77), violates consistency and consequently impacts translation accuracy. Although Arberry’s translation is lacking in many aspects (e.g. no additions

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<sup>1</sup> Giving to the poor is one of the channels through which one can pay زكاة (zakāt). Marmaduke’s translation does not take into account other categories to whom زكاة (zakāt) is payable such as the freeing of a Muslim slave or those Muslims who are in debt. Perhaps a better translation would be ‘compulsory alms’ or ‘obligatory charity’. It is clear that as Ghazala (2002: 14) asserts, the translation of any Islamic term is an approximate translation which fails to encompass the full meaning of any term as it is rightly understood in Islam. Misunderstanding is inevitable, he (ibid: 16) continues, unless the translation is read by a Muslim who is well versed in his or her religion.

or footnotes, El-Magazy 2004: 6), it surpasses many translations in terms of its consistency (Robinson 1996: 4) and this can be attributed to the academic nature of the endeavour.

Merkel (1996: 1) notes that “(o)ne suggested remedy to the problem of consistency in translation is to use tools based on translation memories”. Wade (2003: 58), however, claims that modern methodologies are not likely to yield good results “because computers are not yet able to examine semantic contexts and evaluate the effect of these contexts on choices of lexical equivalents”. According to Al Ghamdi (2015: v), the complexity of God’s names has resulted in inaccurate and inconsistent renditions. His study reveals better accuracy and consistency in Arberry’s translation than in other translations which he looked at.

To cite some instances of inconsistency here in addition to the ones we noted in passing elsewhere, we find an example of inexplicable inconsistency in translating the divine name الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān) by Ali. Usually, he translates it as ‘Most Gracious’ as in [Q1: 3]. Quite surprisingly, on one occasion, he chooses to transliterate the name (rather imprecisely) as the following verse shows:

{ قُلْ ادْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوْ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمَنَ أَيًّا مَا تَدْعُوا فَلَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ }

[ Q17: 110]

**Ali:** Say: “Call upon Allah, or call upon **Rahman:** by whatever name ye call upon Him, (it is well): for to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names.

It might be assumed that Ali transliterates the name because he wants to place an extra emphasis on it in this particular context as he explains in a footnote following the above verse (1987: 813) “(t)he attribute of Mercy in Raḥmān was particularly repugnant to the Pagan Arabs ...: that is why special stress is laid on it in the Quran”. Yet in verse [Q55: 1]:

**Ali:** (Allah) Most Gracious

Ali adds what appears to be a classificatory term “i.e. Allah” to bring to light the intended reference of the name الرَّحْمَنُ (‘Al-Raḥmān’, the Most gracious). According to Hatim and Munday (2004: 18) bracketed discriminators point to the field or collocation for each translation equivalent but this classifier (i.e. ‘Allah’) does not improve our understanding of the verse since the context makes it clear who the referent is, and, as Nida (1964: 137) asserts, the use of classifiers is justified when they are used to reduce the heavy communication load which the use

of loanwords entails. No other translator has ever used “Allah” as a classifier to precede any of God’s names as this introduces unnecessary redundancy. Inconsistency is also a commonplace occurrence in Pickthall’s translation; here is one example:

{فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُورًا قَدِيرًا}

[Q4: 149]

**Pickthall:** Allah is ever Forgiving, **Powerful**

{والله قَدِيرٌ}

[Q60: 7]

**Pickthall:** Allah is **Mighty**

Pickthall’s translation(s) of الْقَدِير (Al-Qadīr) suffer(s) from two main shortcomings. First there is the aspect of hyponymic translation (see section 4.13). Second it shows unwarranted lack of consistency. Further evidence is furnished by Al Ghamdi (2015: 219), who points out that Pickthall’s uses the same rendition (i.e. “mighty”) “to render other Divine Names such as عزيز *ʿazīz* (on dozens of occasions), e.g. Q. 2: 109, 3: 6, 3: 18) and Qahhār (see Q.12: 39, 13: 16, 14: 48 and 40: 16). Pickthall also commonly translates رَبِّ (Rabb) as ‘Lord’ but, quite bizarrely, on a single occasion he gives the more general rendition ‘Allah’ as can be seen in the following verse:

{ وَمَا تَأْتِيهِمْ مِّنْ آيَةٍ مِّنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ }

[Q6: 4]

**Pickthall:** Never came there unto them a revelation of the revelations of **Allah** but they did turn away from it

Pickthall’s practice is reminiscent of the opening remarks of the translators of the King James Bible (KJB), who proclaimed “we have not tied ourselves to a uniformity of phrasing or to an identity of words” (2008 : Ixvii-Ixviii).

While we may forgive Ali and Pickthall for their fluctuations, for their translations were written at time when the ‘academic’ notions of consistency were not presumably in vogue and maintaining consistency through computational means were not technologically realizable, we may however take a dim view of the lack of consistency of the likes of Abdel Haleem who needlessly varies his renditions of divine names such as the (free) binomials الْعَلِيِّ (Al-ʿalī) الْعَظِيمِ (Al-ʿaḍīm). We may hesitantly give leave for his vacillating rendition of الْعَلِيِّ (Al-ʿalī) since the two TL versions encapsulate the denotational and metaphorical nature of the Arabic original.



Nonetheless, using “The almighty” to render two irreconcilably dissimilar names (i.e. العَظِيمُ ‘Al-ṣaḍīm’ and العَزِيزُ ‘Al-ṣazīz’) is an unsound course of action. Also, we are not aware of motives behind departing from a superior, less generalized alternative for العَظِيمُ (Al-ṣaḍīm) [i.e. ‘the Tremendous’ and “the Supreme”], which he makes use of singly for ‘Tremendous’ in [Q2: 255] and twice for “Supreme” in [Q56: 96] and [Q56: 74].

|              |   |  |
|--------------|---|--|
|              | [Q2: 255] العَظِيمُ العَلِيِّ (Al-ṣalī, Al-ṣaḍīm) | [Q42: 4] العَظِيمُ العَلِيِّ (Al-ṣalī, Al-ṣaḍīm) |
| Abdel Haleem | the Most High, the Tremendous                     | the Exalted, the Almighty                        |

Beekman and Callow (1974: 159) instruct translators to restore concordance “when there is no justifying reason for the variety of renditions”. Many unpremeditated renderings can be avoided with the help of technological advances which can strongly enhance consistency. According to Vasconcellos (2001: 697), consistency has been hailed as one of the merits of machine translation over human translation.

## 4.5 Cultural Substitution

Leppihalme (1997: 4) ruminates on the then widely held belief<sup>1</sup> that “translators need to be not just bilingual but bicultural in order to fully understand the target text and be able to transmit it to the target audience”, but he dismisses this belief as it does not cater for the needs of the TL readership.

God’s names can be considered culturally specific (or culture-specific) items because they sometimes partly or wholly meet the criteria proposed by some researchers. According to Mustafa (2018: 9), “Culture-specific terms are part of the terminology of the ST, and therefore also part of the SC, and which are difficult to translate into the TT as the content, subject matter, and system are different in the TL and TC and there is therefore a lack of equivalent terms”.

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<sup>1</sup> Hatim and Mason (1990: 223), for example, contend that “the translator has not only a bilingual ability but also a bi-cultural vision”.

In their book *Translating the word of God*, Beekman and Callow (1974) suggest the use of cultural substitution when concepts or events are not known in the target language. In their discussion of lexical equivalence, they define cultural substitution as “the use of a real-world referent from the receptor culture for an unknown referent of the original, both of the referents having the same function” (1974: 201). Newmark (1988: 81-82) calls this cultural substitute a ‘cultural equivalent’ and describes it as an “approximate translation where a SL cultural word is translated by a TL cultural word”. Baker (2011: 29) mentions cultural substitution as one of the strategies to deal with non-equivalence at the word level, stating that “it gives the reader a concept with which s/he can identify, something familiar and appealing”.

But “the translator's decision to use this strategy will largely depend on (a) how much licence is given to him/her by those who commission the translation, (b) the purpose of the translation and (c) the translator’s own judgement of the desirability or otherwise of obscuring the cultural specificity of the source text” (ibid). Cultural substitution should not normally be used to render any word that constitutes a historical reference, “as this would violate the fundamental principle of historical fidelity” (ibid: 203). Newmark (1988: 82) also points out that the problem with these cultural equivalents is that “(t)heir translation uses are limited, since they are not accurate, but they can be used in general texts, publicity and propaganda, as well as for brief explanation to readers who are ignorant of the relevant SL culture. They have a greater pragmatic impact than culturally neutral terms”. According to Baker (2011: 204), another precaution to observe is “to ascertain whether the word to be replaced was used with its normal, general function in focus, or whether it has a special function in the particular context being considered” (ibid: 204). She further suggests ways to compensate for the potential loss of meaning incurred by the use of cultural substitutes. This can take the form of footnotes or modifying phrases (ibid: 209-210).

Cultural substitution is part of a general approach known as cultural translation, “which is sensitive to cultural as well as linguistic factors” (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997: 35). Cultural translation also encompasses “additions [...] made which cannot be directly derived from the original ST wording; these might take the form of ideas culturally foreign to ST, or even elements which are simply included to provide necessary background information” (ibid: 36) (cf. Nida and Taber 1982). Nida and Taber (ibid: 134) state that, in the context of Bible translation, the translator should not venture into cultural translation as “(I)t is the job of the pastor and teacher, not of the translator, to make the cultural adaptation”. The translator’s first port of call should be the linguistic translation “in which (the) only information which is linguistically implicit in the original is made explicit” (ibid: 203). They describe this linguistic

approach as legitimate and faithful. These qualities are lacking in cultural translation (ibid: 134,203).

The concept of cultural transplantation which Dickins et al (2017) use bears remarkable resemblance to that of cultural substitution. As a form of cultural transposition, cultural transplantation involves “transplanting of the entire setting of the ST, resulting in the entire text being rewritten in an indigenous target culture setting” (ibid: 38). Dickins (2012: 58, emphasis original) argues that “If the same elements are not found in both cultures, the translator may substitute something in the Target Text from the Target Culture which is similar to the element referred to in the Source Text in the Target Culture”. These transplanted texts, as Dickins et al. (2017) point out, are not translations but ‘adaptations’. Although they focus on wholesale transplantation which “is generally only done with literary works, for commercial reasons” (ibid: 219), there are instances with a touch of cultural transplantation (ibid: 54) done on a small scale in translation (2017: 38). Dickins et al. argue (2017: 39) that, ideally, translators should avoid wholesale cultural transplantation and should aim for less drastic solutions to cultural problems in translation.

Ivir (1987: 35), who holds the somewhat extreme view that “translating means translating cultures, not languages”, puts forward seven strategies for resolving cultural differences between the SL and TL. One of these is substitution, which according to Dickins (2012 and manuscript b) can be fitted into a cultural matrix that proposes procedures for translating cultural elements. He refines some of the concepts in Dickins et al (2017). Under what Dickins calls “non-synonymy oriented translation”, he (manuscript b) introduces the concept of ‘cultural analogy’ as an apt replacement of the fuzzy concept of cultural transplantation. The notion of cultural analogy, he asserts, can be invoked if “there is no situational identity (and) communicative translation is impossible”. Elsewhere he explains these two concepts stating that “situational equivalence involves cases in which the same situations (or functions) can be identified in both cultures”.

The notion of cultural analogy and communicative translation refer to:

“a mode of free translation whereby ST expressions are replaced with their contextually/situationally appropriate cultural equivalents in the TL; i.e. the TL uses situationally apt target culture equivalents in preference to literal translation” (Dickins 2012: 58, 2017: 290).

There are occasions when it is befitting to use cultural substitution. For example, Soori (2015: 1824) suggests using it “if there is an overlap rather than a clear-cut presence vs. absence of a particular element of culture”. Also, Mustafa (2018: 26) points out that the “advantage of this [i.e. substitution] is that it is easy for the TL reader to read and understand but it may lose some of the SL meaning”. However, he also advises the translator to consider the possible consequences of using this procedure.

In the translation of some of God’s names, we can find instances of cultural transplantation where “SL names are replaced by indigenous TL names that are not their literal equivalents, but have similar cultural connotations” (Hervey and Higgins 1992: 29-30). For some translators Such as Asad and Abdel Haleem, ‘God’ seems to be the cultural equivalent of the Arabic word الله (for a full discussion of this generic name of God, see section 2.5). Despite their limitations in fully reflecting the Arabic meanings, ‘Lord’ and ‘Almighty’ have been used by most of our selected translators to render the names الرَّبِّ (Al-Rabb) and الْعَزِيزِ (Al-ʿazīz) respectively because they fit as relatively good TL cultural substitutes for the Arabic originals as the following table shows:

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
|                      | [وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ { Q26: 9                       |
| Asad                 | But, verily, thy <b>Sustainer</b> - He alone - is <b>almighty</b> |
| Pickthall            | And lo! thy <b>Lord!</b> He is indeed <b>the Mighty</b>           |
| Ali                  | And verily, thy <b>Lord</b> is He, <b>the Exalted in Might</b>    |
| Abdel Haleem         | your <b>Lord</b> alone is <b>the Almighty</b>                     |
| Saheeh International | And indeed, your <b>Lord</b> - He is <b>the Exalted in Might</b>  |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | And verily, your <b>Lord!</b> He is truly <b>the All-Mighty</b>   |
| Arberry              | Surely thy <b>Lord</b> , He is <b>the All-mighty</b>              |

العَزِيزِ (Al-ʿazīz) does not just mean ‘almighty’<sup>1</sup> (which denotes ‘having complete power; omnipotent’, according to OED) but also expresses His ability ‘to subdue’ and ‘not to be

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<sup>1</sup> To a greater degree, even the cognate form ‘mighty’ (which OED defines as “possessing great and impressive power or strength”) does not capture some of the denotational aspects of the Arabic word. The difference between ‘almighty’ and ‘mighty’ is utilized by Jehovah’s Witnesses (a Christian denomination that rejects the mainstream Trinitarian concept of God; their beliefs are found in their main publication *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society 1982 ) to remonstrate that Jehovah is ‘Almighty’ while Jesus Christ is only ‘Mighty’ and for them the ‘Mighty’ is not the ‘Almighty’s’ equal. Put differently, as Licona (1998:

subdued’ as al-’aṣḫānī explains (1412AH: 565). al-Bayhaqī (1401AH: 59) defines the name as One ‘who always overpowers’ and the ‘invincible and thus unassailable’. In most English translations of the Bible, ‘almighty’ is seen as a perfect match for Hebrew ‘Shaddai’ (quite possibly cognate to Arabic شَدِيد (‘šadīd’<sup>1</sup>, ‘strict’ or ‘strong’). ʿumar (2008vol2: 842) gives the senses of ‘master’ and ‘owner’ for رَبِّ (rabb) but al-’aṣḫānī (1412AH) contends that primarily it signifies تَرْبِيَةٌ (‘tarbiyah’, upbringing or nurturing) something pending its amelioration.

Byrne (2011: 26) explains that the word ‘Lord’ in its Biblical sense is “equivalent to earthly (real or fictional) servant-lord relationships”. Ali (1987: 3) is acutely aware of the prevalence of ‘Lord’ but states that the “Arabic original has also the meaning of cherishing, sustaining, bringing to maturity” and at another place he asserts (ibid: 1938), “the word ‘Lord’ by itself is an inadequate rendering. For it implies cherishing, guarding from harm, sustaining, granting all the means and opportunities of development”. This frame of reference seems to carry weight in his vacillating renditions of the name. Put another way, Ali’s apparent lack of resolution has led him to put forward an array of matches such as “Lord” as above, “Cherisher” [Q2: 131], “the Cherisher and Sustainer” [Q7: 54], “The Lord and Cherisher” [Q7: 61] and “Guardian-Lord<sup>2</sup>” [Q87: 1]. This typifies Malone’s concept of divergence (see Divergence; section 4.6).

Al-Hilali and Khan spell out the problems with ‘Lord’, stating that “there is no proper equivalent for ‘Rabb’ in the English language. It means the One and the Only Lord for all the universe, its Creator, Owner, Organizer, Provider, Master, Planner, Sustainer, Cherisher, and Giver of security. Rabb is also one of the Names of Allāh. We have used the word “Lord” as the nearest to Rabb”. Similarly, Shah (2010: 6) acquiesces to the inadequacy of ‘Lord’ and bemoans

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38) summarizes their doctrine, “Jesus is a “mighty god,” but Jehovah is described as “Almighty God” elsewhere and, therefore, is more powerful (ie. Jesus is mighty, while God is almighty)”. So, since ‘almighty’ denotes the possession of absolute or unlimited power, using it is more commensurate with God’s omnipotence and His عِزَّة (invincibility, unequivocal power, utter supremacy and honour). With this in mind, it follows that Pickthall’s (as well as Abdel Haleem’s [Q40: 42] atypical, once-only) choice of ‘Mighty’ in place of the more judicious and mutually agreeable “almighty” does not quite fit the bill.

<sup>1</sup> More often than not, Arabic ش ‘sh’ corresponds to Hebrew ש ‘s’. (cf. Albright 1935: 180-193 and Blue Letter Bible 1996-2002).

<sup>2</sup> Driven by considerations of compactness on one occasion, he gives preference to this rendering (1987: 1938) although the context under scrutiny does not stand apart from other instances in which the word رَبِّ (Rabb) is mentioned.

the elusive endeavour to find an English word capable of conveying the whole range of meanings that رَبِّ (Rabb) has.

Abdul Majid Daryabadi, a famous Quran translator, argues (1991: 3) that “‘Lord’ is but a poor substitute for the Arabic رَبِّ (Rabb) which signifies not only the Sovereign but also the Sustainer, the Nourisher, the Regulator, and the Perfector. The relation in which the God of Islam stands to all His creation is that of a righteous, benign Ruler, and not that of a mere ‘father’”. Asad seems to suspect non-equivalence in ‘Lord’ and his extensive knowledge of the Jewish and Christian scriptures (Elsayed 2017: 63) seems to impact his choice. So he maintains using “Sustainer” as a potentially good match. With Asad, we see the implementation of Larbaud’s advice (1946, quoted in Newmark 1995: 16) that translators must look up every word even the ones they are very familiar with, but we can also see a reflection of what Iqbal (2000: 112) identifies as “a careful understanding of the nuances of the language”, which can occasionally lead to a single word being rendered by a long phrase, or even sentence, as we can see at times in transforming many divine designations into longer stretches of the language.

Some of the above translators (such as Pickthall, Ali, Al-Hilali and Khan), who are not committed to allocating one TL equivalent for every SL name have gratuitously made two different divine designations undifferentiated by using the same word “Lord” for الرَّبِّ (Al-Rabb) and, oddly enough, for مَوْلَى (Mawlā) as in [Q10: 30], while other possible alternatives for مَوْلَى (Mawlā) are at their disposal (such as ‘Master’ used by Saheeh International, “Patron” or even Arberry’s suboptimal “Protector”). Nonetheless, with their restrictive senses in mind, the above translators find in ‘Lord’ and ‘Mighty’ (or ‘Almighty’) natural target language cultural equivalents for الرَّبِّ (Al-Rabb) and الْعَزِيزِ (Al-ʿazīz) respectively. This confirms Sato’s finding (2016: 9) that “(s)ubstitution or modification of a name may cause a loss of nuance”.

In this regard, Hatim and Munday (2004: 56) raise the question of whether it is worthwhile to invest in retrieving opaque information (such as a meaning or a nuance or an implication) for TT readers. The answer, they believe, lies in Levý’s Minimax principle (1967: 1179), which in consideration of the decision-making process states that the translator “resolves for that one of the possible solutions which promises a maximum of effect with a minimum of effort”. This principle is linked to what Levý (1967: 1180) refers to as a ‘pessimist strategy’ which is a tendency by some translators to make a preassessment of TL aesthetic or linguistic expectations and dismiss all choices that are not in line with these expectations.

By adopting recognized cultural equivalents, the above translators do not seem to feel that the extra effort in finding a better equivalent is justified, but when we are considering the magnitude and importance of God's names, investing in finding an exact, or even approximate, equivalent for God's names is certainly justified.

## 4.6 Divergence

This is one of the translational patterns (also called 'trajection') which Malone (1988) lists to resolve, partially at least, "a given source-target pairing" (Malone 1988: 15). Divergence is Malone's (ibid) term for the process of "translating one source word by more than one target word in different contexts (Fawcett 2014: 147). Fawcett (ibid: 43) refers to this as "one-to-many equivalence", which brings about the sometimes-desirable effect of disambiguation. Taylor (1998: 53) in his exploration of structural and lexical differences in English/Italian translation defines divergence as the processes of "choosing a suitable term from potential range of alternatives. There may be a limited number of alternatives to diverge towards ... or a bewildering selection".

Taylor (ibid: 54) seems to suggest that selection is at the heart of the translation process such that "the translator is often called upon to select from grammatical paradigms, where more than one construction may be acceptable". So, "making the right choice (or a right choice) in all circumstances is the translator's aim and there are generally linguistic or extralinguistic clues available" (ibid). It is worth mentioning that the notion of translation divergence is used differently in the machine translation community. Dorr (1994: 597), for example, points to the "existence of translation divergences (i.e., cross-linguistic distinctions) (which) makes the straightforward transfer from source structures into target structures impractical". These divergences include "divergences, in which the same information is conveyed in the source and target texts, but the structures of the sentences are different ...and translation mismatches, in which the information that is conveyed is different in the source and target languages" (ibid: 599).

Dorr (1994) limits her discussion of translation divergences to seven types, most of which seem to fit in the different patterns of translation shifts described by translation theorists such as Catford (1965). However, "(O)ther types of translation divergences or mismatches, briefly mentioned, but not considered in Dorr's analysis, are the ones based on purely syntactic

information, as well as mismatches due to idioms, aspect information, world knowledge, etc.” (Gola 2012: 8). This view of divergence as commonly employed by machine translation specialists needs not concern us here as it will be discussed in detail elsewhere in this chapter (see sections on shift/transposition and paraphrase).

Although divergence is understood to be a useful translation strategy, it also “crops up as a problem for translation with notorious frequency” (Malone 1988: 29). This may be because “such disambiguation into divergence is not always easy, often because dictionaries are out-of-date or incomplete” (Fawcett 2014: 43). Also, divergence can be “a source language stylistic choice that cannot always be replicated in the target language” (ibid). Another difficulty involving divergence has to do with the absence of “any advance guarantee that the source text will contain sufficient cues as to whether B or C is the better rendition of A in a given case” (Malone 1988: 29). These cues could be linguistic, situational or stylistic. However, there are cases where “the resolution of Divergence is either undesirable, or precluded in principle, or both. One such case type might be called that of ARTISTIC SUSPENCE” (ibid: 34, emphasis original). So, this semantic vagueness or indeterminacy in the SL is intended to create stylistic variation.

In the context of God’s names, we find this one-to-many equivalence in the translation of the name العزيز (Al-ʕazīz). When it is used to designate God, some translators give it a different rendition from when it is used to describe mortal beings. Consider the following:

|                      | {ذُوْكَ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ} [Q44: 49] (Al-ʕazīz) العزيز الكريم | {اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ} [Q2: 129] (Al-ʕazīz) |
|----------------------|--|---|
| Asad                 | mighty   | almighty  |
| Pickthall            | the mighty   | Mighty  |
| Ali                  | mighty   | the Exalted in Might  |
| Abdel Haleem         | powerful   | the Mighty  |
| Saheeh International | the honored  | the Exalted in Might  |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | the mighty   | the All-Mighty  |
| Arberry              | the mighty   | the All-mighty  |

The translations in the right column are for God’s name which are made distinct from (to varying degrees) from the same attribute when used to describe human beings. To indicate the individuality of the attribute in the two contexts, Abdel Haleem opts for a near-synonym while



Pickthall, on the other hand, just drops capitalization that is often used when a name is used to describe God.

## **4.7 Exoticism/Foreignizing Translation vs Domesticating Translation**

According to the cultural matrix proposed by Dickins et al. (2017: 36), exoticism is the lowest level of cultural transposition. It is used to signal “TT foreignness”. So, a text bearing the marks of exoticism “constantly uses grammatical and cultural features imported from the ST with minimal adaptation, thereby constantly signalling the exotic source culture and its cultural strangeness” (ibid). Palumbo (2009: 48) argues that foreignization makes the ST stand out in the TT by purposefully “avoiding the fluency that would mask its being a translation”. Contrary to what some people believe, “(t)his may indeed be one of the TT’s chief attractions, as with some translations of Classical Arabic literature that deliberately trade on exoticism” (Dickins et al 2017: 36).

However, Larson (1998: 25) calls for an idiomatic (domesticated) receptor language text while enabling the translator to self-assess their success by gauging their readers’ ability to find out that it is a translation. Dickins et al (2017: 36) note (ibid) that exoticism can sometimes be unavoidable as the nature of the SL might dictate such an approach. Nida concedes (1964: 167) that “no translation that attempts to bridge a wide cultural gap can hope to eliminate all traces of the foreign setting”. These traces are more visibly seen in calques, which are considered to be a form of exoticism, but if a translator makes extensive use of calques in their translations, then the whole TT can be described as exotic (Dickins et al 2017: 37-38). Dickins (manuscript b) seems to prefer the more common near-synonymous, but broader, term “foreignizing translation” to cover “exoticism”.

Dickins (ibid) and Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997: 59) attribute the concept “foreignizing translation” to Venuti (1995), who strongly favors this strategy which “signifies the difference of the foreign text, yet only by disrupting the cultural codes that prevail in the target language”. This idea has its origin in Schleiermacher (1838), who makes a distinction between a translator who “leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him” and a translator who “leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him” (quoted in Venuti 1995: 19-20). According to Pym (1995: 13), Schleiermacher’s rejection

of foreignizing translation stems from his “political opposition to French expansionism in Germany”. In Pym’s view, Schleiermacher’s foreignizing translation could crudely be described as “literalist (more word-for-word)” while his domesticating translation may be described as “naturalizing... (more sense-for-sense)” (ibid: 1). Pym (ibid: 5) criticizes “Schleiermacher’s literalist translator – the good translator – (who) follows the source text as closely as possible so that readers may experience what Lefevere, translating Schleiermacher, renders as ‘a sense of the strange’ ... Translators risk going too far, betraying themselves and their language”.

Robinson (2011: 111) refutes the claim put forward about people being adversely affected by foreignizing translations, arguing that “(m)any readers associate the strategic awkwardness of a foreignized text with the authoritarian discourse of textbooks, legalese, etc. – so that it seems more ‘colonizing’ than certain playfully liberating assimilative translations. For other readers the quaintness of foreignized texts ... makes their authors, and the source culture in general, seem childish, backward, primitive, precisely the reaction foreignism is supposed to counteract”. Robinson (ibid) is critical of the domestication/foreignization dichotomy because, in his view, “(t)he distinction between ‘foreignizing’ and ‘assimilating’/ ‘domesticating’ a text is in any case based on a naive linguistics... (For example,) Ostensibly ‘reductive’ or ‘assimilative’ or ‘fluent’ language can be ‘foreignized’ or ‘defamiliarized’ by the simple act of reading it in a different tone of voice – sarcastic, ironic, angry, campy, fearful, bombastic, etc. – and a good actor or speaker can ‘naturalize’ even the strangest and most foreign-sounding phrase, so that no one notices anything out of the ordinary”. Similarly, Hedger (2006: 64-65) criticizes the notion of foreignization advocated by Venuti, on the basis that “Venuti’s description of foreignization turns it into a subjective concept, dependent on the reader’s rather than the translator’s viewpoint...(and) one can talk about two different types of foreignizing discursive strategies: the deformation of the target language in order to match the source language, and the deformation of the target language without matching the source language, simply to indicate the general ‘foreignness’ of the source text”.

According to Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997: 59), foreignizing translation as advocated by Venuti (1995), “deliberately breaks target conventions by retaining something of the foreignness of the original”. Venuti (1995) argues in great detail in defence of foreignizing translation because it challenges the dominant practices of domestication in Anglo-American contexts. Also, he states (ibid: 16) that domestication produces an illusion of transparent, fluent semantic equivalence while obscuring differences which an ideal translation is supposed to convey. Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997: 59) conclude that opting for Venuti’s approach “would entail not only a freedom from absolute obedience to target linguistic and textual constraints, but also

where appropriate the selection of a non-fluent, opaque style and the deliberate inclusion of SL realia or TL archaisms". The issue of whether or not to adopt a foreignizing framework in translation has far-reaching consequence especially in the area of literary theory and "the call for adopting foreignizing translations has thus become closely associated with postcolonial translation discourse" (Hui 2009: 203).

Reproducing many of God's names in English brings about many untypical (foreign) colligational patterns (i.e. the grammatical company a word keeps (or avoids) or the place in a sequence that a word prefers (or avoids); Hoey 1998). The frequent co-occurrence of God's names in the complement position is an example of this hypothetical universal of translation (cf. Palumbo 2009: 143) as can be seen in the following verse:

{ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ }

[Q2: 129]

**Al-Hilali and Khan:** You are **the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.**

This example along with many other examples introduce in the TL an untypical (foreign) pattern which associates God's names with the subject complement position (i.e. the word or phrase that follows a copular verb (e.g. the verb 'to be') that "completes the meaning of the subject by renaming or describing it"; Hacker and Sommers 2014: 493). This profusion of foreign patterns in Al-Hilali and Khan's translation typifies foreignization. Hasan (2013: 270) describes Al-Hilali and Khan's translation as embodying the epitome of "foreignizing the Quranic expression...(which)clearly indicates the translators' source-text orientation". One other clear manifestation of foreignization is their heavy use of transliteration, which is occasionally uncalled for, and which Al Ghamdi (2015: 274) frowns upon as being "perplexing as well as tedious for the readers".

Before we move to another strategy it is worth mentioning here that, in principle, it is difficult to categorically establish that a certain Quran translation is domesticating or foreignizing. More often, a given translation has aspects of both orientations. So, any verdict made should not be taken at face value. For example, Al-Hilali and Khan's translation with regards to the translation of God's designations, displays many features which bear the stamp of a foreignizing translation (such as transliteration, calque, literal translation). In fact, in their translation of divine names, Al-Hilali and Khan often adopt an amplified synergetic approach, assimilating native forms or calqued patterns with TL cultural equivalents. This and their heavy reliance on exegetical materials are all manifestations of "Partial Foreignization and Partial Domestication" (Putrawan

2018: 312, emphasis original). That said, Benothman (2011) who has drawn a comparison between Al-Hilali and Khan's translation with that of Abdel Haleem, argues that while "Al-Hilali and Khan tried their best to bring the English reader closer to the Qur'an" (i.e. foreignizing translation), Abdel Haleem "tried his best to bring the Qur'an closer to the English reader" (i.e. domesticating translation).

## 4.8 Explicitation/Addition/Amplification

Ideally a translator should aim for concentration, which Vinay and Darbelnet define (1995: 192) as the use of as few words as possible in the TL to translate a SL item without the loss of any meaning. This is not usually (ibid) how things shape up, as dilution (using more words with no loss of meaning) is by and large inevitable. In between these two extremes lies explicitation (also called 'addition' and 'amplification') which is used to remedy syntactic or meaning losses (ibid).

According to Ghazala (2002: 5), the most common strategy in translating Islamic terms is the use of a descriptive or explanatory equivalent. This phenomenon occurs when the TT states the ST information in a more explicit manner than the ST (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997: 55). According to Murtisari (2016: 64), the concept of explicitation, perverse as it is, and the underlying concepts of explicitness and implicitness have not been thoroughly investigated. Kamenická (2007: 45) claims that "there seems to be a lack of recognition of the fact that the interpretation of the term itself varies from one researcher to another". Kamenická (ibid: 46) states that inherent in the discussion of the process of explicitation is what Blum-Kulka (1986: 19) refers to as the 'explicitation hypothesis', which states that "(t)he process of interpretation performed by the translator on the source text might lead to a TL text which is more redundant than the SL text. This redundancy can be expressed by a rise in the level of cohesive explicitness in the TL text".

Vinay and Darbelnet define explicitation as (1995: 342) "(a) stylistic translation technique which consists of making explicit in the target language what remains implicit in the source language because it is apparent from either the context or the situation". Bechor (2011: 17) argues that Vinay and Darbelnet's definition has been influential in the literature despite its

vagueness and also its failure to address “(q)uestions and doubts that come to mind ... (such as) What does explicit mean? What does implicit mean? (How can these terms be defined?) What is made explicit in explicitation (words, thoughts)? What does apparent mean? Etc.”. This has led to the tendency of many translation scholars to “adopt Vinay and Darbelnet’s definition of explicitation uncritically without noting its vagueness. As a result, in the most extreme cases, scholars have investigated totally different concepts under the label of “explicitation”” (ibid). Bechor (ibid: 18) proposes a modified definition to replace Vinay and Darbelnet’s definition stating that “(e)xplicitness is the verbalization of information that the addressee might not be able to infer if it were not verbalized”.

Klaudy (2009: 104) believes that this process will inevitably give rise to translation gain which can sometimes be unwarranted. This usually comes about through “including additional explanatory phrases, spelling out implicatures or adding connectives to help the logical flow of the text to increase readability” (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997: 55). Nida (1964: 227-231) details the different functions of additions. Among these are obligatory specification as a result of ambiguity in the source language formations. Beekman and Callow (1974: 47) argue that expertise in the field of translation (especially religious translation) has proved that not imparting the implicit meaning in the ST misleads TL readers and distort the original message of the ST. Che Suh (2005: 128) proposes that the translator may resort to ‘addition’ “(w)hen simple preservation of the original culture-specific item may lead to obscurity”. So, “the translator may decide to keep the original item but supplement the text with whatever information is judged necessary”.

Newmark notes (1988: 91) that translators have to make allowance for their target readerships in adding information that is of a cultural, technical or linguistic nature. Nida (1964: 228-231) gives an all-inclusive view by listing nine types of addition “which may legitimately be incorporated into a translation”. Calling them ‘addition’, he duly adds (ibid), might be something of a misnomer since “there has been no actual adding to the semantic content of the message, for these additions consist essentially in making explicit what is implicit in the source-language text”. These additions are as follows: (a) filling out elliptical expressions; (b) obligatory specification which occurs as a result of grammatical restructuring; (c) additions required because of grammatical reconstructing; (d) amplification from implicit to explicit status which involves “the compact semantic relationships with many of the finer distinctions left to the context” ; (e) answers to rhetorical questions; (f) classifiers; (g) connectives; (h) categories of the TL which do not exist in the SL and (i) doublets (i.e. semantic repetition or “repetition of

meaning” in phrases like “answered and said” or in Arabic تدابير صارمة قاسية [lit. strict and severe measures]<sup>1</sup>, Dickins et al 2017: 82-83) .

Nida (ibid: 230) considers the use of classifiers when a proper noun is involved as “convenient device for building a meaningful redundancy”. This is very important in religious contexts where a lot of specificity is sometimes a must. Vinay and Darbelnet (1995: 350) use another term “supplementation” to refer to “the translation technique of adding lexical items in the target language which are required by its structure and which are absent in the source language”. Judging by the examples they provide it seems that this concept is limited to additions supplemented due to structural differences between any two languages.

Vinay and Darbelnet (1995: 339) and Malone (1988), however, use the term “amplification” rather differently to denote the use of more words in the TL than are found in the ST to transfer the SL equivalent. It is not clear whether there is a substantial difference between explicitation, addition and amplification as they all involve much the same thing. Klaudy (2009) seems to favour explicitation as an umbrella term to cover the different manifestations of addition and amplification. The result of these additions has been the observations we often read, by the likes of Guttinger (1963), that TTs are longer than their SLs or Nida’s comment that translated texts are easier to understand by virtue of what he refers to as “redundancy” (Nida 1964: 131). Toury (1980: 60) also considers explicitation as one of the universals of translation. What is meant by a universal of translation is “a feature that is found in translations and not in other kinds of text” (Pym 2010: 75).

Fawcett (2014: 45) explains how translators react differently to giving assistance to their readers: some demand that readers should resort to external resources such as dictionaries and encyclopaedia “while other translators are overly lavish with disruptive footnotes” and the translator is engaged in what Govaert (1971: 431) identifies as “embellishing and tampering”. It can be mind-boggling, Fawcett reasons (2014: 46), if the translator decides to provide additional information for their readers because they have to gauge their readers’ level of sophistication. Vinay and Darbelnet (1995: 342) warn against the “excessive use of explicitation as it may lead to overtranslation”. They (ibid: 347) identify overtranslation as a translation error that results from “seeing two units of translation where there is only one”.

There is a fine line between what is deemed a ‘translation’ and what can qualify as an explanation. According to Ghazala (2002: 3-4) going into the particularities of Islamic terms

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis square brackets are often used for nesting, a note inside a quotation or parenthetical expression.

(such as the rituals of the حَجَّ ('Hajj', major pilgrimage) is considered additional information which has no place within the text but in the margins or footnotes. He further adds (ibid) that a translation of a single term should comprise one or two or few words. Anything that is longer than that is an illustration. As Larson (1998: 47) puts it that there is a difference between implicit information and details which are totally absent and as such “never intended to be part of the communication”. Also, Hasan (2013: 228-229) argues that “(e)xplanatory information is not always welcome. Too much information may even mean that the reader does not read the footnotes. This does not mean that the priority in translation should be given to the purpose of translation rather than to the audience. Attention should be paid to both factors”.

Therefore, according to Gutt (1989: 101-102) the translation “should be expressed in such a manner that it yields the intended interpretation with minimal effort, that is, does not require any unnecessary processing effort on the part of the audience.” Hickey (1998: 228) argues that additions should be made judiciously and “no translator’s note, additional sentence of explanation calling attention to itself need be used, but rather that the clarifications appear as brief presupposition-bearing adjectival or adverbial phrases”.

Newmark (1988: 92) discusses at length the various forms of additional information, which can be:

1- within the text in the following forms:

- a. as an alternative to a given translation using ‘or’
- b. as an adjectival clause
- c. as a noun in apposition
- d. as a participial group
- e. in brackets, often for a literal translation of a transferred word: as in “Allah (God)” or Al-Hilali and Khan [Q20: 98] “Ilah (God)”
- f. in parentheses with long additions
- g. classifiers such as ‘the Lord of mercy’ for الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān) (Abdel Haleem’s translation)

Newmark (*ibid*) makes a distinction between round brackets which are used for material relevant for the translation and square brackets which can be used to “make corrections of material or moral fact”<sup>1</sup>.

In Nida’s view (1964: 238), any adjustment of incomprehensible material or erroneous interpretation emanating from literal translation should be in the text. In those cases where those close renderings cannot be salvaged in the text, translators can make use of footnotes. Under these circumstances, (foot)notes have two functions; (1) “to correct linguistic and cultural discrepancies” such as different customs, unknown objects or measurements, explaining a play on word and, most relevant for the current study, to “include supplementary data on proper names”, and (2) to give general information that facilitates the understanding of some historical or cultural traditions discussed in the ST.

The other methods mentioned by Newmark (1988: 92) take the form of notes and are arranged here according to the degree to which they are preferred:

2. Notes at bottom of page (should not be too lengthy, since this can annoy readers)
3. Notes at end of chapter (can be infuriating if a chapter is long as it might take forever to locate them)
4. Notes or glossary at end of book (should be correctly referenced and not confusing).

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<sup>1</sup> In traditional English grammar, round brackets (parentheses) have the function of “enclosing information that clarifies or ... as an aside”, while square brackets are ‘interruptions’, which “are used exclusively within quoted material” (cf. Straus et al 2014: 34-35). Despite the insistence of many authors that the two must not be interchangeable, there seems to be a lot of wiggle room. The rigidity in categorization is not adhered to by many translators of the Quran. For example, Asad, Saheeh Interantional and Abdel Haleem make extensive use of square brackets rather than parentheses to add further explanations or insert deducible material or afterthoughts. Pickthall consistently marks exegetical material with parentheses. For Al-Hilali and Khan, there is no discernible pattern of preference, but quite often square brackets are used to enclose a major section of supplementary details which has some minor parenthetical material. Arberry, whose translation displays a remarkable scarcity of explicitation, is characterized by the sporadic utilization of round brackets. Ali uses parentheses for in-text interpolations and infrequently resorts to square brackets in the footnotes for the same effect. The OED of Grammar has a litmus test of the appropriateness of applying brackets: “If you removed the bracketed material the sentence would still make perfectly good sense”. This does not hold true for some Quran translators. Would the following translation by Ali make sense after blanking out the part in parenthesis?: “We have not sent thee But as a (Messenger)To all mankind” [Q28 :34].



According to Enani (1990: 17) it is the duty of a translator of the Quran to search for implied senses according to the context in which words are mentioned. So parenthetical details are inevitable. In a long list of recommended tactics to deal with Islamic terms, Ghazala's (2002: 21) second most favoured strategy consists of providing a direct equivalent plus a descriptor or a depictive word (such as translating *صوم رمضان* as "fasting of the month of Ramadan" in which the addition of 'month' functions as a descriptor/classifier).

There is an abundance of divine names renditions that feature explicitation/addition. For example, God's name *الرَّزَّاقُ* (Al-Razzāq) is an intensive *faʿḥāl* form (from the Arabic active participle form *الرَّازِقُ* 'Al-Rāziq'), which refers implicitly to the abundance of God's continuous provision for His servants (al-Bayhaqī (1993vol1: 172), which he attributes to al-Ḥalīmī). This is how our translators handle these implicit aspects:

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
|                      | <i>الرَّزَّاقُ</i> (Al-Razzāq) [Q51: 58] {إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الرَّزَّاقُ} |
| Asad                 | God Himself is the Provider of all sustenance                             |
| Pickthall            | Allah! He it is that giveth livelihood,                                   |
| Ali                  | For Allah is He Who gives (all) Sustenance                                |
| Abdel Haleem         | God is the Provider   |
| Saheeh International | Indeed, it is Allah who is the [continual] Provider                       |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | Allah is the All-Provider   |
| Arberry              | Surely God is the All-provider  |

Abdel Haleem's translation does not heed the implicit aspects in *الرَّزَّاقُ* (Al-Razzāq), and does not make any distinction between *الرَّزَّاقُ* (Al-Razzāq) and *الرَّازِقُ* ('Al-Rāziq', which he translates as 'provider' in [Q34: 39]), and which can be attributed to his assiduity to maintain the brevity which characterizes his translation; Shah 2010: 5). In fact, Abdel Haleem's treatment of God's names is in many ways no different from other translators, which makes us have some apprehensions about Shah's (2010: 4) endorsement of Abdel Haleem's translation as a manifestation of originality. Rippin (2004) concurs with the view that what Pickthall considers syntactic 'oddities' get smoothed out. This seems to have a special salience in his translation and is coupled with using terms in common parlance. Pickthall and Ali turn the name into a descriptive phrase, which despite verbalizing what can be implicitly inferred, fails to convey the intrinsic nature of the name. Pickthall also give a restricted view of God's provision. As Huber points out, (2000: 60) when speaking about God, the meaning should be capable of "being

stretched to infinity”. The locution is somewhat infelicitous, which makes Watt (2001: 178) observe that Pickthall’s translation “does not read well”.

Unlike other translators, Saheeh International manage to communicate the implicit sense of ‘continual provision’ yet they miss the ‘the abundance’ aspect of this provision. Asad’s, Al-Hilali and Khan’s and Arberry’s use of the descriptor ‘all’ is an attempt to replicate the implied sense of ‘profusion’ in الرَّزَّاق (Al-Razzāq), a quality which sets it apart from its near-synonymous counterpart الرَّازِق (Al-Rāziq). Al-Hilali and Khan and Arberry’s renditions “the All Provider” bear the marks of ‘transparency’; a term used by Newmark (1995: 78) to designate the state in which the ST term is “shining through the corresponding TL term”.

This intrusion on the part of translators to illuminate the implicit aspects of meaning is inescapable; as Abdul-Raof rightly (2001: 140) puts it, “the artistic illusion of your (i.e. the translator’s) non-existence is unnecessary” but Abdul-Raof (ibid) lays the foundation for these additions: they should be based on authentic Quranic exegesis. A translator, Stamps (1993: 23) forewarns, has to be mindful of the likely ‘slippage’ “from translation - 'express the sense of in or into another language' – to interpretation - 'expound the meaning of; make out the meaning of”.

## 4.9 Generalizing Translation / Generalization

Dickins et al (2017: 77) use the words “generalizing translation” to describe what happens when “the TT expression has a wider and less specific denotative meaning than the ST expression”. Similarly, according to Knittlová (2010: 48 quoted in Pozdílková 2012: 4) generalization occurs when a SL term is replaced by its hyperonym, and a certain semantic feature is ‘suppressed’”. This translating by a hyperonym is the opposite of a process which Fawcett (2014: 29-30) calls ‘concretization’ or ‘differentiation’ (cf. Retsker 1974) wherein a general or abstract undifferentiated term is translated by (a) more specific or concretized item(s). Dickins et al (2017: 77) state that translators may employ this strategy “because it results in a less wordy overall phrase” in the TL. However, they warn against the unacceptable use of generalization “if the TL offers suitable alternatives or if the omitted details are important in the ST but not implied or compensated for in the TT context” (ibid). Conversely, “generalization is acceptable if the TL offers no suitable alternative and the omitted detail is either unimportant in the ST or is implied in the TL context” (ibid).

Klaudy (2005: 15) regards generalization as one of the manifestations of implicitation. It occurs when the SL unit has a specific sense while its TL equivalent has a more general sense. This has led some researchers like Pozdílková (2012: 10) to suggest that implicitation should be associated with generalization and explicitation with particularization. Baker (2011: 23) refers to generalization (generalizing translation) as “translation by a superordinate” (where ‘superordinate’ is a synonym of ‘hyperonym’). She regards it a very common strategy to tackle non-equivalence and claims that it gives the best results in most languages due to the uniformity of the hierarchical structure of semantic fields in all languages. Generalizing translation or generalization is not only operative at the lexical level but is widely used with grammatical categories. In the case of grammatical generalization, what happens is that “a SL grammatical category with specific meaning (e.g. personal pronoun with gender distinction) is rendered in the TL by a unit with more general meaning” (Klaudy 2001: 1).

Elewa (2017: 306) reiterates the benefits of using techniques such as translation by a superordinate stating that a “translator can resort to this technique when he fails to find an equivalent”. Also, it is used to “overcome a relative lack of specificity in the target language” (Brakhw 2014: 69). Levý, however, disapproves of the excessive use of generalization in translation, arguing that this results in “impoverished, colourless and greyish texts” (1963: 9, quoted in Pozdílková 2012: 17). According to Pozdílková (2012: 18), “Levý views generalization as a deforming tendency flattening the meaning”. The translator is not at liberty to use generalizing translation in all contexts. Also, “(g)eneralization is a simple way out when the translator does not comprehend the SL word meaning and how to express it in the TL” (Белоручев, 1980; quoted in Butkuvienė 2004: 16). This does not mean that a general term is always readily available in the target language; Larson (1998: 75) makes the interesting, if uncorroborated, claim that “languages tend to differ most in generic terminology, rather than in specific” and this makes specific vocabulary easier to find.

Elewa (2017: 440) argues that translators “have little freedom to use the techniques proposed for non-equivalence, particularly when translating sacred texts. Otherwise, every translator will give his own interpretation of the ST, infused with his sectarian and theological orientation”.

Generalization in translating God’s names can be seen in the translation of many names such as العَفُور (‘Al-Ġafūr’, and by extension العَفَّار ‘Al-Ġaffār’ and الغَافِر ‘Al-Ġāfir’). The basic dictionary meaning of عَفَرَ (ġafar) revolves around ‘cover’ and ‘concealment’ (Ibn Mañḍūr 1414AH vol5: 25). But as Larson (1998: 59) rightly claims that “a word is a ‘bundle’ of meaning

components” and the meaning of عَفَّارٌ (Ġaffār) as an attribute covers other aspects such as wiping out sins and abolishing their effect, which necessitates in Larson’s view (ibid: 61) that the translator uses several words in the TL to make up for the missing meaning components. Also, Newmark (1995: 28) defends componential analysis as both more “accurate and profitable” than the use of as synonym (such as ‘forgive’) because it bypasses “the all too common ‘one-to-one’ translation”. In other words, engaging in a componential analysis allows the translator to choose a rendition that covers all or most aspects of the meaning of a word that would not be possible if he or she is satisfied with conventional or stock equivalents. In this particular example of عَفُورٌ (Ġafūr), covering the sins is a part of its meaning or a result of the action itself (Ibn al-Qayyim 1996: vo11: 314).

Our selected translators invariably use “forgiving” and its variants (‘forgiver’, ‘who forgive’) which does not capture the essence of the act of forgiveness, which is covering of sins. These translators seem to be less focused on the ‘contrastive’ aspects of عَفَرَ (ġafar) and more attentive to its generic aspects. Al Ghamdi (2015: 210) lauds some translators’ awareness of the delicate differences between the near-synonymous الْعَفَّارُ (Al-Ġaffār), الْعَافِرُ (Al-Ġāfir) and الْعَفُورُ (Al-Ġafūr) but he does not find any fault in giving them the same rendition: “forgive and its variant forms”. Abdul-Roaf (2001: 33) disapproves of translators’ taking no notice of the word’s emotive overtones and regards the use of ‘forgive’ to render الْمَغْفِرَةَ (al-maġfirah) (and its derivatives) as diluting the boundless aspects of God’s mercy. Consider the following example:

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
|                      | [Q15: 49]{ أَنَا الْعَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ }<br>الْعَفُورُ (Al-Ġafūr) |
| Asad                 | I alone - am truly forgiving                                      |
| Pickthall            | I am the Forgiving  |
| Ali                  | I am indeed the Oft-forgiving                                     |
| Abdel Haleem         | I am the Forgiving  |
| Saheeh International | it is I who am the Forgiving                                      |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | I am the Oft-Forgiving  |
| Arberry              | I am the All-forgiving  |

We must not forget, however, that this sense of the word عَفُورٌ (Ġafūr) is the primary sense and as such in the words of Newmark (1995: 117) it is the “most frequently and/or widely diffused sense at a particular period time” and should not be confused with the “the illusory” literal or etymological meaning of the word. But in the Quran, we are not bound by any sense (primary or otherwise) that the word has acquired (or lost) after the end of the Revelation of the

Quran period. So there is no need to deprive target readers of a hefty chunk of the meaning of غَفُور (Ġafūr).

Having said that, we can attribute this agreement among Quran’s translators to the recognized acceptance of a generalized ‘forgive’ as an equivalent for غَفُور (Ġafūr) despite its impreciseness. A pivotal factor conducive to its recognition is the prevalence of the term in the Bible (The KJV, for example, uses the word ‘forgive’ 95 times).

The translation of the divine name الْوَهَّاب (Al-Wahhāb) illuminates the ubiquitous nature of the application of generalization in the transfer of God’s names. الْوَهَّاب (Al-Wahhāb) in Arabic is a *fāḥḥāl* pattern intensive which designates someone who gives, confers or bestows generously without expecting any form of repayment in return (Ibn Manḏūr 1414AH vol1: 803). What our translators have done is to convey the general sense of ‘giving’ or ‘bestowing’ and have left out of consideration the absence of any form of remuneration or compensation and the self-initiation involved in the act. A notable exception is Asad’s specification “of gifts” which captures that<sup>1</sup> aspect. Consider the following:

|                      | [Q 3: 18] الْوَهَّاب (Al-Wahhāb)        |
|----------------------|---|
| Asad                 | the [true] Giver of Gifts               |
| Pickthall            | the Bestower                            |
| Ali                  | the Grantor of bounties without measure |
| Abdel Haleem         | the Ever Giving                         |
| Saheeh International | the Bestower                            |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | the Bestower                            |
| Arberry              | the Giver                               |

All the above translators have failed to convey an important specific component of the meaning of الْوَهَّاب (Al-Wahhāb). To make matters worse they have not made any compensation of the omitted detail. Admittedly, Ali and to a lesser extent Abdel Haleem, attempt to replicate the intensive nature of the divine designation but not ‘the unselfish and absolute benevolence’ aspect of the meaning of this name. This makes the name indistinguishable from الْمُعْطِي (Al-Muḥṭī), a name mentioned in the prophetic traditions. Khan, who translated the collection of Al-

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Professor Dickins (personal communication) for drawing my attention to the fact that “a ‘gift’ in English typically has the sense – i.e. the associative meaning – of ‘no remuneration or compensation’. Certainly, an exchange like “How much is that?”, “Nothing – it’s a gift” seems perfectly normal”.

Bukhari's prophetic narrations, tries to make the difference perceptible by assigning 'the giver' for الْمُعْطِي ('Al-Muṣṭī', in Khan 1997, vol. 4: 215) while reserving "bestower" (as above) for الْوَهَّاب (Al-Wahhāb). Making use of the near-synonymous 'bestower' (which means someone who "confers or presents an honor, right, or gift", according to OED) does not convey the essential difference between the two divine attributes (i.e. الْوَهَّاب 'Al-Wahhāb' and الْمُعْطِي 'Al-Muṣṭī') (cf. Amjad and Farahani, 2013: 135-136 for criticism of some existing translations of الْوَهَّاب 'Al-Wahhāb').

Another example of using a general equivalent in place of a more specific alternative is Pickthall's (anomalous) rendition of the divine designation الرَّبِّ ('Al-Rabb', conventionally translated as 'Lord') in [Q6: 4]. Pickthall quite oddly uses the generic term for God (i.e. 'Allah') to take the place of his usual translation (i.e. 'Lord'). It seems here that Pickthall's choice can be demystified if we fathom the argument presented by the likes of Larson (1998: 174), who postulates that if the distinctive elements of a specific word are not 'in focus', then more generic words could be used.

## 4.10 Literal Translation

Bassnett (2002: 12) delineates the task of the translator in maintaining the delicate balance of ensuring "that the surface meaning of the two (texts) will be approximately similar and the structures of the source language will be preserved as closely as possible but not closely that the target language structures will be seriously distorted". It is clear that the closer the translator attempts to preserve the meaning and structure the more likely they fall into the trap of literalism or the pitfalls thereof.

Perhaps there is no concept – apart from 'equivalence' – that causes more controversy among translation theorists and professional alike than that of 'literal translation'. The controversiality of this concept stems from its nature and applicability in translation situations. Therefore, it is better to discuss what different authors mean by literal translation and then to adopt one definition which will be our basis for any future reference to this concept. Newmark in recognition of its importance devotes a whole chapter in his *Textbook of translation* (1988) to discussing the merits of literal translation. The basic definition he gives for literal translation

goes as follows: “The SL grammatical constructions are converted to their nearest TL equivalents but the lexical words are again translated singly, out of context” (1988: 46). In response to what he calls “prevailing orthodoxy” that makes the likes of Neubert (1983) emphasize the mismatch between any two languages semantically and grammatically, Newmark (1988: 68-69) proposes “that literal translation is correct and must not be avoided, if it secures referential and pragmatic equivalence to the original”. For him (ibid: 69) literal translation is not always the same as word-for-word translation which “transfers SL grammar and word order, as well as the primary meanings of all the SL words, into the translation”. Also, the word is the basic unit in word-for-word translation but in literal translation it can be larger than a word (i.e. a phrase, a collocation or even a sentence).

Newmark (ibid: 70) believes that literal translation should be the translator’s first port of call even in genres such as poetry where it is usually condemned. Newmark (ibid: 74) admits that “(l)iteral translation may appear tedious, but there is satisfaction in weighing it against this or that more elegant version and finding it more accurate and economical”. Elsewhere, Newmark (1991: 124) argues that “excessive pragmatics tend to rob the target language text of its translational character, and obviously, if the genius or the particular of the foreign language is to be preserved, cleanly and straight, only two procedures can preserve it —transference and literal translation”. But for Al-Jabari (2008: 42) “the results are lamentable; the attempt to be literal in the form of the message has resulted in grievous distortion of the message itself” as can be observed in Bible translations that adopt a literal approach. It is quite clear that for Newmark literal translation must not give rise to translationese. For Newmark, translationese is wrong and inaccurate (1988: 73, 75).

This pejorative attitude towards translationese resonates with the opinion of subsequent translation theorists who define translationese as, for example, “TL usage which because of its obvious reliance on features of SL is perceived as unnatural, impenetrable or even comical” (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997: 187). However, for Newmark (1988: 80) at least, this does not rule out the possibility of “(S)ome mild translationese (which) has a gentle charm”. Vinay and Darbelnet (1995: 33) seem to reiterate Newmark’s view of literal translation as “direct transfer of a SL text into a grammatically and idiomatically appropriate TL text”. They believe that one of the hallmarks of literal translation is that it “is reversible and complete in itself” (ibid: 34). Put differently, if the TT is translated literally into the TL, then the TT can be retranslated back into the SL with the least amount of disruption to the meaning. This is reminiscent of the concept of back-translation, which is widely used as a translation quality assessment tool and for establishing structural differences between the SL and TL (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997: 14-

15). While it is useful as “a check on semantic content” (Ivir 1981: 59), we need to bear in mind that “the efficacy of back-translation as a translation quality testing tool has been questioned in the past decades” (Son 2018: 90). But Newmark’s description of literal translation does not resolve the debate surrounding it.

Elewa (2017: 32) also makes a distinction between word-for-word translation and literal translation arguing that word-for-word translation “is mistakenly regarded as an absolute synonym of “Literal Translation”; however, one can obviously notice that it is a stricter form of literal translation where the translator sticks to the source text word order”. Furthermore, “literal translation does not mean providing exact equivalents from the dictionary blindly” (ibid: 33). Elewa (ibid) also distinguishes between literal translation and a less popular strategy known as ‘lexical translation’. “Lexical translation in its narrow sense, which only deals with single words, may be regarded as literal translation. However, in literal translation the meaning of words is derived straight from the dictionary while keeping TL grammar and word order intact. (ibid: 226). For Elewa (ibid) one important feature of literal translation is that “literal translation tends to be longer and more simplistic than the TL, especially in the translation of Arabic”.

Chesterman (1997: 12) summarizes the main points of contention stating “‘Literal’ is an unfortunate term: for some it means ‘word-for-word and therefore ungrammatical, like a linguist’s gloss’; for others it means ‘the closest possible grammatical translation, probably not sounding very natural’”. The former seems to refer to what is known as ‘interlineal translation’ (or, sometimes ‘interlinear translation’), which Dickins et al. (2017: 293) define as “a style of translation in which the TT provides a literal rendering for each successive meaningful unit of the ST (including affixes) and arranges these units in the order of their occurrence in the ST, regardless of the conventional grammatical order of units in the TL”.

There is a third view of literal translation which many seem to overlook. This is the view held by Dickins et al (2017: 14, 294) of ‘literal translation proper’ in which “the denotative meaning of words is taken as if straight from the dictionary (i.e. out of context)<sup>1</sup>, but TL grammar

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<sup>1</sup> The value of dictionaries in establishing basic senses is often overinflated to say the least. MacArthur (2015: 134) lashes out at dictionaries which sometimes just provide “metaphorically-expressed, pedagogically-oriented definitions, aimed at non-native speakers of English”. Similarly Steen (2007: 98) finds fault with dictionaries “as arbiters between one or two meanings”. Dictionaries, he further illustrates (ibid), are not always up-to-date with language usage and they might have limited space to spell out all nuances and in some cases some senses are



is respected”. So, “in a literal translation under this definition of ‘literal, English ST ‘rat’ would be translated as Arabic TT فأر *fa’r*, regardless of whether the meaning in the English ST was (i) any of numerous long-tailed murine rodents [...]; or (ii) a person who deserts his friends or associates [...]”. Therefore, Dickins (manuscript b) refers to literal translation as ‘primary-meaning translation’, primary meaning being synonymous with the most basic denotative meaning or with what Baker (2011: 11) calls ‘propositional meaning’. This primary meaning is in the words of Larson (1998: 109) the one “which most readily comes to mind” when a word is said in isolation. This is sometimes difficult to establish as “isolated words do not exist in vacuum and are subject to the influence of their physical as well as linguistic context” (ibid). It is usually the case, however, as Larson notes (ibid: 110), that we can find a primary meaning equivalent in the TL but this equivalent will not probably match in its secondary meanings<sup>1</sup>. Beekman and Callow (1974: 172) claim that no attempt has been made to define ‘primary sense’ (i.e. primary meaning) in a formal way but they suggest two criteria for distinguishing primary senses: (1) “that sense which is culturally more relevant to more people and (2) that sense whose collocates either represent a larger class or are more generic”.

In the words of Ramm (1970: 120) the “literal meaning of a word or a sentence is the basic, customary, socially designated meaning”. The Pragglejaz group (2007), whose seminal article on metaphor (and basic sense) identification has laid the foundations for pinning down basic senses (and for our purposes literal ones), characterize basic senses (ibid: 3) as having a general tendency to be: more concrete<sup>2</sup>, related to bodily actions, more precise (or less vague), and antecedent that of other senses. They hasten to point out (ibid) that “basic meanings are not necessarily the most frequent meanings of the lexical unit”. This has the effect of making waves in trending analytical tools. For example, Jihong (2017: 59) demonstrates how a learner’s dictionary (i.e. Longman) which enumerates senses according to their frequency puts the sense

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collapsed (ibid). Contemporary Dictionaries are of great value in that any sense, Steen et al (2010: 35) emphasize, which cannot be described as ‘basic’ is not included in the dictionary.

<sup>1</sup> We can find some Arabic/English pairs which have primary and secondary senses equivalents as in the word ‘pig’ خنزير which primarily refers to the ‘omnivorous mammal’ in addition the secondary sense of ‘unpleasant person’.

<sup>2</sup> We cannot always give a blanket judgement since, as Justice (1987: 36) argues, “the passage from concrete meanings to abstract and vice versa are both so common in semantic history that it is difficult to know which was original... The etymology of something as primeval and concretely sensuous as the moon is said by Kluge and others to be palely de-verbal, ‘the measurer’”.

of “to go away from a place” as the basic sense for the word ‘leave’ while a historical dictionary such as OED puts the older sense of “to allow to remain in a place” ahead of other senses.

Which sense is more basic (and literal)? Is it the prevalent sense or the etymological one? This seems to be left to the discretion of the analyst. The present researcher embraces the view that native speakers’ intuitions should be the point of reference when a basic meaning is assessed. I concur with the view of James Dickins (personal communication) that since many words have evolved in unpredictable ways which, in turn might have engendered a number of historical senses and the oldest of which may be no longer in circulation, relying on native speakers’ judgment of basic sense steers clear of all these hurdles. As a result, in our investigation, we tend to equate literal sense with basic or common sense. So unless otherwise indicated, in this thesis ‘literal meaning’ designates the first meaning that springs to the mind of an average (educated) reader or hearer whenever the word (or phrase) is encountered either in isolation or in a specified context. This intuitive sense is selected as the basis for any literal interpretation because it often overrides all other possible senses in a translation task. Usually the intuitive sense coincides with the basic sense, as listed first in standard dictionaries, such as the Oxford Dictionary of English (Stevenson ed., 2005, 11-12), and its online counterpart Lexico, though not Oxford English Dictionary, which lists not the conceptually basic sense first, but the oldest attested sense: “The sense section consists of one or more definitions, each with its paragraph of illustrative quotations, arranged chronologically” (Proffitt et al. 2022<sup>1</sup>).

But why not rely solely on dictionaries in establishing the basic (literal) sense of a word? The compelling reason for this choice is that dictionaries are written by authors who use their own intuitions to ascribe basic senses to words. There is a caveat to this; in many Arabic dictionaries, authors sometimes select the historical (older) sense as the basic sense (as does the Oxford English Dictionary). This can be referred to as the ‘linguistic’ sense. If this ‘linguistic’ sense clashes with the intuitive sense, the ‘linguistic’ sense is regarded by many researchers as the ‘literal’ sense. If translators choose to go with the linguistic sense at the expense of the intuitive sense, this often leads to undesirable outcomes or translation errors. This is deemed by the present author as an example of ‘literalism’ and occasionally depreciative terms may be employed to categorize this kind of anomaly. The present researcher does not concur with the view that ‘literal translation’ involves the direct transfer of an ST item into the TL while the

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<sup>1</sup> The reference here is to the 3rd edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, which is still in preparation at the time of writing this thesis. However, the Guide to the Third Edition of the OED is already available online: [<https://www.oed.com/public/oed3guide/guide-to-the-third-edition-of>]

norms of the TL are observed (Vinay and Darbelnet 1995: 33). If this view of literal translation was the correct view, there would not be any stigma attached to literal translation. For the lack of an alternative term, we can make use of Chironova's (2014) term 'Literalistic Translation' since this form of literal translation demonstrates a distortion of the ST as a result of the interference of the basic ST 'out of context' sense.

Another concept often associated with literal translation is what is referred to as faithful translation. Faithful translation is often associated with the translation of sacred texts. Faithful translation is the kind of translation that "evokes in a receptor essentially the same response as that displayed by the receptors of the original message. The receptor understands the same meaning in it, reacts to it emotionally in the same way, and comes to analogous decisions and actions as the original receptors; faithfulness is primarily a quality of the MESSAGE rather than of the FORM" (Nida and Taber 1982: 201, emphasis original). According to this view, in literal translation the form is "reproduced in the receptor language in such a way as to distort the message and/or the patterns of the receptor language" (ibid: 203).

Nida and Taber's (1982) view of literal translation as a general approach should not be confused with their use of the concept 'literal meaning', which is contrasted with 'figurative meaning'. In their discussion of semantic domains and componential analysis, they identify literal meaning as being "based on the most commonly understood meanings of the diagnostic components" (ibid: 203). This distinction is echoed by FIT (International Federation of Translators) in the Translator's Charter, which has attempted to lay the foundation for the "translator's code of ethics". This document gives recommendations concerning 'lines of conduct' for translators in which huge emphasis is put on faithfulness, stating that "(a) faithful translation, however, should not be confused with a literal translation, the fidelity of a translation not excluding an adaptation to make the form, the atmosphere and deeper meaning of the work felt in another language and country" (quoted in Chesterman 1997: 188).

For Ghazala (2002: 21) 'direct' literal translation should take precedence over any other strategy (such as glossing or adding a descriptor) to render Islamic terms such as *الكتاب* ('al-kitāb', the scripture, or the book<sup>1</sup>). According to Elimam (2014: 131), "translators of the Qur'an generally attempt to remain as close as possible to the text in order to reflect some features of the Qur'anic style in their work". This is typical of translators of sacred texts who "tend to stick

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<sup>1</sup> If we consider the primary meaning of the word *كتاب* (kitāb), it is doubtful that 'scripture would qualify as a 'literal translation' of *كتاب* (kitāb) taken out of context.

more closely to the original than translators of other types of composition” (Stewart 2000: 33, quoted in AlKhawalda 2004: 217). This adherence to the source text sometimes results in literalism, which as Burman (1998: 731) explains, imparts “more of the feel and shape of the Qur'an” but this word-for-word rendition as he calls it (ibid) might “misrepresent the Qur'an badly from time to time”.

Based on empirical evidence, Aghajani and Aldoo (2018) and Aghajani and Jalali (2019) have concluded that literal translation is by far the most common strategy employed in Pickthall's, Ali's and Arberry's Quran translations, just as it is in many Persian Quran translations. This demonstrates the dominance of literal translation in discussions of Quran translation no matter how different the TLs are.

We can see literal translation of God's names in the translation of the name السَّلَام (Al-Salām). The first meaning to spring to mind when we encounter the word is the sense of ‘peace’, but its primary dictionary meaning indicates a state of being immaculate and free from any defect (Ibn al-Qayyim n.d. vol2: 133). al-Šawkānī (1414AH vol5: 247) points out that the majority of scholars are of the opinion that the name means ‘He whose creations are safeguarded from any injustice to come from Him’. Consider the following translations:

|                      | [Q59: 23] السَّلَام (Al-Salām)        |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Asad                 | the One with whom all salvation rests |
| Pickthall            | Peace                                 |
| Ali                  | the Source of Peace (and Perfection)  |
| Abdel Haleem         | Source of Peace                       |
| Saheeh International | the Perfection                        |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | the One Free from all defects         |
| Arberry              | the All-peaceable                     |

What first strikes us here is the number of choices afforded to translators in selecting an acceptable translation. It seems to reflect Newmark's (1995: 134) generalization that “the greater the difference in grammar and lexis between the SL and TL languages, the greater the degree of choice”. Arberry's rendition “All-peaceable” seems to be wide of the mark and is engrossed in literalism and can be regarded as a translation error (OED defines ‘peaceable’ as “inclined to avoid conflict or dissent”). It is clear that Arberry's eschewing of incorporating exegetical material into his translation has resulted in these inaccurate literal renditions and has generally undermined his translation. Al-Jabari (2008: 189) seems to nail it down when he brings to light

that literal translation is the main factor that adversely affects the comprehensibility of Arberry's translation. Arberry seems to be very keen on retaining the form of the original and this overemphasis on preserving the form "inevitably results in a serious loss or distortion of the message", in the opinion of Nida (2003: 106). Furthermore, Neubert (1970, cited in House 2015: 6) asserts that semantic equivalence should take precedence over syntactic equivalence. We should, however, give recognition to Arberry as his rendition seems quite unpremeditated, since he professes in his introduction (1956: 21) that his translation has been scrutinized "word for word" with the assistance of a native Arabic speaker<sup>1</sup> who is "a very devout Muslim deeply read in Classical Arabic".

Arberry's, and Pickthall's, renditions represent a phenomenon which Newmark (1995: 134) alludes to when he argues that if a meaning seems obscure to a translator, he is more likely to 'cling' to SL words. Pickthall's "Peace" is an example of blind literalism since the primary meaning of the word clashes with the "appropriate contextual meaning", which is a telltale sign of interference (Newmark 1995: 123). This is not very surprising, as he himself acknowledges in his introduction (1930: vii) that he "sought to present an almost-literal and appropriate rendering worthy of the Arabic original". Asad's rendition seems to be edging closer to unmotivated 'blatant re-writing' by rejecting a literal gloss and providing supplementary details as to the nature of the security (or peace) God bestows on His servants. But as Newmark (1995: 77) stipulates, the supplementary information should be supplied "briefly and unobtrusively without holding up the flow the narrative". Asad's style seems rather convoluted in comparison with the other (above) translators.

Ali and Abdel Haleem attempt to palliate the literal meaning by delimiting it with the phrase "source of<sup>2</sup>" which does not seem to offset the literal sense 'peace', although Ali's bracketed explanation "and Perfection" captures an essential (nonliteral) aspect of السَّلَام (Al-Salām). Saheeh International's translation 'perfection' is the concomitant sense associated with being free from defects. The closest 'exegetic' equivalent is the one given by Al-Hilali and Khan but it lacks the economy of the original. However, as Dryden rightly puts it (1680), "it is almost impossible to Translate verbally, and well, at the same time".

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<sup>1</sup> Being a native speaker of any language is no guarantor against linguistic pitfalls or inaccuracies. Even as straightforward as it might appear, it is a taxing task to identify which sense is 'literal' or 'basic'. MacArthur (2015: 133) opens up when she gives up her testimony that as a well-educated speaker of English, she "had been kidding myself about my knowledge of what the words in my language "basically" mean".

<sup>2</sup> Also, aesthetically 'source of peace' does not have the glittering sound of the Arabic divine designation.

Literal translations of the Quran, claims Abdul-Raof (2001: 182), are attempts “to optimize Qur'anic linguistic architectural charm, yet with minimal... effect on the target language audience”. All the above renditions point to what Abbasian and Nazerian deem to be a serious issue in the translation of divine designations: “the distortion of the emotive overtones and expressive effects that the original divine attributes”.

To the credit of most (if not all) translators of the Quran, they are aware of the unacceptability of giving a literal rendition for some names such as الْجَبَّار (Al-Jabbār) and الْمُتَكَبِّر (Al-Mutakabbir)<sup>1</sup>. By ‘literal’ here we mean the meaning that first spring to mind when encountering the word on a page. Consider the following ‘literal’ translation of the above by the Wehr Dictionary contrasted with their senses in the Quran:

|                               | <b>Literal (dictionary senses)</b>                                | <b>As a divine name</b>   |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| (Al-Jabbār) الْجَبَّار        | giant; colossus; tyrant, oppressor                                | The compeller, the Irresistible                                     |
| (Al-Mutakabbir) الْمُتَكَبِّر | proud, imperious, high-handed, haughty, supercilious, overweening | The supreme, The sublime, the superb, The superior, the truly great |

God’s names cannot have negative connotations and this is a point on which Muslim, Christian and Jewish scholars agree (cf. Byrne 2011: 14 and Huber 2001: 50) Byrne (2011: 98) states that initially Al-Jabbār seems to have negative connotations in a Jewish or Christian mindset but upon close scrutiny one can see through the real nature (or sense) of this quality which depicts God’s ability “to compel humans to follow His will”. Similarly, Byrne (ibid) continues, Al-Mutakabbir is indicative of God’s apparent greatness and His having “rights and privileges that others do not and, as such, is much superior to any created thing”.

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<sup>1</sup> As Al Ghamdi (2015: 278) concludes, the relationship between الْمُتَكَبِّر (Al-Mutakabbir) with its root-shairing near-synonymous counterpart الكبير (Al-Kabīr) goes unnoticed despite the fact that both refer to God’s majesty and loftiness. According to Al Ghamdi (2015: 280) الْمُتَكَبِّر (Al-Mutakabbir) is kept distinct from الكبير (Al-Kabīr) in many Quran translations. However, these translators do not take into consideration the sense of divine majesty, might and sovereignty shared by the two names.

## 4.11 Modulation

Modulation is defined by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995: 36) as “a variation of the form of the message, obtained by a change in the point of view”. In Mason’s view (1994: 70), it is a shift in perspective and in comparison with other strategies it is more elusive and hence its “motivations are harder to trace”. This strategy seems to be so subtle that even the most professional translator and translation theorist might be oblivious to its ubiquity. We can, however detect some instances where its implementation is recognizable in the translation of God’s names. For example, Pickthall and Arberry render the name الحليم (Al-Ḥalīm) in [Q2: 225] as ‘the clement’ unlike other translators who render the name as ‘forbearing’, which is in line with its Arabic dictionary meanings of ‘unhurried’ and ‘prudent’ (Ibn Mandūr 1414AH vol12: 146). Being clement is not fully congruent with these senses and as such it might fall into the part-for-whole category of modulation given by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995: 89).

Vinay and Darbelnet (1995: 36) explain that modulation can be justified when a literal translation results in an awkward form in the TL. Pickthall and Arberry’s translation does not meet this stipulation and this makes it a form of optional modulation which is instigated by the translator’s stylistic inclinations. Pickthall and Arberry’s rendition “reflects the subtly different angles from which speakers of different languages view real-life objects and phenomena” (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997: 108). Perhaps it is more helpfully expository if we place an adaptation that typifies modulation side by side with a non-modulated rephrasing, as the following two renditions of the divine attribute الغني (Al-Ġanī) from Abdel Haleem’s translation illuminate:

|              |   |  |
|--------------|---|--|
|              | [Q47: 38] الغني (Al-Ġanī)<br>Modulated transfer | [Q44: 64] الغني (Al-Ġanī)<br>Non-Modulated |
| Abdel Haleem | the source of wealth                            | Self-Sufficient                            |

Abdel Haleem above presents two contrasting equivalents. Abdel Haleem has clearly exploited modulation in his translation, and this is arguably what has made it appealing to many readers. On the authority of Vazquez-Ayora (1977: 293) “the translator who does not use Modulation is not a translator; the efficient use of Modulation tests the translator’s imagination, sensibility, expressive capacity and ingenuity”. However, translating a sensitive subject matter such as divine names does not sanction indulgent translation maneuvers such as modulation.

We can see clearly modulated vantage points in the translation of the sacred name الواسع (Al-Wāsiʿ). The name الواسع (Al-Wāsiʿ) is the noun agent (active participle) form which is derived from the verb وسع ('wasaʿa', to encompass, be big enough for) (Ṣumar 2008 vol 3: 2440). Al-Saʿdī (1421AH: 242) points out that the name depicts the immeasurability of God's attributes and qualities. So, He is limitless in His majesty, bounties, sovereignty, knowledge, mercy and forgiveness.

|                      | [Q5 : 54 ] واسع (Wāsiʿ)                 | [Q4: 130] واسع (Wāsiʿ)                  |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Asad                 | infinite                                | infinite                                |
| Pickthall            | All-Embracing                           | All-Embracing                           |
| Ali                  | encompasseth all                        | He that careth for all                  |
| Abdel Haleem         | has endless bounty                      | infinite in plenty                      |
| Saheeh International | all-Encompassing                        | all-Encompassing                        |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | All-Sufficient for His creatures' needs | All-Sufficient for His creatures' needs |
| Arberry              | All-embracing                           | All-embracing                           |

Pickthall, Ali [Q5: 54], Saheeh International and Arberry's glosses represent instances where literal unaltered perspectives are in operation. Modulation can be seen in the adjustment of focus or direction of the train of thought that Asad's (negation), Ali's [Q4: 130], Abdel Haleem's (negation) and Al-Hilali and Khan's adaptations unambivalently reveal. These modulated adjustments are more pronounced in Asad's and Abdel Haleem's negation of the opposite of the literal sense of واسع (Wāsiʿ). Al-Hilali and Khan's translation delineates a corollary of being "all-embracing" and thus vitalizes the unembellished literal rendering. Although this strategy has salvaged the intended sense of the divine designation, it has reduced the economy and succinctness of the ST.

## 4.12 Paraphrase

OED defines 'paraphrase' as "(a) rewording of something written or spoken by someone else, esp. with the aim of making the sense clearer; a free rendering of a passage". Wille (2013: 1) argues that "(f)ollowing this line, all translations, especially interlingual in Jakobson's understanding, could be actually qualified as paraphrases because, by its nature, paraphrasing means rewording. In such a case, however, paraphrasing as a translation strategy or technique



would have to be considered as paraphrasing within a paraphrase (or paraphrasing a paraphrase) which seems an unnecessary complication”.

This strategy is one suggested by Baker (2011) to deal with equivalence at word level. This translation procedure can be achieved by the use of related or unrelated words in the target language. A related-word paraphrase is “used when the concept expressed by the source item is lexicalized in the target language but in a different form, and when the frequency with which a certain form is used in the source text is significantly higher than would be natural in the target language” (ibid: 36). The examples that Baker provides for this type of paraphrase seem to fit the definition given to transposition. The other type of paraphrase that she suggests involves the use of unrelated words. She points out that this could be done by “modifying a superordinate or simply unpacking the meaning of the source item, particularly if the item in question is semantically complex” (ibid: 38). Her description of the use of unrelated words in paraphrase seems more befitting for the term “paraphrase” as we generally understand it in the realm of translation theory.

Dickins et al (2017: 295) use the term ‘rephrasing’ to refer to a very similar concept of “exact rendering of the message content of a given ST in a TT that is radically different in form but that neither adds details that are not explicitly conveyed by the ST nor omits details that are explicitly conveyed in it”. In their view, rephrasing is a “halfway point” between exegetic translation and gist translation (ibid: 5). So to understand rephrasing (and paraphrase), we need to understand the two opposing concepts of exegetic translation and gist translation. Dickins et al. (ibid: 292) define exegetic translation as “a style of translation in which the TT expresses and comments on additional details that are not explicitly conveyed in the ST. In other words, it is similar to the concepts of explicitation and expansion explained elsewhere in this thesis (section 4.8). The other term on the end of the spectrum is ‘gist translation’, by which Dickins et al. (ibid: 292) mean “a style of translation in which the TT expresses only the gist of the ST (i.e. the TT is at the same time a synopsis of the ST)”. Generally speaking, “although translation proper may include elements of gist or exegesis, the dominant mode of translation is one that involves rephrasing between the ST and the TT” (ibid: 7).

Having said that, Dickins et al (ibid: 5) note that “(i)t certainly seems very hard to achieve an ideal rephrasing”, but they conclude that we must not forget that “(b)y its very nature, translation is concerned with rephrasing in such a way as to lose as little as possible of the integrity of an ST message” (ibid: 76). El-Magazy (2004: 106) recommends the use of paraphrase because it is capable of “express(ing) the meaning faithfully, or stress(ing) the components in focus in the

text”. Larson (1998: 67) similarly argues that paraphrase (or its near-synonym ‘restatement’) helps to unpack concepts peculiar to one culture and can be utilized to “to eliminate the skewing between grammar and semantics”.

It seems that Baker’s (2011) preference for the term ‘paraphrase’ is an attempt to avoid the more common yet problematic term ‘equivalence’. Also, Newmark (1988: 93) draws the attention of his readers to his “reluctance to list ‘paraphrase’ as a translation procedure, since the word is often used to describe free translation. If it is used in the sense of “the minimal recasting of an ambiguous or obscure sentence, in order to clarify it”, he is willing to accept it. In other words, Newmark objects to the practice of paraphrasing if it refers to “an amplification or explanation of the meaning of a segment of the text” (ibid: 90). During the final revision of the translation process, he (ibid: 36) recommends that the translator should seek to get rid of paraphrase but not to the detriment of the translated text. Newmark clearly looks down on any translation procedure that can be considered a form of paraphrase. For example, he (ibid: 46-47) dismisses free translation because it “reproduces the matter without the manner, or the content without the form of the original”. Another important reason for his negative attitude towards free translation is that he views it as “a much longer than the original, a so-called ‘intralingual translation’, often prolix and pretentious, and not translation at all”.

Abdul-Raof (2005: 172) explains that a Quran translator is bound by SL linguistic and cultural standards and paraphrase “may be the solution, but it robs the Quranic text of its distinctive religious character”. Paraphrase as a translation strategy has been criticized because it “results in a TT version that can be described as loose, free, in some contexts even undertranslated. Semantic components at the lexeme level tend to be disregarded, in favour of the pragmatic sense of some higher unit such as a whole clause” (Chesterman 1997: 104). Also, while Baker (2011: 41) gives precedence to the use of paraphrase in dealing with several problems in translation and commends the high precision achieved by the paraphrase strategy, she enumerates some disadvantages associated with this strategy. For example, she claims (ibid) that a paraphrase “does not have the status of a lexical item and therefore cannot convey expressive, evoked, or any kind of associative meaning”. Another important disadvantage, she adds (ibid) is that “it is cumbersome and awkward to use because it involves filling a one-item slot with an explanation consisting of several items”.

Despite its shortcomings, Birot (2015: 64,63) looks with favour on paraphrase, describing it as an ‘indispensable’ procedure in vogue among professional translators. He also gives a clear explanation of the term ‘paraphrase’ stating that it “involves the explanation of the meaning of

a unit or a segment of language for which literal translation either sounds unnatural or results in translation loss”.

We come across a myriad of examples of using paraphrase in the translation of God’s names. We have seen already one such instance in the translation of the name الْغَفَّارُ (Al-Ġaffār) in {وَأِنِّي} [Q20: 82] لِنَغْفَارٍ لِّمَن تَابَ وَآمَنَ

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
|                      | غَفَّارٍ (Ġaffār) [Q20: 82]                         |
| Asad                 | <b>I forgive all sins</b>                           |
| Pickthall            | <b>Forgiving</b>                                    |
| Ali                  | I am (also) He that <b>forgives again and again</b> |
| Abdel Haleem         | <b>most forgiving</b>                               |
| Saheeh International | <b>the Perpetual Forgiver</b>                       |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | <b>Forgiving</b>                                    |
| Arberry              | <b>All-forgiving</b>                                |

What else is better to turn to than Ali’s translation to furnish specimen instances of exploiting paraphrase to achieve naturalness or what Dressler (1990: 138) deems to be ‘unmarked translation’. Ali’s characteristic paraphrasing makes his translation metamorphose into an ‘indirect translation’. Kidwai (2017: 244) dismisses many of Ali’s renditions because they offer, in his words, “a literal, soulless version” and Ali’s loose paraphrases come at a price: “moving too far away from the original”. In essence, the lexical decomposition that Ali engages in is an embodiment of what Newmark (1995: 130) calls an “extended synonym and inevitably an expansion and a diffusion of the original text”, and thus runs counter to a view which Newmark (ibid) promotes that “the best translation is likely to be the briefest, i.e. the one nearest to the number of lexical items used in the SL text”. As described by Gutt (2010: 186), ‘indirect translation’ arises as a result of the clash between “the urge to communicate as clearly as possible” and “the need to give the receptor language audience access to the authentic meaning of the original” which is resolved in favour of the former. Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997: 76-77) give some characteristic features of indirect translation which “will typically expand upon and elucidate ST so that implicit information which it contains ... is easily retrievable” by the TL audience.

However, in order not to discredit Ali’s efforts, many of his paraphrases are for concepts and grammatical forms (such as the intensiveness of الغَفَّار ‘Al-Ġaffār’ and الحَفِيفُ ‘Al-Ḥafīd’) that are not lexicalized in the TL. This view is not unconventional and is in keeping with the views expressed by the likes of Baker (2011: 38). Despite Ali’s diligence to compensate for the loss of the nuances of meaning if a corresponding form is used, we must be cognizant of the fact that in the Quran, just as in poetry or aesthetic works of art, the form cannot be detached from the meaning. Al-Hilali and Khan occasionally make use of paraphrases when it is felt that it would allow them more freedom to express the full range of denotations of God’s attributes and their translation of الْقَيُّوم (Al-Qayyūm) as “the One Who sustains and protects all that exists” captures some of the implicit aspects of the divine name. In the translation of الْقَيُّوم (Al-Qayyūm) the meaning seems inextricably attached to the form (which is intensive) and no translation strategy (such as a paraphrase) can precisely impart the intended sense, or, as House (2015: 36) puts it, the meaning “cannot be expressed in any other way: not through paraphrase, explanation or commentary, the borrowing of new words, etc.”. In linguistic terms, the ‘arbitrary’ relation of the signifier and the signified does not hold here.

Another telling example is the translation of God’s name الْمُسْتَعَان (Al-Mustaṣān) in [Q12: 18] { وَاللَّهُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلَىٰ مَا تَصِفُونَ }

|                      | الْمُسْتَعَان (Al-Mustaṣān) [Q12: 18]   |
|----------------------|---|
| Asad                 | to God [alone] <b>that I pray to give me strength</b> to bear the misfortune which you have described to me |
| Pickthall            | And Allah it is <b>Whose help is to be sought</b> in that (predicament) which ye describe                   |
| Ali                  | Against that which ye assert, it is Allah (alone) <b>Whose help can be sought</b>                           |
| Abdel Haleem         | from God alone <b>I seek help</b> to bear what you are saying.  |
| Saheeh International | And Allah is <b>the one sought for help</b> against that which you describe                                 |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | And it is Allah (Alone) <b>Whose help can be sought</b> against that which you assert                       |
| Arberry              | <b>God's succour is ever there to seek</b> against that you describe  |

Al- 'aṣḥāhānī (1412AH: 596) explains that in Arabic *المُسْتَعَان* (Al-Mustaḥān) involves “the seeking or enlisting of the support of someone”, which perfectly parallels the above translators’ paraphrases. Apparently, *المُسْتَعَان* (Al-Mustaḥān) is a lexical lacuna that has no TL lexicalized equivalent at the word level. Semantic lacunas (or gaps) exist when there is a common notion in the TL, but the TL lacks the means to express that notion at the same level (i.e. “phonological [e.g.\*pkly/pkli/], morphological [e.g.\*ungood], syntactic [e.g.\*informations] or semantic [e.g.\*male dog]”; Sankaravelayuthan 2019: 435). Translators have no choice but to unpack the meaning using a paraphrastic procedure and that “explanatory equivalent is more informative for the native speaker of the target language for comprehension purposes” (Jassen 2004: 149). So, any brevity-related manoeuvre (such as generalization or transposition) seems to be out of the question. This will turn the name into an exegetic phrase. Lexicalising it back in English would not yield an equivalent translation, but a monolingual definition of the name’s denotative sense.

A question might crop up here as to the difference between transposition/shift and paraphrase. This confusion stems from the practice of some translation theorists who use the two concepts in an interchangeable manner. Transposition/shift simply changes word category (verb, noun, etc.) while paraphrase, as its name suggests, turns a lexical item into a stretched out component (phrase, clause, sentence or even more than one sentence) as the above translators have done in converting the SL noun into adapted restatements (mostly adjectival clauses as in “Whose help is to be sought”).

A concluding remark about using paraphrase has to be made here: many target language readers of Quran translations have an aversion to the use of paraphrase as it is discordant with the idea of being faithful to the original (Elimam 2017: 67).

### **4.13 Particularizing/ Hyponymic Translation/Specification**

This strategy is the inverse of generalizing translation as it involves the rendition of a ST expression by “a TL expression (which) has a narrower and more specific denotative meaning than the SL expression” (Dickins et al 2017: 77). This entails the use of a hyponym to transfer the SL meaning (ibid). To illustrate, Abu-Mahfouz (2011: 68), for example, criticizes Ali’s translation of the general word *بقرة* (any cow) by the more specific word ‘heifer’ since ‘heifer’ denotes a cow that has not given birth to a calf. Pyles et al (1970: 225-226) refer to this process

as specialization and involving a word sense's contraction. Although Baker (2011) suggests the use of generalizing translation to solve many translation problems, Pozdílková (2012: 4) criticizes her for not mentioning "the opposite strategy, i.e. using a more specific word, as a means of solving translation problems; she also does not take into account situations where a TL term with a corresponding degree of generality or specificity exists, but for some reason, the translator opts for specification or generalization; in other words, she does not discuss optional shift".

Both generalizing translation and particularizing translation result in "a degree of translation loss: detail is either added to, or omitted from, the ST text". Dickins et al (2017: 77) give some situations where it is acceptable to use particularizing translation. For example, this may happen "if the TL offers no suitable alternative and the added detail does not clash with the overall context of the ST or the TT". In his Supplement to thinking Arabic Translation, Dickins (n.d.: 20) lists other situations where particularizing translation is acceptable. One example is if "the context implies something which is typically referred to in more specific terms in the TL than in the SL; thus an إنذار issued by a military commander is likely to be an 'ultimatum, rather than simply a 'warning'". Another example is if "the TL typically makes use of a specific collocation ...which happens to involve a hyponym of the TL form; for example كنز ثمين is likely to be translated as 'priceless treasure', rather than 'valuable treasure', since 'priceless treasure', is the more common collocation in English" (ibid: 20-21). Dickins (ibid: 21) also includes a less obvious trigger for using particularizing translation. This can happen if the specific term in the TL helps to disambiguate the meaning of a polysemous item. He gives the example of قديمة كنيسة, which "might be translated as 'ancient church', in a particular context where this was appropriate to avoid the ambiguity of 'old church', since this latter could be interpreted to mean 'former church', instead of the intended 'old [= not new] church'. That is to say, 'old', in English is polysemous between the two senses of 'old', and 'former', and in this context, it would not necessarily be clear to the reader which of the two senses was intended" (ibid: 21).

Leuven-Zwart (1989, 1990) uses the term 'specification' to refer to the same process, such that "a shift towards greater specification will produce a transeme (a basic unit for linguistic comparison), the meaning of which is made more precise, by either the addition of more words or the use of words with a less general meaning". Similarly, Klaudy (2005: 15) sees specification as one of the manifestations of explicitation, stating that "explicitation takes place, for example, when a SL unit with a more general meaning is replaced by a TL unit with a more specific meaning". Saldanha (2008: 30) in her discussion of the three types of explicitation identified by House (2004) mentions elaboration, which might involve specifying the meaning of a certain

item. Nida and Taber (1982) suggest a number of lexical choices that can increase the efficiency of the translator's task. They give preference to the use of specific terms which are "easier to understand than more generic ones. But if one is dealing with a highly specialized domain, such as a rather abstruse scientific discipline, generic terms are easier than specific terms" (ibid: 149).

Newmark does not seem to agree with the view of Nida and Taber, arguing that "the more specific a word, the less accurate its translation, since it comprises more semantic features" (1995: 169). 'Accurate translation' must be understood here as a general word meaning 'good' or 'right' (Palumbo, 2009: 6). Specification has some risks; as Pozdílková (2012: 15) notes, "it seems that the first potential problem which might result from specification is that it might imply a risk of misinterpretation of the correct meaning out of other possible more specific meanings". In the words of Hatim and Mason (1990: 11) the translator should aim "to allow a multiplicity of responses among SL readers, it follows that the translator's task should be to preserve, as far as possible, the range of possible responses; in other words, not to reduce the dynamic role of the reader". This risk has to do with the assumption that the "reader might be denied access to the other possible meanings of the generic term".

Efforts aiming to disambiguate potential meanings of a more generic term for the reader to facilitate the comprehension of the text are sometimes considered to be rather a deforming tendency in translation, as words get usually disambiguated by their context" (Pozdílková 2012: 16). Put differently, "(i)f the translator opts for a more specific meaning, he or she might destroy the author's intention to keep a word ambiguous" (ibid). Leuven-Zwart (1990: 89) believes that a high degree of specification and (quite paradoxically) generalization bear the marks of translated texts, with specification being more common than the corresponding process of generalization. Although this strategy solves a common translation problem, it is not clear to what degree a translator is ready "to accept the loss of noncentral meanings" (Fawcett 2014: 21).

In fact, we might argue that many polysemous names of God are examples of particularizing translation since most translators choose one specific sense and as such they cover a limited part of the meaning of the name. Nonetheless we can see a greater level of specificity in translating God's name *الْغَنِيِّ* (Al-Ġanī) as the following translations illustrate:

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
|           | [Q44: 64] { وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُوَ الْغَنِيُّ }<br>الْغَنِيِّ (Al-Ġanī) |
| Asad      | self-sufficient   |
| Pickthall | the Absolute  |

|                      |                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Ali                  | free of all wants        |
| Abdel Haleem         | self-sufficient          |
| Saheeh International | the Free of need         |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | Rich (Free of all wants) |
| Arberry              | the All-sufficient       |

الغني (Al-Ġanī) is one who is not in need of anyone while everyone needs Him (Ibn Maḍḍūr 1414AH vol15: 135). All the above translations with the possible exception of Pickthall's (who uses a generalizing term 'absolute') give specific renderings that need to be expanded to encompass humanity's dependence on God. There is no single English word that covers both aspects of the word الغني (Al-Ġanī); hence the limited choices the translators have at their disposal. In these situations what Helaire Belloc regards as (1931: 23-24) the translators' emancipation from mechanical restriction such as space and form is a great tool at the translator's disposal but we must not forget Newmark's rule of thumb; "the shorter the translation, the better it is likely to be".

Al-Hilali and Khan's<sup>1</sup> use of 'Rich' is a perfect example of Newmark's concept of 'translatorese' which refers to dismissing a less frequent translation in favor of an automatic choice which opts for the most common dictionary translation but they attempt to rectify the situation by inserting a parenthetical note. Even the note seems to carry the imprint of Ali's rendition, which presumably lends support to Al-Jabari's (2008: 192) exaggerated asseveration that Al-Hilali and Khan's translation is a 'poor' replication of Ali's in that they just modified his obsolete lexical choice and brought them up to date. On the other hand, using 'rich' to describe God might have overtones of anthropomorphism if we consider the definition given to anthropomorphism by the Encyclopaedia of Psychology and Religion (n.d: 47) as any portrayal of God "as having human appearance and qualities". Indeed this has been partially offset by an afterthought as Elsayed (2017: 104,105, 107) indicates that adding bracketed notes "attracts the attention of the target reader", which makes plain that it is an exegetical or explanatory point so as to "keep the reader acquainted with the intended meaning". This is the inclination of House (2015: 56), who exhorts "abstain(ing) from finding approximate equivalents" for culturally

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<sup>1</sup> Pickthall, in another instance, in [Q47: 38] has also gone awry when he uses the same words "The Rich" to render الغني (Al-Ġanī) which ostensibly conjures up the image of 'cash rich'. In the aforementioned context الغني (Al-Ġanī) was set up in opposition to its antonym الفقير ('al-faqīr'), primarily meaning 'poor' but idiomatically signifying 'in dire need' or 'destitute of'. This furnishes further evidence of the sloppiness of acting on a hunch when it comes to assigning an unsanctified sense to a word standing for the Almighty God.



specific items in timeless texts and alternatively urges translators to “provide explanatory notes”. Al-Jabari (2008: 182, 165) seems to disagree with this view arguing that this excessive use of brackets by Al-Hilali and Khan has an impact on the reader’s concentration and “breaks down the flow of the sentence”.

But what is striking is Al-Hilali and Khan’s imprecise renditions although they are not usually inhibited by issues of brevity and space to communicate faithful renditions. They choose to compensate by splitting the meaning of the name الغني (Al-Ġanī) “spreading it over a relatively longer stretch of the TT” (Dickins et al 2017: 291). Put differently, the word الغني (Al-Ġanī) is supposed to be understood in a general sense yet the translators interpret it in a specific sense. This has been noted by Beekman and Callow (1974: 185-186) as the third significant ‘problem’ (sic) that adversely affects the generic-specific choice. A word must be said about the indulgence of some translators (such as Asad, Ali and Arberry) in their use of dashes which in Newmark’s view (1995: 174) “tends to interrupt the flow of a sentence conspicuously”.

We can also see hyponymic translation in Pickthall’s translation of God’s name القدير (‘Al-Qadīr’, commonly translated as ‘Mighty’ and ‘Powerful’ in [Q60: 7] and [Q4: 149] respectively). Many other translators have followed suit and use ‘powerful’ or ‘has power’ to translate القدير (Al-Qadīr). Newmark points out (1995: 129) that if a translator accepts a rendition just because of the authority behind it rather than its intuitive appeal, this particular translation is “likely to clash with the rest of his version – it will not cohere”. Translators, such as Abdel Haleem, Al-Hilali and Khan and Arberry, who appear to have followed Pickthall in his rendition of القدير (Al-Qadīr) as ‘powerful’ have probably inadvertently fallen into this trap of incoherence by using almost the same rendition (‘all Powerful’) as in [Q 30: 54]) with another divine name: القوي (Al-Qawī), thus rendering them lamentably interchangeable. This lends some support to Toury’s law of standardization (1995) in that the TT here does not display a comparable degree of linguistic variation as found in the ST. Indeed, ‘power’ and ‘mightiness’ are essential parts of His infinite ability قُدْرَة (qudrah) but as al-Ṭabarī (2001 vol23: 122) explains, His ability implies that nothing can hinder Him from doing whatever He wants and no ineptitude can restrain Him. Pickthall’s (as well as Asad, Ali, Abdel Haleem, Al-Hilali and Khan and Arberry’s) two renditions (‘Powerful’ and ‘Mighty’) fall short of reflecting the general aspects of قدير (Qadīr). Saheeh International’s ‘literal’ translation as “Competent” redeems many aspects of the word sense.

## 4.14 Recognized Translation

Newmark (1988: 89) defines this as “the generally accepted translation of any institutional term”. Vermes (2001: 120), in the context of translating names, argues that “(t)he existence of an established conventional TL correspondent will, for reasons of optimal processing effort, generally pre-empt any other option”. This technique is sometimes so captivating that any attempt to reinstate an older indigenous form is likely to fail. Ghazala (2012: 210) cites a couple of examples which depict the prevalence of this phenomenon in Arabic (compare, for example, English ‘alcohol’ with its transformed Arabic form كحول ‘kuḥūl’ despite the presence of an original Arabic الغول ‘al- gūl’<sup>1</sup> which is, ironically, the English word’s etymon)<sup>2</sup>. It can be assumed that any translation that has been used as the natural equivalent of any given term should have a priority over any other contender by virtue of its acceptance among translators. So, “the translator has first to establish whether there is a recognized translation” (Newmark, 1988: 100). For Newmark, this is particularly important when translating names. Malone (1988: 26) calls this kind of treatment “prefab-matching” as “the translator renders a source element into the target text not de novo but by employment of some already conventionalized (prefabricated) counterpart”.

Fawcett (2014: 42) believes that “the use of already existing, conventionalized target language counterparts ... is the kind of thing Toury (1995: 267-268) is referring to with his law of ‘growing standardization’ according to which source language textemes are replaced by target language repertemes or linguistic routines ... which gives unity of expression to the translations of a given era”. Aziz (1983: 83) argues that when foreign names are translated, existing recognized forms should take precedence over new competing alternatives even if these are purported to be more accurate. Many of the recognized equivalents qualify for what are known as ‘functional equivalents’ (i.e. “replacing a culture-specific item or expression with a target language item which does not have the same propositional meaning”, Baker 2011: 29).

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<sup>1</sup> Although OED and the Merriam-Webster dictionary claim that English ‘alcohol’ comes from Arabic كحل ‘koḥl’ (a type of eyeliner), I tend to agree, intuitively, with the view of some researchers such as Hajar (2000: 343) who argues “the old Arabic dictionaries state that: Al-Kol (Al-ghol): 1. A genie or spirit that takes varied forms and shapes (a supernatural creature in Arab mythology). 2. Any drug or substance that takes away the mind or covers it. Obviously, the last statement fits well with alcohol – it does take away the mind”.

<sup>2</sup> Other examples given by Ghazala (2012: 210) are ‘sandwich’ سَنْدَوِيتْسْ (sandawitš) vs. شَطِيرَة (ṣaṭīrah), ‘electron’ إِلِكْتْرُونْ (’iliktrūn) vs. كُھَيْرِبْ (kuhayrib) and ‘infrastructure’ بِنْيَة تَحْتِيَّة (binyah taḥtīyyah) vs. بِنْيَة دَاخِلِيَّة (binyah dāxilīyyah).

According to Bell and Candlin (1991: 7, emphasis removed), many translators dither over keeping these (recognized) functional equivalents and face “criticism of the inaccuracy of a beautiful translation” or they risk being “criticized for the ugliness of a faithful translation”. This use of recognized equivalents of ST items can be seen, for example, in translating some ideological Islamic-related texts from English into Arabic. Dweik and Khaleel (2017: 165) conclude that in such texts, recognized translation “stands as the most prominent procedure”. They (ibid) further regard it as demonstrating attempts by translators to foreignize these texts “by employing a generally accepted translation to convey the message of the source text faithfully regardless of its ideological implication”. The examples they give include rendering ‘Islamic extremism’ as التطرف الاسلامي, ‘fundamentalism’ as اصولية, ‘rogue state’ as دولة مارقة and ‘Islamists’ as اسلاميين. In a similar fashion, Vermes (2001: 107) argues that some translation variants of historical figures have become so naturalized in the target culture such as ‘Martin Luther’ which “must be translated into Hungarian as ‘Luther Márton’, because this variant has established itself as the standard form; ...(and) Martin Luther King is never referred to in Hungarian as ‘Király Luther Márton’”.

Molina and Albir (2002: 510) propose the use of ‘established equivalent’ as an alternative term for ‘recognized translation’ to describe the technique of “us(ing) a term or expression recognized (by dictionaries or language in use) as an equivalent in the TL”.

In the translation of God’s names, we can find many examples which can be described as recognized equivalents because we can sense some agreement on a TL equivalent. For example, Quran translators almost all agree on translating God’s name الْوَدُود (Al-Wadūd) as ‘loving’ or any of its variants sometimes with some intensive qualifiers (such as ‘all’, ‘full’ and ‘most’). The focal point is ‘love’ and qualifiers perform ancillary roles. In general, it is true of qualifiers in English that “(n)ot only do they add emphasis, but also they enhance social, regional, and educational differences in characterization; further, they aid in creating and maintaining tone; finally they clarify and add to meaning” (Benzinger 1971: IV). وَدُود (Wadūd), which can mean (‘loving to His slaves’ or ‘Who is loved’) comes from وَدَّ (wadda), which means أَحَبَّ (‘aḥabba’, Lisān Al-Ṣarab Dictionary). Despite the presence of some near-synonyms (such as ‘likable’, ‘amiable’, ‘cordial’, etc.), the fact that translators opt for ‘love’ (or a derivative) is indicative of its established status.

{وهو الغفور الودود}

[Q85: 14]

**Asad:** And He alone is truly-forgiving, **all-embracing in His love**

**Pickthall:** And He is the Forgiving, **the Loving**

**Ali :** And He is the Oft-Forgiving, **Full of Loving-Kindness**

**Abdel Haleem:** and He is the Most Forgiving, **the Most Loving**

**Saheeh International:** And He is the Forgiving, **the Affectionate**

**Al-Hilali and Khan :** And He is Oft-Forgiving, **full of love**

**Arberry:** and He is the All-forgiving, **the All-loving**

It is no coincidence that all the above translators, apart from Saheeh International, have selected ‘love’ (or a derivative) but more significantly this points to a subtle influence exerted by earlier translators on subsequent translators. This should come as no surprise since translators handle a delicate domain like divine attribution.

We have already seen examples of recognized translations of God’s names such as ‘Lord’ for الرَّبِّ (Al-Rabb), and ‘Mighty’ or ‘Almighty’ for الْعَزِيزِ (Al-ʿazīz). The adoption of these established renditions demonstrates, to the credit of these Quran’s translators, their diligence as Newmark (1995: 71) considers it part of the translator’s job to ascertain the existence of a previous accepted translation. If a translator can secure a recognized equivalent, it is “inadvisable to introduce a new one” (ibid). Also, ‘Lord’ and ‘Almighty’ as recognized equivalents arguably achieve what Beekman and Callow (1974: 40) call ‘dynamic fidelity’ by which they mean a translation that is “both natural in structure and meaningful in content”.

## 4.15 Transposition/Shift

This is a very common process, which involves “replacing one word class with another without changing the meaning of the message” (Vinay and Darbelnet 1995: 36). According to Waliński (2015: 61) “transposition is a highly versatile translation procedure”. But trying to match parts of speech, in the view of Beekman and Callow (1974: 26) produces “undesirable results” and “the translator needs to guard against this tendency”. In the words of Palumbo (2009: 104), shifts are “inevitable features” of translations. Enani’s personal experience corroborates (2003: 90) Vinay and Darbelnet’s and Palumbo’s assertions of the widespread use of transposition among translators. This lends support to Vazquez-Ayora’s (1977: 293) claim of

the intuitive application of transposition in contrast with the risky use of modulation which calls for extensive knowledge in the TL.

The replacement of a word class might alter the meaning of the ST, as Baker (2011: 85) points out: “(d)ifferences in the grammatical structures of the source and target languages often result in some change in the information content of the message during the process of translation”. Nida (1964: 167) refers to these replacements as grammatical modifications dictated by the difference between the SL and TL structures which lead to some adjustments such as “shifting word order, using verbs in place of nouns, and substituting nouns for pronouns”. Shifts can be applied not only interlingually but also intralingually, in which case they are part of intralingual translation, which is one of the main types of translation described by Jakobson (1959).

Transposition can be obligatory or optional. There are some linguistic constraints that sometimes necessitate changes in word classes (cf. Vinay and Darbelnet 1995: 94). Newmark (1988: 88) states; “(t)ransposition is the only translation procedure concerned with grammar, and most translators make transpositions intuitively”. Newmark (1988: 85) mentions several types of transposition such as that involving a change from singular to plural. The second type occurs when “an SL grammatical structure does not exist in the TL” (ibid). “The third type of shift is the one where literal translation is grammatically possible but may not accord with natural usage in the TL” (ibid: 86).

Catford (1965: 73) uses the term “shift’ to refer to the same “departures from formal in the process of going from the SL to the TL”. He distinguishes between two types of shift. There is level shift, which encompasses “the shifts from grammar to lexis and vice versa” (ibid). for example, we can see level shift in the expression of the aspect of continuity in Arabic using lexical items since Arabic, unlike English, generally does not employ grammar to express certain aspects of tense like continuity. The second level deals with category shift. This type covers many instances such as the transfer of SL adjectives by means of TL nouns or the intra-system rendition of a SL plural noun using a TL singular form since the corresponding TL equivalent is uncountable, as can be seen in the mismatch between the Arabic plural form نَصَائِح (naṣā’ih) and the non-count English ‘advice’. Dickins et al (2017: 292) call this process ‘grammatical transposition’ (as distinct from cultural transposition). It denotes the practice of “translating an ST expression having a given grammatical structure by a TT expression having a different grammatical structure containing different parts of speech in a different arrangement”. They note (ibid: 127) that translation loss on the grammatical level is both evident and commonplace and

grammatical transposition can alleviate such loss. This formalization seems to incorporate both shifts and paraphrase, which are not always easy to demarcate.

Examples abound which demonstrate typical cases of transposition especially in those translations that take on a paraphrastic or a slightly different tangent such as Ali's but even then, some instances do not easily lend themselves to one categorical shift. For example while it can be established unambiguously that the attributes in [Q17: 17] *خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا* (Xabīr-an, Baṣīr-an) are turned into verbs by Ali as “to note and see<sup>1</sup>” and Abdel Haleem as “knows and observes”<sup>2</sup> but this straightforwardness in categorization vanishes when we analyze other less transparent cases such as Ali's translation of *السَّمِيعِ* (Al-Samīʿ) *الْبَصِيرِ* (Al-Baṣīr) in [Q42: 11] as “the One that hears and sees (all things)”. This elongated expansion has some transformed elements implanted in a definitive paraphrase which might entangle an analyst since they are not readily ascribable to either a momentary shift or an amplification bordering on an archetypal paraphrase. We can stumble upon instances where a quasi-transposition/shift presents itself adjacent to a stretched paraphrase as the following renditions from Ali's translation demonstrate:

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<sup>1</sup> These verbs, like their cognate nouns, do not relay the forcefulness of the SL lexemes.

<sup>2</sup> Arberry applies shift to the second name (i.e. *بَصِيرًا* ‘Baṣīr-an’) “is aware of and (sees)”. Perhaps a subtler shifted version is Pickthall and Al-Hilali and Khan's “(All)Knower and (All)Beholder” which instead of using a nominalized adjective (e.g. ‘the aware’), opt for an agent noun or ‘nomen agentis’ (in English, for example, typically verb+’er’ or “or”) which if back-translated would yield *أَسْمَاءُ فَاعِلٍ* (nomina agentis: i.e. *خَابِرًا بَاصِرًا* ‘xabir-an’ ‘baṣir-an’). Wright (1996 voll: 131) describes Arabic agent nouns as verbal adjectives “i.e. adjectives derived from verbs, and nearly correspond in nature and signification to what we call participles”. *خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا* (xabīr-an, baṣīr-an) in Arabic are agent-noun-like adjectives *صفة مشبهة*. Wright (ibid: 133) glosses them as “adjectives which are made like, or assimilated to, the participle, viz, in respect of their inflection”. Agent nouns in Arabic are devoid of any supplemental sense attached to them. Rather they denote a general capacity unlike their cognate *صفة مشبهة*, which designates a consolidated state (cf. al-ṣāqīdī 2013: 179). For example *غَاضِبٌ* (‘gāḍib’, angry) may indicate a one-off state with no indication of its degree. *غَضَبَانٌ* (‘gāḍbān’, furious), its agent-noun-like counterpart, expresses a rather heightened temper. Accordingly *خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا* (Xabīr-an, Baṣīr-an) stand for “a quality inherent and permanent in a person ... and a certain degree of intensity” (Wright 1996 vol. 1: 133-134) in contrast to the corresponding agentive formation *صيغة اسم الفاعل* (agent noun measure) which may suggest “a temporary, transitory or accidental action or state of being”, Wright (ibid: 131-132). It has to be mentioned, in retrospect, that we tacitly accept Justice's (1987: 25) contention that in English “the often-agentive -er/-or is a poor predictor of morpho-semantic derivation: prisoner, plumber, dead ringer, harbinger, a real looker, grounder, in the slammer, sockdolager, terror, butter”.

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
|           | [Q42: 19] <b>الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ</b> (Al-Qawī) (Al-ʿazīz) |
| Ali       | He <b>has power</b> and <b>can carry out His Will</b>       |
| Pickthall | He is <b>the Strong, the Mighty</b>                         |

Compare Pickthall’s adjectival “the Strong” with Ali’s converted segment “has power” on one hand and on the other hand Pickthall’s simplex “mighty” with Ali’s explicitation-like paraphrase “can carry out His Will”. Those translators who are not restrained by consideration of syntactic categories bring to mind the proposition put forward by Ezra Pound (1954: 273) that calls for “more sense and less syntax (good or bad)” in translations and that syntax should always be subordinate. There is sometimes disparity in stylistic value (things like formality, literariness, etc.) in the SL and TL, and to circumvent these obstacles a change of word class is inevitable. As Vinay and Darbelnet (1995: 35) note “the transposed form is generally more literary in character”.

A mammoth undertaking is, however, to identify instances of class shifts with translators who are faithful to ‘the letter’ such as Arberry. Ephemeral occasions on which he seems to lose his literalness can be spotted when he transforms the attributive عَلِيم (ʿalīm) (i.e. ‘aware’) into a stative verb ‘knows’ as in [Q10: 36] and when he converts the divine name التَّوَّاب (Al-Tawwāb) into an ordinary verb; “He Turns” as in [Q2: 37] (a faithful rendition of which is Asad’s “the-Acceptor of Repentance”, while an idiomatic version is Abdel Haleem’s “He is the Ever Relenting”). Nonetheless, if we adopt Newmark’s (and Dickins et al.’s 2017) elaborate view of transposition, almost all renditions of God’s names will naturally fall into this category. For example, using grammatical structures such as the superlative forms to lexicalize the intensive nature of many names is a form of transposition. Consider the following examples:

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
|                      | [Q62: 1] <b>الْقُدُّوسُ</b> (Al-Quddūs) |
| Asad                 | the Holy                                |
| Pickthall            | the Holy One                            |
| Ali                  | the Holy One                            |
| Abdel Haleem         | the Holy One                            |
| Saheeh International | the Pure                                |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | the Holy                                |

The divine name *الْقُدُّوس* (Al-Quddūs) indicates purity and being too honorable for any form of imperfection (Ibn al-Qayyim 1978: 179). First, using a lexical means (i.e. English ‘the’<sup>1</sup>) to express the ‘embedded’ definiteness (i.e. *ال* which prefaces nouns in Arabic) is an obligatory form of shift. Also, changing a noun phrase where the head is an adjective to a noun phrase with a noun head (i.e. ‘The Holy One’) is an example of transposition. Also, using the intensifier ‘all’ as is used by Arberry is an overt attempt to transpose and reflect (lexically) the ingrained or intensive nature of the Arabic form which is not structurally detachable.

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<sup>1</sup> English ‘the’ and the Arabic so-called definite article *ال* are not always compatible in their usage. Among other things, they agree in:

- 1- their anaphoric application *للعهد الذكري* (‘I saw a man. The man was tall’ vs. *رأيت رجلا. كان الرجل طويلا*)
- 2- when used in reference to unique referents (e.g. ‘the sun’ *الشمس*) or something in their immediate physical or social context *للعهد الذهني* (‘The doorbell is ringing’ vs. *الجرس يذق*).
- 3- their use for generic reference (exclusively with countable singular nouns in English as in ‘the elephant is the largest mammal’ *الفيل اكبر الثدييات*).

In Arabic, on the other hand, *ال* can be used to refer to all parts (or components) of a class and in this case this can be referred to as *الاستغراق* (all-encompassing) function. Unlike English, *ال* can be attached to adjectives more or less freely. More pertinently and importantly, it has the function of signifying perfection. Hence one of the distinctive features of divine names is the (optional) prefixation of *ال*. This is called *لام الكمال* (‘*lām al-kamāl*’, the definite article of ‘perfection’, ‘faultlessness’ or ‘exemplariness’ when applied to divine names (apart from *الله*) which is presumably the rationale behind the customary insertion of ‘all’ to precede most God’s names such as ‘All-hearing’ *السَّمِيع* (Al-Samīʿ) and ‘All-merciful’ *الرحيم* (Al-Rahīm), in an attempt to reflect this (see al-Damīrī 2004 vol. 1 10: 12; Abdullah and Thabet 2014; Azar and Hagen 2009: 114; and Ibn Hišām al-Naḥawī 2004:110-111) along with the following website [<https://www.thoughtco.com/definite-article-grammar-1690423/>]



## 5. Synonymy

Since synonymy is central to this research, we will begin by analysing the concept of synonymy and present the main arguments relying on the semanticists' treatment of this phenomenon. We will also explore the various arguments of Quranic scholars.

### 5.1 Definition

According to Murphy (2010: 110) the word 'synonym' comes from the Greek roots *syn* 'alike' and *onym* 'name'. 'Synonymy' refers to words that "have the same meaning" Jackson (1995: 65). Lyons (1981: 50) and Harris (1973: 6) do not restrict the concept to words but expand it to include any two or more expressions. This view is known as the restrictive view which "makes identity, not merely similarity, of meaning the criterion of synonymy" (ibid).

Interestingly, many authors who address lexical meaning give a more or less similar definition. However, they admit that the above definition poses more problems than it solves. Murphy (ibid) believes that "it is rare for words to have the same meaning". This phenomenon is termed "absolute synonymy". The occurrence of such a relationship is "vanishingly rare" in the words of Cruse (2011: 143). Also, Lyons (1981: 50) describes it as "almost axiomatic in linguistics that absolute synonymy ....is extremely rare .....in natural language". Bloomfield (1935: 145) stipulates that "if the forms are phonemically different, we suppose that their meanings also are different ... we suppose, in short, that there are no actual synonyms". Ullmann (1962: 141), after quoting the above statement by Bloomfield, however, describes it as "wrong to deny the possibility of complete synonymy". He (ibid) adds that "paradoxically enough, one encounters it where one would least expect it: in technical nomenclature". According to him (ibid), what has given rise to this phenomenon is the need for precision in using scientific terms and the fact that such terms tend to be void of any emotional overtones. A case in point is the pair 'methanal' and 'formaldehyde' suggested by Dickins et al (2017: 7) which "refer to the same chemical compound (i.e. they are synonyms)" (ibid, emphasis original) Semanticists who define absolute synonymy usually follow their description with pairs and sets which they believe do not adhere to the strict interpretation of synonymy. For example, according to Lyons (1981: 51) 'large' and 'big' are not fully synonymous.

In their endeavour to make a distinction between full synonymy and other types of synonymy, semanticists usually employ certain techniques which should help set full synonyms apart. First and foremost, full synonyms should be fully intersubstitutable in all possible contexts. This can be termed “the collocational range of an expression” (Lyons 1981: 52). Consider the behaviour of the synonymous items ‘discovered’ and ‘found’ in the following examples (quoted in Jackson (1995: 65):

1. We discovered/found the boys hiding in the shed.
2. Fleming .....penicillin in 1928.

In 1 the pair ‘discover’ and ‘find’ are interchangeable. However, in 2 only ‘discover’ may be used, suggesting that the pair are not fully synonymous.

Another test which is used to rule out the possibility of full synonyms at least in the English language is the test of normality in which words should be “mutually substitutable in all contexts without change of formality” (Cruse 2011: 142). To explain this criterion Cruse (ibid) gives the following examples:

- 3.a She looks almost Chinese.
- 3.b She looks nearly Chinese.

Apparently, 3a sounds more normal than 3b. Also, Professor James Dickins, (personal communication) embraces this view and further comments that 3b “seems to suggest that someone has been trying to make themselves look more and more Chinese, e.g. through cosmetic surgery. Along these lines one might say, ‘Following her last operation she now looks nearly Chinese’”.

Another interesting test proposed by Ullmann (1962: 143-144) and Palmer (1988: 92) is to see whether two words have the same antonyms. It is most probable that items with the same meaning must have the same opposites. They cite the example of the word ‘superficial’ with its antonyms ‘deep’ and ‘profound’. ‘Superficial’ has ‘shallow’ as its proposed synonym but we can only put ‘deep’ in contrast with ‘shallow’.

Having ruled out the possibility of full synonyms, how to account then for the significant similarities between a given pair of items? Semanticists have made a distinction between full

synonymy and some other types of synonymy. Cruse (2011: 143) proposes the name ‘propositional synonymy’ for items which are mutually entailing. For example, the pair ‘fiddle’ and ‘violin’ are propositional synonyms since buying a ‘violin’ entails buying a ‘fiddle’ and the difference between them is in “aspects which are of non-descriptive meaning” (ibid). These aspects can pertain to stylistic differences. So, in the case of violin/fiddle, ‘fiddle’ is said to be more colloquial and more jocular (ibid). In Cruse (1986), the term that is used is ‘cognitive synonymy’ to capture different dialectal, stylistic and collocational differences between seemingly identical lexical items.

## 5.2 Near-Synonymy

Different levels of synonymy can be shown on a continuum with full synonymy at one end, non-synonymy at the other end and propositional synonymy and near-synonymy in between. The intervening degrees of synonymy are propositional synonymy which is closer to full-synonymy and near-synonymy being closer to non-synonymy. Near-synonymous items exhibit a significant degree of similarity but within certain limits that make them slightly different. These differences must be “either minor or backgrounded or both” (Cruse 2011: 145). Cruse (ibid) cites a few minor differences that are tolerated between near-synonyms:

- (i) “adjacent position on scale of degree: fog: mist, big: huge
- (ii) certain adverbial specialisations of verbs: chuckle: giggle, drink: quaff
- (iii) aspectual distinctions: calm: placid
- (iv) difference of prototype centre: brave (prototypically physical): courageous (prototypically involves intellectual and moral factors).”

Cruse (ibid) further gives an example of what can be considered a backgrounded difference. Such difference can be seen in the pair ‘pretty’ and ‘handsome’ in which the presupposed female vs male distinction is backgrounded. Edmonds and Hirst (2002: 116) state that “near-synonyms must have the same essential meaning but may differ only in peripheral or subordinate ideas”. They (ibid: 107) believe near-synonyms abound in language but it “can be difficult even for native speakers of a language to command the differences between near-synonymy”. They (ibid) add that any definition of near-synonymy is bound to fail unless it takes granularity into account. Granularity for them helps “characterise the essential and peripheral aspects of meaning or “the coarse-grained from the fine-grained”.

Cruse (1986: 285) draws a distinction between cognitive synonyms and ‘plesionyms’, which is the term he uses for near-synonyms. As noted above, cognitive synonyms are mutually entailing. Near-synonyms, by contrast, involve “unilateral entailment” (ibid). For example, for the pair ‘huge’ and ‘big’, we can assert that something is huge and that entails that it is also big but not the other way round. This is called ‘scalar implicature’ which is a type of associative meaning (in addition to extralinguistic-based and linguistic-based aspects of associatative meaning) and have been proposed by Dickins (2014: 1,5) to account for “usages such as ‘This house is big’ to mean ‘[...] not huge’ (which) are frequently explained in terms of Grice’s maxim of quantity (1989), which requires the speaker to be just as informative as is required”. To determine whether a given pair is involved in a cognitive or near-synonymy relationship, Cruse (ibid) uses the intuitive test of using phrases like ‘more exactly’ and ‘not exactly’. If the pair collocates with these phrases, then most probably the pair are near-synonyms. ‘More exactly’ “is normally used to cancel a minor trait and introduce a correction” (Cruse 1986: 286). We now can assert that near-synonymy is about minor traits. Let’s take one of Cruse’s examples to illustrate:

- It was a misty day or more exactly a foggy one.

The pair misty/foggy collocates appropriately with ‘more exactly’ suggesting that the pair are near-synonyms. If we apply the same procedure with pairs such as ‘flat/apartment’ or ‘daddy/father’, this will yield less normal structures. Consider the following examples:

- ?It wasn’t exactly a flat. It was an apartment.
- ?He is my father, more exactly my daddy.

The difference between the pair ‘flat/apartment’ is fundamentally dialectal (‘flat’ being originally British, and ‘apartment’ American). Similarly, the distinction between ‘father’ and ‘daddy’ is stylistic and does not exhibit the kind of difference we expect between near-synonyms. This is in congruence with what Cruse states about synonymy in general, that it “must not only manifest a high degree of semantic overlap, they must also have a low degree of implicit contrastiveness” (Cruse 1986: 266). Cruse (1986: 267) defines synonyms as “lexical items whose sense are identical in respect of ‘central’ semantic traits, but differ...only in respect of ...minor or peripheral traits”. It is clear that the above tentative definition given in (ibid) matches that of near-synonymy rather than a general definition for all types of synonymy.

Dickins' et al (2017: 82) illustration of near-synonymy seems to capture its essence. They state that near-synonymy “is a case not of synonymy but of hyperonymy-hyponymy or semantic overlap, which comes near to being synonymy ... an example from English is ‘thin’ versus ‘skinny’ – assuming the reasonableness of a statement such as ‘she’s thin but not skinny’ and not the reasonableness of a statement ‘she’s skinny but not thin’”.

### 5.3 The view of lexicographers

According to Edmonds and Hirst (2002: 116) dictionary-makers usually write dictionaries with near-synonymy on their minds. Gove (1984: 24a-25a) explains that synonyms “have the same or very nearly the same essential meaning” and “usually they are distinguished from one another by an added implication or connotation, or they may differ in their idiomatic use or in their application. They may be and usually are interchangeable within limits, but interchangeability is not the final test, since idiomatic usage is often a preventive of that. The only satisfactory test of synonyms is their agreement in denotation”. Also in Roget’s Thesaurus, it is stated that “it is hardly possible to find two words having in all respects the same meaning, and being therefore interchangeable; that is, admitting of being employed indiscriminately, the one or the other, in all their applications” (Chapman 1992, page xiv). It is therefore incumbent on lexicographers and dictionary-makers to make distinctions between (near-)synonyms. This is not a trivial matter and in the words of Ullmann (1962: 144) poses “a great challenge”.

### 5.4 Synonymy in Arabic

Books which address synonymy in Arabic usually focus on the differences between old and contemporary schools in their analysis of the significant similarities between lexical items. According to al-Ziyādī (1980), the term تَرَادُفٌ (‘tarāduf’, synonymy) was not known to early Arab grammarians until about the ninth century. That does not mean that they were oblivious to the notion of semantic similarities as attested by the statement of the grammarian Sibawayh in his book *Al-Kitāb* that Arabs might use two lexical items to refer to the same meaning (quoted in al-Ziyādī (1980: 35). Al-Suyūfī (1986) gives a historical analysis of the ambivalent attitude towards synonymy. He gives the example of Ibn Fāris (d.395 AH), who supports the view of some of his mentors that any lexical items believed to be (fully) synonymous are different in certain semantic traits. He (ibid) cites the example of إنْسان (‘insān’, a human) and بَشَر (‘bašar’, a mortal) which differ in their derivation. إنْسان (‘insān’, a human) is derived from نَسَبَان

(‘nisyān’, forgetfulness) or يُوْنِس (yu’ nnis, entertain) and بَشْر (‘bašar’, a mortal) refers to the fact that a human is بَادِي الْبَشَرَةِ (‘bādī al-bašarah’, the skin is outward-facing). Al-Suyūfī (1986) further elaborates on this point by citing the set سَيْف (‘sayf’, sword) مُهَنْد (‘muhammad’, indian cast-iron blunt sword), and حُسَام (‘ḥusām’, a slashing sword which he considers not to be fully synonymous as حُسَام (ḥusām) and مُهَنْد (muhammad) refer to different qualities of the same entity, i.e. سَيْف (‘sayf’, sword). If we apply our criterion of near-synonymy, we can intuitively consider them near-synonymous as they overlap and differ only in minor or backgrounded aspects of meaning.

In the field of lexicography, we can find many volumes written for the sole purpose of compiling different names for the same designation such as the one authored by al-Fayrūzābādī, which enumerates different names for ‘honey’. Al-Ziyādī (1980: 40) criticises these books which list different names for the same entity as being sometimes an exaggeration and upon close investigation not revealing a congruent pattern of synonymous items. Also, they include lexical items which exhibit different qualities, states and types of the same entity in what seems to be a hyperonymy-hyponymy kind of relationship.

Nonetheless, there is one old school of linguists who deny the existence of synonymy. This is championed by Abū Hilāl al-ṣaskarī (1931), who not only denies the existence of synonyms but wrote a book which details the fine-grained differences between seemingly identical lexemes.

The view of contemporary Arab linguists seems to differ from early Arab linguists due to recent developments in dialectology, phonology and semantics (cf. al-Ziyādī 1980: 65). They have rigorous conditions for treating a pair of items as synonymous. The important ones are that they must:

- (i) show complete agreement in their meaning
- (ii) be used by the same speech community
- (iii) be in common use synchronically rather than diachronically

Al-Ziyādī (ibid: 67) explains that in contrast with these strict rules, early Arab scholars adopt a looser view of synonymy and this explains the abundance of synonymous items for the same concept.

Having stated this, this is not the view of all contemporary Arab linguists. Some see synonymy as involving lexical items with a similar denotation rather than complete agreement (cf. al-Ziyādī ibid, al-Munajjid 1997).

Recently, from a slightly different perspective, Elewa (2004), in a corpus-based study, looks at what might initially appear to be fully synonymous items such as جَاءَ ('jā', come) and أَتَى ('atā, arrive), and ظَنَّ ('ḍan', think) and حَسِبَ ('ḥasib', reckon). Particularly important to his analysis is the application of collocational restrictions of near-synonymy using Cruse's model (1986). Elewa's findings reveal that "(c)orpus-based analysis of items which are often regarded as roughly synonymous in Arabic can highlight subtle differences in meaning among such items" (Elewa 2004: 165).

## 5.5 Synonymy in the Holy Quran

There has been a significant interest in synonymy in the Quran as one of the manifestations of its miraculousness. Some Quranic scholars consider synonymy one of the rhetorical devices used in the Quran (al-Munajjid 1997: 109). One of the features of Quranic discourse is the use of semantic repetition. This involves the repetition of items with almost the same meaning or items which share many semantic properties (Elewa 2011: 246). This form of form of quasi-synonymy (Ullmann 1962: 193) is used in English in a more restricted fashion (cf. Dickins et al. 2017: 81-85).

This can be seen in the following verse:

{ قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَشْكُو بَثِّي وَحُزْنِي إِلَى اللَّهِ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ }  
[Q12: 86]

**Pickthall:** He said: I expose my **distress and anguish** only unto Allah, and I know from Allah that which ye know not.

According to al-Zarkašī (1957 vol 2: 472), this form of repetition is claimed by some to be a form of emphasis while others hold the view that the pair ) bat̄'lamentation ,) and حُزْن ('ḥuzn', grief) are not linked for emphasis but there is an additional sense to حُزْن ('ḥuzn', grief) which renders it different from ) bat̄'lamentation ,). Those who deny the existence of repetition of (fully) synonymous items usually rely on the claim that this violates the very important principle of economy in language. The alternative view, however, asserts that this

emphasis and repetition was common in the speech of the people to whom the Quran was revealed. Furthermore, it was looked upon as an ultimate form of eloquence. So, denying its existence is unnecessary arrogance (al-Zarkašī 1957: 3/384).

Another aspect of Quranic sciences in which the subject of synonymy arises is the explanation of some uncommon lexical items. al-Munajjid (1997: 119) cites Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī which uses synonymy to explain the meaning of some lexical items. So, يَفْتَحُ ('yaftah', literally open) is explained as يَقْضِي ('yaqḍī', to judge) and بِالْحَقِّ ('bi-al-ḥaqq', in truth) is explained as بِالْعَدْلِ ('bi-al-ʿadl', in fairness). al-Šāyḡ (1993: 187) believes this type to be only an approximation of the meaning which aims at making it easier for the layman who does not understand the intricacies of the meaning of words.

There is, nonetheless, a group of Quranic scholars who wavered about affirming the existence of synonymy in the Quran. These differ in their analysis of synonymy. al-Munajjid (1997: 120-126) divides them into three types:

- (i) those who believe that some lexical items are better than others but their denotation is the same. So, in following verse:

{ ذٰلِكَ الْكِتٰبُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ }

[Q 2: 2]

**Saheeh Internatioanl:** This is the Book about which there is no **doubt**, a guidance for those conscious of Allah

لَا رَيْبَ ('lā rayb', no doubt) is deemed easier to articulate phonetically than لَا شَكَّ ('lā šak', loosely no doubt).

- (ii) those who express some reservations about the identity of some seemingly synonymous items. This group instructs Quranic exegetes not to describe any pair as totally “synonymous whenever possible” (al-Zarkašī 1957 vol4: 78). al-Zarkašī (ibid) cites the pair الْخَوْفُ ('al-xawf', fear) and الْخَشْيَةُ ('al-xašyah', dread) stating that خَشْيَةٌ ('xašyah', dread) represents an intense kind of خَوْفٍ ('xawf', fear). So, what we are looking at here is what is described in modern linguistics as hyponymy with خَوْفٍ ('xawf', fear) being a hyperonym of خَشْيَةٌ ('xašyah', dread).



(iii) those who deny the existence of synonymy in the Quran. One of the famous proponents of this attitude is al-Rāḡib al- 'aṣfahānī, whose book on the explanation of uncommon Quranic words sheds significant light on the meaning of obsolete words. For this monumental book, he intended to write a sequel, which he never actually wrote, aimed at revealing the true nature of what appeared to be synonymous items and to uncover the obscure differences between them (al-Rāḡib al- 'aṣfahānī 1412AH: 55). It is quite clear, after all, that he denies the strict full synonymy approach and adopts the looser near-synonymy outlook.

In a similar vein, Ibn Taimīyyah (1972), who discusses the fundamentals of Quranic interpretation in one of his books, thinks that one of the miraculous aspects of the Quran is that there are very few instances where one lexical item can express the full meaning of another. If two lexemes are conjoined in the Quran, he explains, this shows that there is a difference between them even if they appear to be fully synonymous. He also believes that one of the reasons for the differences between early exegetes is their use of different expressions which designate the same thing but with a sense not found in another. He gives the example of divine names which show different attributes of God but denote the same entity.

In more recent times, Bint al-Šāṭī' (1971: 94) stated that in the Quran there is not one single word that can replace another. She demonstrated this using the pair حُلْمٌ ('ḥulm', dream) and رُؤْيَا ('rū'yā', vision) in the story of Joseph قصة يوسف in the following verses.

{ قَالُوا أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَأْوِيلِ الْأَحْلَامِ بِعَالَمِينَ }

[Q12: 44]

**Ali:** They said: “A confused medley of **dreams**: and we are not skilled in the interpretation of **dreams**.”

{ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ أَفْتُونِي فِي رُؤْيَايَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لِلرُّؤْيَا تَعْبُرُونَ }

[Q12: 43]

**Ali:** O ye chiefs! Expound to me my **vision** if it be that ye can interpret **visions**.

She (ibid) argued that real Arabs who spoke the language fluently at the time of revelation would not replace رُؤْيَا ('rū'yā', vision) with حُلْمٌ ('ḥulm', dream) in the above verses. The only

exception, she added, where one item might mean the same as another is if they belong to different Arabic dialects.

## 5.6 The Translation of Near-Synonymy in the Quran

Translation is largely about finding synonyms or equivalents across languages. Simms (1997: 6) draws a good analogy stating that “interlingual translation is impossible in a pure form since just there is no such thing as pure synonymy within a language, so there is no such thing as pure lexical equivalence between languages”. Similarly, Abdul-Raof (2001: 9) draws more or less the same conclusion, observing that “the linguistic universal fact of lack of absolute synonymy between two lexical items in a given language leads us to believe that non-equivalence in translation among languages is an expected linguistic phenomenon”.

Elewa (2004) notes that the failure to capture the subtle differences between near-synonymous items in Quran translations can be attributed to the reliance of translators on Quran exegeses which are not based on corpus analysis. This has led to “some verses left either vague or misinterpreted because of the vagueness of some lexemes” (Elewa 2004: 166). This is reiterated in Ssalahuddeen (2013: 1005), who argues that “one of the reasons behind the translators’ less appropriate choices is their depending on the exegeses only. Most of these exegeses tackle the meaning of the verses in general with less sensitivity to the linguistic nuances” of near-synonymous lexemes.

The issue of synonymy has drawn the attention not only of researchers but also Quran translators. In the introduction to the third edition of his translation of the Quran, Ghali (2003: 5) notes that “again, a translation of the meanings of the Qur'an should be based on a clear-cut methodology such as the one adopted here: the differentiation between synonyms. Such a distinction between synonyms has not been strictly observed before, although its adoption can reveal many areas where shades of meaning should be kept distinct”. There is a pressing need to tackle near-synonymy in the Quran because if you are to “read a typical translation of the Qur'an rendered into English ... you will find the same word in English used to translate a whole score of words in Arabic. خَشْيَةٌ (‘xašyah’, dread), وَجَل (‘wajal’, awe), حَذَر (‘ḥaḍar’, apprehension), خَوْف (‘xawf’, fear), وَجَس (‘wajs’, trepidation), تَقْوَى (‘taqwā’, mindfulness) and رَهْب (‘rahb’, horror) would all more or less end up being translated as ‘fear’ (Khan 2007, my emphasis).

Having discussed the various debates regarding synonymy, it is time to delve into the appraisal of the translation of (near-)synonymy in the Quran. First of all, one can observe that the various researchers who address this issue have abandoned the concept of synonymy in favour of the more specific near-synonymy outlook on items which appear to be closely related (cf. Abdellah 2003, Al-Sowaidi 2011, Hassan 2014, and SSalahuddeen 2013).

These researchers usually study near-synonymous items in light of the following (summarised by Xiḍr 1999):

- (i) the morphological derivation of the word using monolingual dictionaries
- (ii) the development of the word and whether it has acquired new senses. Ibn Fāris (1997) thinks that the Quran has changed the way some words are understood.
- (iii) close inspection of the context in which the word is used. According to al-Zarkašī (1957 vol2: 200), the context plays a vital role in indicating what is general and what is specific. It is the best clue to the specific sense of the word.

One of the early investigations of the translation of near-synonymy in the Quran is that conducted by Abdellah (2003), who looks at how five well-known translators tackled near-synonymy by looking at the seemingly synonymous pair غَيْثٌ (ḡayṭ) and مَطَرٌ (maṭar). He (2003: 13) analyses “the linguistic, cultural and emotional contexts of this pair of near-synonyms in Arabic. مَطَرٌ (maṭar) is a general term for all types of rain while غَيْثٌ (ḡayṭ) comes as a mercy which can be in the form of rain. He (ibid) concludes that Quran translators differ in the strategies they use to render this pair of near-synonyms. There are those who “don’t differentiate the meaning or effect of each of the words “ghayth” and “matar” and opt for the word ‘rain’ as an equivalent (Arberry, Ahmad Ali, Shakir). These translations are not considered adequate in conveying the message of the original (Abdellah 2003: 13)”. “On the other hand, two translators seem to have realised the difference in meaning, usage, and emotional effect these words have, and those different strategies for rendering the message in English; Yusuf Ali used ‘rain’ to mean ‘ghayth’...all the time and ‘shower of ...’ to mean ‘matar’ while Pickthall used ‘rain’ for both of them, and added clarifying adjectives to explain different types of water that comes from the sky” (Abdellah 2003: 65). By ‘clarifying adjectives’ Abdellah means the following: ‘saving, fatal, dreadful’.

Similarly, Ssalahuddeen (2013) looks at seven pairs which display near-synonymy in the Quran and how they are rendered in five translations of the Quran. For example, he looks at the pair جَاءَ (jā’) and أَتَى (’atā), finding that “the meanings of ignorance and doubt are associated with

the word “ya’tunaka” while the meanings of knowledge and certainty are associated with the word “ji’nak”” (Ssalahuddeen 2013: 985). This resembles the findings of Elewa (2004) who has analysed the concordances of جاء (jā’) and أتى (’atā) and concluded that “the former has a strong tendency to occur in positive contexts, whereas the latter has a negative sense” (Elewa 2004: 118). Ssalahuddeen (2013: 987) argues that “the majority of the translators do not make a distinction between certainty and doubt.....considering أتاهَا (’atāhā) synonymous with جاءها (jā’hā) in Arabic”. He (ibid) commends any translation that uses “reached” for جاءها (jā’hā) and “approached” for أتاهَا (’atāhā) as in the following two verses:

{ فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ يَا مُوسَى }

[Q20: 11]

[But when he **approached** it, a voice was heard: “O Moses”]

{ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهَا نُودِيَ أَنَّ بُرُوكَ مَن فِي النَّارِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا }

[Q27: 8]

**Abdel Haleem:** When he **reached** the fire, a voice called: ‘Blessed is the person near this fire and those around it

After investigating seven pairs, Ssalahuddeen (ibid: 1005) reaches the conclusion that “some of the translators don’t properly render the near-synonymous terms in a way that shows the interpretive nuances between them or at least highlights the reasons behind their usages”.

Hassan (2014) explores the rendition of the following near-synonyms in four translations of the Quran:

- Rayb / Shakk (generally meaning doubt)
- Ghaith / Matar (generally meaning rain)
- Fu'ad / Qalb (generally meaning heart)
- Al-Half / Al-Qasam (generally meaning swearing) (ibid: 167).

This study is particularly important because it reexamines the findings of other earlier studies. For example, one of the pairs he looks at is مَطَرٌ (maṭar) and غَيْثٌ (ġayṭ), which was also

scrutinised by Abdellah (2003). Hassan’s examination (2014) confirms some of the conclusions reached by Abdellah (2003) and adds that the translations of “Ali, Arberry, Irving, and Ghali have not entirely been successful in translating the near-synonyms Rayb / Shakk, Ghaith / Matar, Fu’ad / Qalb, as well as Al-Half / Al-Aqsam. This is perhaps due to either their inability to recognise the nuances among the near-synonyms in question, their tendency to translate these near-synonyms out of context, or their inattention to most of the linguistic and exegetical works pertinent to synonymy” (Hassan 2014: 187). Interestingly this study also investigates the extent to which Ghali (2003: 5) was successful in achieving what he set out to achieve in his translation of the Quran: “differentiation between synonyms”. Hassan (2014) seems to show an ambivalent attitude towards Ghali’s rendition of near-synonyms. He (ibid: 176) once comments on the translation of رَيْبٌ (rayb) as ‘suspicion’ as an “adequate translation of the word [which] may be attributed partly to his tendency to translate words in context, and partly to his interest in reading exegetical works related to the Qur’an, which makes his translation faithful to the original” (ibid). But he criticises Ghali’s translation of the word فُؤَادٌ (fu’ād) as “miss(ing)the point...adher[ing] to the literal meaning of the word, disregarding the purport which it attempts to convey” (ibid: 182). In a similar vein, he (ibid: 186) does not agree with Ghali’s translation of the pair حَلْفٌ (‘ḥalif’, swearing) and قَسَمٌ (‘qasam’, oath), which, he affirms, “doesn’t draw any distinction between them which may be ascribed to the translator’s tendency to translate those words out of context, though context can contribute a lot to revealing their precise meanings” (Hassan 2014: 186).

## 5.7 The Translation of Near-Synonymous Divine Names

In the introduction to this thesis (section 1.1), we have had a look at one pair of divine designations (العَلِيمُ ‘Al-ʿalīm’ and الْخَبِيرُ ‘Al-Xabīr’) where near-synonymy manifests itself. We have seen how our selected translators seem to treat these near -synonymous names as if they were absolutely synonymous. The following are some further manifestations.

### 5.7.1 قَرِيبٌ (Qarīb) and الْبَاطِنُ (Al-Baṭīn)

The divine name قَرِيبٌ (Qarīb) is mentioned three times in the Quran and all without the definite article ال (the) but scholars (e.g. al-Zajjājī 1986: 146 , Ibn al-Qayyim. 2019 vol3: 719 among others) who engage in linguistic and theological analysis of God’s names freely attach

the definite article in their mention of the name thus making no discernible distinction between the two forms. The word قَرِيب (qarīb) is the opposite of being far and denotes being close or near (Ibn Mandūr 1414AH vol1: 662). It can also denote being promptly responsive (al-Zajjājī 1986: 146). al-Safḍī (1421: 222) expounds different types of divine proximity: among these are swiftness of divine response, God’s penetrating knowledge, and His safeguarding of His slaves. As for بَاطِن (Bāṭin), this is derived from بَطْن (‘baṭn’, ‘insides’ or ‘belly’; al-’azharī 2001 vol. 13: 252 and Ibn Mandūr 1414 AH vol 13: 53). بَاطِن (Baṭin) signifies someone Who has knowledge of the innermost secrets of somebody else (al-Zajjāj, n.d: 61 and al-’azharī 2001 vol.13: 252). al-Ṭabarī (2001vol22: 385) points out that when applied to Almighty God it refers to God’s propinquity and the fact that there is none closer to everything than Him. He cites as conclusive evidence for this usage a prophetic tradition in which Prophet Muhammad supplicates Allah the Almighty saying:

{اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ الْأَوَّلُ فَلَيْسَ قَبْلَكَ شَيْءٌ، وَأَنْتَ الْآخِرُ فَلَيْسَ بَعْدَكَ شَيْءٌ، وَأَنْتَ الظَّاهِرُ فَلَيْسَ فَوْقَكَ شَيْءٌ، وَأَنْتَ الْبَاطِنُ فَلَيْسَ دُونَكَ شَيْءٌ} صحيح مسلم وابن ماجه

[Translated by Al-Khattab 2007, vol. 5: 128]

{You are the First and there is nothing before You; You are the Last and there is nothing after You; You are the Most High (Az-Zahir) and there is nothing above You, and **You are the Most Near (Al-Batin) and there is nothing nearer than You**} [Reported by Muslim and Ibn Mâjah]

Another less common sense reported by Ibn Mandūr (1414AH vol13: 55) is that البَاطِن (Al-Baṭin) is the One concealed from being viewed by His creatures. What concerns us here, however, is the most common (or most literal) interpretation of being extremely close. According to Al-ṣabd Al-Jabbār (2012: 392), البَاطِن (Al-Baṭin) refers to God’s perfect proximity which entails encompassment of everything and this signals His contiguousness. قَرِيب (Qarīb), by contrast, designates an exclusive type of nearness to the righteous of His servants. Let us now turn to our selected translators for further analysis.

|           |                          |                              |
|-----------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
|           | [Q34: 50] قَرِيب (Qarīb) | [Q57: 3] البَاطِن (Al-Baṭin) |
| Asad      | ever-near                | the Inward                   |
| Pickthall | Nigh                     | the Inward                   |
| Ali       | is (ever) near.          | the Immanent                 |

|                      |                           |   |
|----------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Abdel Haleem         | ever near                 | the Inner                                   |
| Saheeh International | near                      | the Intimate                                |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | Ever Near (to all things) | the Most Near (nothing is nearer than Him). |
| Arberry              | Ever-nigh                 | the Inward                                  |

We have already shed light on the finer details of the disparity of the two divine designations. We can further substantiate their near-synonymous nature by implementing Cruse’s yardstick (2000: 159-160) which readily embraces lexemes such as قَرِيب (Qarīb) and البَاطِن (Al-Baṭīn) by putting them on adjacent positions on a cline of ‘degree’<sup>1</sup>– a category which accommodates other near-synonyms such as ‘fog’ and ‘mist’.

The position adopted in this thesis is that absolute synonymy does not exist in Arabic (or English). In this, we are on the same wavelength as Steiner (1993: x), who comes to the conclusion that “only mathematical symbolism and the meta-algebraic algorithms of formal logic are transferable, that is, translatable in their totality”. An inescapable issue is why such ‘absolute equivalence’ is attainable in arithmetic calculations and not in intra- or inter -linguistic symmetry. Dickins et al (2017: 17) propose the following rationale: “in mathematics, an equivalent relationship is objective, incontrovertible and, crucially, reversible. In translation, however, such unanimity and reversibility are unthinkable for any but the very simplest of texts”. Having established that, it is evident that none of the above translators have even intimated that the two names are near-synonyms apart from Al-Hilali and Khan, whose renditions might seem to indicate full synonymy.

The use of “inward” and its substitute “inner” on the one hand and “near’ and its analogous form “nigh”<sup>2</sup> on the other hand sticks to the literal (most common) usage of the terms. This camouflages the two divine names’ similarity, much less reveals the finer details of their differences. Saheeh International departs from the relatively recognized translation of البَاطِن (Al-

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<sup>1</sup> In the literature, alternative terms for ‘degree adjectives’ are used (such as ‘scalar adjectives’ or ‘scalar nouns’) (cf. Gómez-Torrente 2010).

<sup>2</sup> “Nigh is somewhat outmoded or poetic in the sense of near”, according to the Webster’s New Dictionary of Synonyms (1984:154). We are using the word “analogous” in the sense of ‘near-synonym’. The Webster dictionary (ibid: 30A) hesitatingly recognizes many analogous forms as ‘near-synonymous’.

Baṭīn) by giving it the rendition “intimate”. This is capable of conveying multiple senses but they reveal in a footnote a restricted sense of the word ‘intimate’ pointing out that “nothing being nearer than Him by way of His knowledge”. They further note that “another meaning is “the Unapparent,” i.e., concealed from man's physical senses”.

Ali’s employment of the (arguably) philosophical concept of ‘immanence’<sup>1</sup>, (defined by the editors of Encyclopedia Britannica (2017) as the “theological conception of God as existing in and throughout the created world, as opposed, for example, to deism, which conceives Him as separate from and above the universe”), comes as a bit of surprise since this notion is beset by a lot of confusion and hence it is usually recoiled at in Islamic discourse. Edmonds (1998: 23) alerts us to this when he speaks of the unwanted “extra nuances” that may be introduced when an imprecise near-synonym is selected. Asad, similarly, makes use of this term but in a supplementary footnote to the above verse, upholding that “He is the transcendental Cause of all that exists and, at the same time, immanent in every phenomenon of His creation ...in the words of Tabari, “He is closer to everything than anything else could be”. Another - perhaps supplementary - rendering could be, “He is the Evident as well as the Hidden”. The term ‘immanent’ is not explicitly mentioned in the Bible but quite often employed in biblical commentaries. From a Christian perspective it is viewed as depicting that “God is both transcendent over and immanent in His creation; that is, God is both beyond the world and in the world. In the former, the theistic God is distinct from pantheism, and in the latter, He is distinguished from deism” (Geisler 2011). Even within a Christian framework there are objections to the employment of ‘immanence’ and ‘transcendence’ in the literature on the grounds that “how can God possess contradictory characteristics?” (ibid).

So, a translator who attempts to relate this non-Islamic concept runs the risk of making their readers misperceive it as some form of incarnationism or pantheism<sup>2</sup>. While we can understand the position of many translators who cling to the literal meanings of divine names for fear of introducing a sense which is at odds with the Muslim creed, what seems incomprehensible is the stance of Asad, who adopts a fairly unconstrained approach in his translation. Finally the above translators attempt to depict the ‘ceaseless’ characteristic of many divine names by the use of

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<sup>1</sup> In the revised Saudi version (1987: 1687) this is rightly replaced with “the hidden” in view of the fact that “Allah is Hidden in so far as intellect cannot grasp His essence nor can He be seen in the present world”. This conveys a more creditable sense of the divine name.

<sup>2</sup> To offset the entangled issues involved in the use of Immanence, Christian theologians take it to mean that “God is not only the originating Cause of the universe, but He is also the sustaining Cause of it” (Geisler 2011).



‘ever’. Some theologians seem to cast aspersions on its use since “technically speaking, omnipresence is not an attribute of God, but rather it flows from His attributes”, according to Geisler (2011).

### 5.7.2 رَوْوْف (Ra’ūf) Vs رَحْمَن رَحِيم (Raḥmān Raḥīm)

We have already considered the relationship between the root-sharing synonymous divine names الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān) and الرَّحِيمُ (‘Al-Raḥīm’; see section 2.6), so there is no need to discuss this again here. Consequently, since الرَّحِيمُ (Al-Raḥīm)’s rate of occurrence is approximately double that of الرَّحْمَنُ (Al-Raḥmān), we have selected it for analysis in relation to another near-synonym رَوْوْف (Ra’ūf). Also رَحِيم (Raḥīm) is paried with رَوْوْف (Ra’wūf) on eight occasions in the Quran. رَحِيم (‘Raḥīm’, and most probably by extension رَحْمَنُ ‘Raḥmān’) denotes the bestowal of abundant mercy while رَوْوْف (Ra’ūf) is the adjectival counterpart of the noun رَأْفَةٌ, which designates the most profound benign type of mercy (al-Xaṭṭābī 1984: 91). Ibn Maḍḍūr (1414 AH vol 9: 112) illustrates that رَأْفَةٌ (ra’fah) does not involve any detestable dimension unlike رَحْمَةٌ (raḥmah) which may be accompanied by something unpleasant but in the best interests of an individual. Giving the ailing person bitter medicine, al-Ḥabd al-Jabbār (2012: 201) spells out, is an act of mercy رَحْمَةٌ (raḥmah), however repugnant, whereas رَأْفَةٌ (ra’fah) appertains to dispensing mercy unmarred by any discomfort. Are translators capable of replicating these differences? Consider the following:

|                      | [Q24: 20] رَحِيم (Raḥīm) | [Q24: 20] رَوْوْف (Ra’wūf) |
|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Asad                 | a dispenser of grace     | compassionate              |
| Pickthall            | Merciful                 | Clement                    |
| Ali                  | Full of mercy            | (full of) kindness         |
| Abdel Haleem         | merciful                 | compassionate              |
| Saheeh International | merciful                 | kind                       |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | Most Merciful            | full of kindness           |
| Arberry              | All-compassionate        | All-gentle                 |

With a view to the definition given in the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English of the word ‘gentle’ as “kind and careful in the way you behave or do things, so that you do not hurt or damage anyone or anything”, perhaps the closest equivalent for رَوْوْف (Ra’ūf) is

Arberry’s rendition “All-gentle”. Arberry has managed to reproduce their differences in almost every particular detail. Other translators have captured the essence of the meaning of رحيم (Raḥīm) yet seem to lose sight of the meaning components that set الرَّؤُوف (Al-Ra’ūf) apart from الرحيم (Al-Raḥīm), its near-synonymous counterpart. Edmonds (1998: 23) rightly cautions about leaving out a desired nuance when a translator picks up a TL equivalent. “Compassionate”, “clement” and “kind” fall flat of echoing some nuances (such as unadulterated mercy and being free from any harshness) of the meaning of الرَّؤُوف (Al-Ra’ūf). This situation is further aggravated in Ali’s and Al-Hilali and Khan’s translation by their resort to a paraphrase “full of kindness”, which besides falling short of our expectations of accurate renditions, obscures their identity as divine designations in their own right. What is unique about these two names is that they come twinned in comparable contexts to describe Prophet Muhammad as in [Q9: 128], which make them ideal for investigating the two types of consistency (verbal and contextual). The above table is reproduced below with the same qualities assigned to Prophet Muhammad.

|                           | [Q9: 128]<br>رحيم <i>rahīm</i><br>(of Prophet) | [Q24: 20]<br>رحيم <i>rahīm</i><br>(of God) | [Q9: 128]<br>رؤوف <i>ra’ūf</i><br>(of Prophet) | [Q24: 20]<br>رؤوف <i>ra’ūf</i><br>(of God) |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Asad</b>               | (Full of) mercy                                | a dispenser of grace                       | Full of compassion                             | compassionate                              |
| <b>Pickthall</b>          | merciful                                       | Merciful                                   | full of pity                                   | Clement (or full of pity in [Q54: 10])     |
| <b>Ali</b>                | merciful                                       | Full of mercy                              | most kind                                      | (full of) kindness                         |
| <b>Abdel Haleem</b>       | (full of) mercy                                | merciful                                   | full of kindness                               | compassionate                              |
| <b>Saheeh</b>             | merciful                                       | Merciful                                   | kind   | Kind                                       |
| <b>International</b>      |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Al-Hilali and Khan</b> | merciful                                       | Most Merciful                              | full of pity, kind                             | full of kindness                           |
| <b>Arberry</b>            | compassionate                                  | All-compassionate                          | Gentle   | All-gentle                                 |

The first thing we notice is that most of the above translators seem to be aware of the difference between الرَّؤُوف (ra’ūf) as an adjective eligible to be used a divine appellation and الرَّؤُوف (ra’ūf) as a common modifier. In the former the translators’ focus is on deification or elevation (e.g. strengthening the meaning by using words such as “full of” and “all”) whereas in the latter they do not seem to be bound by any considerations of formal correspondence and

exploit what Catford (1965: 6) calls “unit shift” (i.e. a shift away from the strict equivalence between ST and TT units [the word in this case]). Apart from the above observation, the translators are fairly observant of verbal consistency typically in the rendition of الرَّحِيم (Al-Raḥīm). With الرَّؤُوف (Al-Ra’ūf) they do not show comparable consistency to that which they seem to observe elsewhere, with the exclusion of Pickthall who is not as attentive to verbal and contextual consistency as the other selected translators. For example, Pickthall’s use of ‘clement’ above is not confined to الرَّؤُوف (Al-Ra’ūf) but extends also to الْحَلِيم (Al-Ḥalīm) as in [Q35: 41], عَفُو (ʿafū) as in [4: 99] and تَوَّاب (Tawwāb) as in [24: 10].

It can be argued that the verbal consistency that the table above depicts is unwarranted since God’s exalted status and perfect attributes should be made perceptively distinct when used in reference to the non-divine but it must be borne in mind that we are making a reference to a venerated individual; a prophet, though not God’s equal, but someone who is definitely worthy of special treatment. However, we must not forget the idea put forward by Lightfoot (1873: 46), a famous King James Version reviser, who deprecates the utilization of “various renderings of the same word or words, by which artificial distinctions are introduced in the translation which have no place in the original”. Contrastingly, he also (ibid: 65) frowns upon “the obliteration of real distinctions by the same rendering of different words”. The question that remains largely open is whether the above contextual considerations warrant the use of the same words (or phrases) to render the two words (الرَّؤُوف ‘Al-Ra’ūf’ and الرَّحِيم ‘Al-Raḥīm’) in each of their occurrences, a principle termed “concordance” by Beekman and Callow (1974: 152). It might be argued that the use of capital letters by Pickthall and Saheeh International (merciful vs. Merciful) makes the divine attribute stand out as a proper noun which, in a way, reflects its distinctiveness

Similar to the strategy of repeating words (or symbolic forms) in situations that demand extra emphasis, it is quite probable that the above translators are under the impression that what Benzinger (1971: 21-22) describes as “the multiplication of synonyms” is in operation here and the sole purpose of what we might loosely term semantic repetition<sup>1</sup> is “to stress an idea (in this

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<sup>1</sup> I think that a distinction must be made between semantic repetition and binominals or conjoint phrases which are “pairs of near-synonyms that function together as a single unit” (Munday 2012: 176). Examples of English binominals include ‘tried and tested’ ‘law and order’, ‘black and white’ and ‘again and again’ although the last two do not quite meet Munday’s criterion. Therefore, Munday’s definition could be revised to allow for any “sequence of two words pertaining to the same form-class, placed on an identical level of syntactic hierarchy, and ordinarily connected by some kind of lexical link” (Malkiel 1959: 113). To keep things neat and tidy, it is better to reserve the

case “profound mercy”) every way possible”. Its ubiquity in the advertising industry (e.g. “Clorox sanitizes and disinfects”), old English poetry and the Bible is notable, and it is a feature of both Arabic and English but in English it is manifestly on a smaller scale (Dickins et al 2017: 83). While we concur with Dickins and Watson’s assertion (1999: 582) that “expressions of this kind are not tautological, as they might appear to be if they were translated with two English words”, we beg to differ with their precept that “they represent a single concept and should (be) translated accordingly into English”. Put another way, in Quran translation, where the sanctity of the text, precision of expression and faithfulness are of prime concern, we cannot sanction the treatment that “is fairly normal for adjectives which are coordinated asyndetically (without the connective *و* ‘and’) to be translatable by a single adjective in English” (ibid). Later Dickins et al (2017: 83) give an inkling that this strategy is not preferred in situations where the difference is palpably recognizable.

It is worth pointing out that some translators above have employed what Dickins et al (2017: 84) terms ‘semantic distancing’: a strategy put forward to tackle semantic repetition or anomaly (the superordinate-hyperonym noun doublet) by choosing English words whose meanings are more obviously distinct than those of their Arabic counterparts”. This might explain why some translators give what many might consider mediocre matches (such as “kind”, “full of pity” or even “gentle”) that are not up to par with the grandeur of the Arabic vocable الرُّؤُوف (Al-Ra’ūf). The description that Berman (1985/2000: 291) gives for such deforming tendencies is “qualitative impoverishment” or “the replacement of terms, expressions and figures in the original with terms, expressions and figures that lack their sonorous richness or, correspondingly, their signifying or “iconic” richness”. This practice typifies ‘domesticating translation’ and ethically affects “receiving the Foreign as Foreign” (ibid: 285-286, emphasis original). Using ‘common-level’ or ‘familiar’ alternatives has its own advocates such as Wonderly (1968), who promotes this elementary technique to convert Bible translations into publicly accessible versions. Aldahesh (2022: 202) expresses a similar view, arguing:

The informative level of meaning must be given priority when translating a sensitive text such as the Qur’an. Given that the stylistic and poetic qualities of the Qur’an are Qur’an-specific properties and that reproducing them surpasses human faculties, no effort should be made by translators to echo these qualities (ibid).

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term ‘binomials’ for pairs where an inversion of its constituents is not feasible. In this way, semantic repetition in which lexical cooccurring items are freely ‘floating in the air’. Following Malkiel (ibid: 116), and for want of a better term, we can regard conjoined near-synonyms in Arabic as “loosely attached binomials”.

Also, these seemingly generalizing substitutes appear to substantiate Newmark's (1996: 57) conjecture that "English has a special place as regards translation equivalence: when it names human and natural qualities, it can be both wider and more approximate (e.g. *nice*, *nasty* for which it appears foreign language equivalents are hard to find)". This is difficult to reconcile with the fact that English has an ever-evolving lexical stock which has outstripped many languages in word count. Many Quran translation researchers argue (e.g Hassan 2014: 165, Abdellah 2003: 51 and Abdul-Ghafour, Awal, Zainudin and Aladdin 2017: 258) and that Quran translators should not be content with less precise equivalents when more exact renditions are at their disposal.

### 5.7.3 الرَّقِيب (Al-Raqīb) and شَهِيد (Šahīd)

الشَّهِيد (Al-Raqīb) is a near-synonym of one sense of a number of divine names such as الشَّهِيد (Al-Šahīd), الحَافِظ (Al-Ḥafīḍ), الحَسِيب (Al-Ḥasīb) and الكَفِيل (Al-Kafīl) among others. Being the closest near-synonym, we have selected الشَّهِيد (Al-Šahīd) for comparison with الرَّقِيب (Al-Raqīb). Ibn Maḍḍūr (1414 AH vol 1: 424) glosses the name الرَّقِيب (Al-Raqīb) as 'an overseer from Whom nothing is hidden' and it can also mean someone who awaits and actively anticipates. Al-Ṭabarī (2001 vol 6: 350) throws extra light on this, stating that it embraces God's power to compute and keep track of our actions and watch over our maintenance. As for الشَّهِيد (Al-Šahīd), it is an intensive form derived from the active participle الشَّاهِد (al-šahid) which denotes Allah's being a present witness Who beholds what others cannot perceive without being physically present, hence the nomenclature الشَّهِيد (al-šahīd) which is attached to anyone who dies in a battle in the way of Allah, to draw attention to the continuation of their lives (al-Zajjājī 1986: 133). Al-Ṣābd al-Jabbār (2012: 360) outlines the main differences between the two names, pointing out that الشَّهِيد (Al-Šahīd) encapsulates awareness and taking account of observable actions or statements or extrinsic conditions, while الرَّقِيب (Al-Raqīb) entails being au fait with the innermost secrets or hidden matters as well as transparent affairs. The two attributes can be located semantically within close proximity, which make them ideal for investigation. Consider the following:

|                      |           |              |
|----------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Asad                 | witness   | keeper       |
| Pickthall            | Witness   | the Watcher  |
| Ali                  | witness   | the Watcher  |
| Abdel Haleem         | witness   | the watcher  |
| Saheeh International | Witness   | the Observer |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | a Witness | the Watcher  |
| Arberry              | witness   | the watcher  |

What is noteworthy about the above renditions is their consensus on the use of nouns to transfer the Arabic nominalized adjectives. In the view of Dickins (personal communication) all God's names with the possible exception of الله ('God' or 'Allah') are adjectives used nominally. The above renditions conceal their bona fide adjectivity (attributive content) by opting for nouns (which puts greater stress on qualities of non-transience). This seems reasonable as Wierzbicka (1986: 357) suggests, given that characteristics are better "designated by nouns rather than adjectives (not nominalized ones) if they are seen as permanent and/or conspicuous and/or important nouns". With God's names, more prominence is given to their attributive (or ascriptive) aspects and their nouniness<sup>1</sup> reflects their permanent nature (hence they are called nominal adjectives).

More importantly perhaps, all the above translators categorically render شَهِيد as 'Witness', which constitutes evidence of translators' affinity for literal meaning and it is their first port of call whenever the context warrants. Additionally, another reason to vouch for the translators' choice is the fact that in Biblical traditions God is occasionally given the designation 'witness' as in 1 Samuel (12: 5, KJV) and 1 Thessalonians (2: 5, KJV). On the flipside, though, this rendition does not take into consideration the heightened sense embedded in الشَّهِيد (Al-Šahīd) which sets it apart from its whittled-down counterpart الشَّاهِد (al-šahid). Differences between the two divine names emerge when we scrutinize the translation of الرَّقِيب (Al-Raqīb). Translators have selected one sense of the Arabic word and try to replicate it in their translation. These are the definitions of the above cited renditions as they appear in OED.

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<sup>1</sup> Not all adjectives in English show inherent 'temporariness'. Compare, for example, 'sick' with 'blind' or 'deaf'. Also, not all nouns lay stronger emphasis on the permanence of the attribute than on its ascriptive nature. Compare, for example, 'He is a cripple' with 'He is sick' (cf. Wierzbicka 1986: 356).

| <b>Word</b> | <b>Definition</b>  |
|-------------|--|
| keeper      | A person who manages or looks after something or someone |
| watcher     | A person who observes something attentively or regularly |
| observer    | A person who watches or notices something                |

Perhaps the closest match for الرَّقِيب (Al-Raqīb) is “watcher” since it allows for the “attentive” and “regular” components of its meaning. That being the case, it is no wonder that most of the above translators have singled it out. The above translators do not seem to be capable of reproducing the “thorough knowledge” and subtle nature of God’s watch. “Watcher” perhaps in tandem with “observer” might be as good alternatives to “witness”, and the other way round, which leaves them fairly interchangeable and thus indistinguishable. In both cases priority is given to the literal sense that first comes to the mind when the word is encountered out of context.

The above translators appear to be keen on keeping the distinction recognizable but their desire to sustain succinct (or terse) renditions has apparently stifled any efforts to mirror the near-synonymous association. Articulating subtle differences “with invariable precision” between near-synonyms, in the view of Edmonds and Hirst (2002: 108) is a grueling task even for native speakers. These mitigating circumstances help to vindicate the stance of most translators, who are either oblivious or inattentive to finer points of differences between seemingly synonymous terms. Irrespective of how painstaking they are, finding the best match seems to elude them. To illustrate, although Asad’s “keeper” is reflective of one central component of the divine designation الرَّقِيب (Al-Raqīb), it is more acceptable for الحَفِيز (Al-Ḥafīḏ) (and الحَافِظ ‘Al-Ḥāfiḏ’<sup>1</sup>, by association). Such superficial similarity is enough grounds for investigating the near-synonymy relationship between الرَّقِيب (Al-Raqīb) and الحَفِيز (Al-Ḥafīḏ), which will be the focus of the next section.

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<sup>1</sup> Al Ghamdi (2015: 260) considers in detail the differences between الحَفِيز (Al-Ḥafīḏ) and الحَافِظ (Al-Ḥāfiḏ) pointing out that both names refer to divine preservation, maintenance, protection and safeguarding. Many Quran translators fail, Al Ghamdi (2015: 263) notes, to reflect the morphosemantic differences between the names. He (ibid: 260) explains that الحَفِيز (Al-Ḥafīḏ) has a broader meaning than الحَافِظ (Al-Ḥāfiḏ) which includes the sense of ‘record-taking’ of actions in addition to the general meaning of preservation.

#### 5.7.4 الرَّقِيب (Al-Raqīb) and حَفِيط (Ḥafīḍ)

The meaning of الرَّقِيب (Al-Raqīb) has been already scrutinized. As for حَفِيط (Ḥafīḍ), and its contracted counterpart حَافِط (ḥāfiḍ)<sup>1</sup>, this basically denotes two types of ‘keeping’, according to al-Jawharī (1987 vol 3: 1172): first safeguarding something and second committing it to memory. As a divine designation it refers to God’s preservation of the heavens, earth, His servants and His dominion in keeping a record of His creatures’ deeds and words (al-Xaṭṭābī 1984: 67-68). Apparently, the similarities between الحَفِيط (Al-Ḥafīḍ) and الرَّقِيب (Al-Raqīb) are more salient than their differences. The divergence lies in the focus of the two names. In الرَّقِيب (Al-Raqīb), the focus is on “observation” and “heedfulness” while in الحَفِيط (Al-Ḥafīḍ) it is affording protection and keeping account of His creatures’ actions. This is how our translators give expression to these names:

|                      | [Q11 : 57] حَفِيط (Ḥafīḍ) | [Q5: 117] الرَّقِيب (Al-Raqīb) |
|----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Asad                 | watches over              | keeper                         |
| Pickthall            | Guardian                  | watcher                        |
| Ali                  | hath care and watch       | watcher                        |
| Abdel Haleem         | Who protects              | watcher                        |
| Saheeh International | Guardian                  | observer                       |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | Guardian                  | watcher                        |
| Arberry              | Guardian                  | watcher                        |

Most of the above translator choose “Guardian” to render الحَفِيط (Al-Ḥafīḍ), which OED defines as “a person who protects or defends something”. We can see a clear propensity to uniformity in some of the renditions above. Pickthall, Saheeh International, Al-Hilali and Khan and Arberry have opted for “Guardian”, although it does not stand out as too distinct from “watcher”, which is some translators’ choice for الرَّقِيب (Al-Raqīb), and other potential substitutes (of which there are many). “Guardian” communicates the basic (and literal) meaning of one sense of the word الحَفِيط (Al-Ḥafīḍ). This interlingual transfer seems to suffer, however, from two shortcomings. First, nothing signals its emphatic nature (which makes it indistinguishable from its kindred form الحَافِط ‘Al-Ḥāfiḍ’). Second, and what is perhaps more pertinent here, is that it sidelines the secondary yet crucial sense of God’s حَفِط (ḥifḍ): keeping track of His creatures’ dealings.



However, “guardian” has the advantage of setting it apart from its near-synonymous counterparts “watcher” or “observer”.

Asad’s and Abdel Haleem’s transposition converts an attribute into an action verb. This shift is of the type that the flexibility of the TL accords (noted by Machali 2009 and cited in Subiyanto 2016: 118). Also, Ali’s longer stretch, which presumably aims at splitting up the sense components of the lexeme, does not communicate all the range of senses الحَفِيط (Al-Hafīḍ) is capable of imparting. This componential analysis (Dickins and Watson 1999: 79) and the collateral compensatory splitting and the expansion that has ensued (Dickins et al 2017: 54) partially disambiguate the basic sense of the word, but as Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997: 192) note, if the translator uses a larger unit to recast the basic ST meaning, this will lead to an unflattering free translation (i.e. being more mindful of TL naturalness than of ST meaning, *ibid*: 62). In spite of everything, it cannot be established categorically that periphrastic phrasings are intrinsically counterproductive in as much as “the logos works in mysterious ways. Brevity can be expressive... but so can length”, on the testimony of Justice (1987: 86). Hervey (1995: 60) cites the effective application of compensation in resolving areas of linguistic conundrums such as puns.

Although words with distinct meaning components which have no clear-cut interlingual matches are a privileged site for compensation, we can observe here an attempt to make the TL version mirror the idiomaticity of the SL lexeme which, Ali seems to suggest, has what it takes “to make the translation come alive, for it is by means of such distinctive expressions that the message can speak meaningfully to people” (Nida and Taber 1982: 106). In practical terms, however, compensation is generally held to be the “consequence of the mismatch between the two language systems under consideration and is conditioned by the limits of those systems” (Hervey 1995: 69).

Compactness has been sacrificed above (by some translators), which has led to the relegation of a fully-fledged steady attribute into a verb with its fixation on the mere recurrence (or regularity) of an action. We can detect some conformity among some of the above translators but the question that crops up here is whether they follow through on their pursuit of harmony. Nothing could be further from the truth. The following tabulates their replications of the very same renditions with other divine names.

|                      | <b>حَفِيف (Ḥafīd)[Q11: 57]<br/>[Q42: 6], and [Q34: 21]</b>   | <b>Other divine names that have matching renditions</b>                         |
|----------------------|--|---|
| Asad                 | watches over; watches,<br>watches over   | [2: 28] (Muqīt) مُقِيت<br>[33: 52] (Raqīb) رَقِيب                               |
| Pickthall            | Guardian, Warden,<br>taketh note of  | [2: 107] (Walī) وَلِي<br>[17: 2](Wakīl) وَكِيل<br>[59: 33](Muhaymin) مُهَيِّمِن |
| Ali                  | hath care and watch,<br>watch over, doth watch<br>over   | No recurrence   |
| Abdel Haleem         | Who protects, is<br>watching, observes over  | [4: 45] (Walī) وَلِي<br>[47: 11] (Mawlā) مَوْلَى                                |
| Saheeh International | Guardian   | No recurrence   |
| Alhilali and Khan    | Guardian, Hafeez<br>(Protector) over them<br>(i.e. takes care of their<br>deeds and will<br>recompense them),<br>Hafiz over everything.<br>(AllKowner of<br>everything i.e. He keeps<br>record of each and every<br>person as regards deeds,<br>and then He will reward<br>them accordingly) | [2: 107] (Walī) وَلِي<br>[6: 66] (Wakīl) وَكِيل                                 |
| Arberry              | Guardian, Warden,<br>Guardian  | [3: 173] (Wakīl) وَكِيل   |

All the above translators barring Saheeh International have slipped into what Berman (1985/2000: 291-292) terms “quantitative impoverishment” or loss of lexical variation “since the translation contains fewer signifiers than the original”. Put another way, different ST divine names share the same TL rendition as الحَفِيف (Al-Ḥafīd). This suppresses their variation and fails to reflect their differences. These divine names cannot be inter-substituted whatever the cost may be. Using an identical rendition for distinct names reduces the richness of the TT and makes

the TT somewhat lexically impoverished. It is a domesticating strategy that introduces a textual deformation which neutralizes a foreign element in a translation which is meant to be clearly visible, particularly in Berman's view (ibid: 284), and not wilfully "uprooted from its own language-ground".

Saheeh International have maintained astounding congruity in their renditions. They not only use the same translation in all occurrences of حَفِيط (Ḥafīḍ) but they also do so exclusively. This homogeneity stems from their awareness of the delicate nature of the translations of God's attributes. This task is admittedly difficult or as they put it "an impossibility" (2004: iii). Their introduction to their translation is a testimony of their dedication to accurate transfer of divine names and attributes. They try to make use of whatever is available at their disposal, proclaiming that "throughout this work there is an endeavor to be consistent in the translation of oft-repeated words and phrases from the text" (ibid: ii). This is a feather in their cap, but it is, arguably, somewhat off target especially if we take into consideration the multiple range of senses the divine name is purposed to convey. They address this issue in the aforementioned preface, attributing it to commonplace conventions which make "both early and later scholars emphasize some aspects more than others in their commentaries... Any translation, which can reflect but one emphasis, must necessarily appear as a severe limitation" (ibid: iii).

Other translators above have varied their selection and it can be inferred they must have found pointer to corroborate their options. Such pointers for one particular sense cannot categorically substantiate their variable renditions. To illustrate with حَفِيط (Ḥafīḍ), if we exclude the sense of 'protection' in [Q42: 6], we cannot put aside all the other senses the name stands for. So Pickthall and Arberry's anomalous 'Warden' can be sanctioned by the context but so are other conceivable alternatives. Also, "Warden" is as admissible as "Guardian" in all instances of the divine name. It is a little surprising that Arberry does not maintain his characteristic consistency either in the rendition of name الحَفِيط (Al-Ḥafīḍ) or in reserving the words 'Warden' and 'Guardian' for الحَفِيط (Al-Ḥafīḍ), to the exclusion of every other divine name. We must also not gloss over the fact that الحَفِيط (Al-Ḥafīḍ) is not as frequent as other divine names which have duplicate glosses (e.g. الحَفِيط 'Al-Ḥafīḍ' has only 3 occurrences while الوَلِيّ (Al-Walī) and الوَكِيل (Al-Wakīl) have 14 and 13 respectively). Even Al-Hilali and Khan employ variable schemes. On one occasion they use a translation doublet (transliteration+near synonymy). This 'double presentation' (Pym's 2018: 80 term) has the extra advantage of a transliterated form which accords "more value as an original form than does the immediately substitutive TT", in the words of Pym (2018: 84). As claimed by Chesterman (1997: 95), the inclusion of both SL and TL versions "so that one acts as a gloss of the other" has far-reaching ideological ramifications. These 'combinations', to use

Schaffner and Wiesemann's (2001: 34) term, "are frequently 'safer' solutions". They reason (ibid) that for these combinations to yield positive results they should be used at the first textual occurrence to make TL readers become acquainted with them so that with subsequent occurrences the loanword can be solely used.

Al-Hilali and Khan also appear to pay extra attention to detail but upon closer scrutiny their readers are occasionally not provided with detailed annotations. Sometimes their incidental remarks confound rather than illuminate the lexical choices in their running translation as their rendition of [Q42: 6] illustrates. With a view to this proportional distribution, it is probable that some of the above translators did not feel the sense of imperativeness in keeping these near-synonymous names perceptively discernable. This might be the very reason (along with the absence of the definite article prefix ل, the absence of which masks its independence as a veritable divine name) why most translators above have decided to replace one grammatical category (adjective) with other categories (verb or phrase).

All things considered, our investigation validates Edmonds' (1998: 23) deduction of the scarcity of faithful and direct interlingual matches for near-synonymous items. In the final analysis, Edmonds goes on to declare, "the target language will provide many near-synonyms for a source language word that differ (from the target word and among themselves) in nuances of meaning".

Our investigation resonates with the findings of Dickins (personal communication) that while divine names in the Quran are co-referential (have the same referent, i.e. God) they are not co-scriptive (i.e. do not exhibit complete synonymy) and the semantic similarity or differences between them is determined by overlapping denotations or meaning components that narrow down their overall denotation which Dickins (2018: 16) refers to as 'sub-ascription'.

To conclude, our selected translators often do not capture the fined-grained distinctions between near-synonymous divine names despite their seeming fervor to maintain their divergence. A close inspection also suggests the role antecedent renditions play in subsequent translations. Subsequent translators seem to use these prior renditions as a benchmark against which their own translations are assessed, hence the apparent similarities among them. However, our translators present an almost contradictory pattern by playing down the denotational mismatch between near-synonymous names. The position of eminence that divine names hold in the Islamic creed requires extra rigor on the part of Quran translators to mirror any component of meaning the name denotes. That said, our translators display varying degrees of consistency

in their renditions of near-synonymous names, with Pickthall being the least consistent in his rendition of divine names and Saheeh International being the most consistent with almost one exclusive translation per name. Arberry demonstrates a significant degree of consistency but not on an equal footing with Saheeh International. Asad, Ali, Abdel Haleem and Al-Hilali and Khan exhibit a medium level of consistency in their rendition of near-synonymous names.

## 6. Polysemy

### 6.1 Introduction

Dash (2010: 2) points out that “(a)lmost all the natural languages have a set of words that are capable of conveying multiple objects, ideas, and senses—both in their context-bound and context-free situations”. According to Ghazala (2008: 98), a large number of words have more than one meaning and words which carry only one sense (i.e monosemous words) are usually of technical or scientific nature and due to their specific reference should not pose any significant problems for translators. Divine names with multiple senses pose a problem not only for Quran’s translators but also for Bible researchers (e.g. Byrne 2011).

In the context of Bible translation, Nida and Taber (1969: 63) regard the analysis of the different components of words as a pivotal stage in the exegesis or interpretation of any passage. Although they (*ibid*) deem it important to analyze the different related senses of any word, they downplay the importance of this analysis because “the different meanings of a single word are rarely in competition, for they not only have relatively well-defined markers which help to differentiate the meanings, but so often they are so diverse as not to compete with one another for the same semantic domain”. Newmark (1998: 17) does not seem to agree with Nida and Taber’s view and calls polysemy a language resource which requires extra effort on the part of the translator which is, for him at least, worthwhile. Also, he (*ibid*: 206-207, 218) calls for the retention of a deliberate use of ambiguous (or vague) words, if possible, by separating out the different senses of a word “in or in spite of its context”. He adds (*ibid*: 219) that “(s)ometimes a word has two senses which are both equally effective (pragmatically and referentially) in the relevant stretch of language... as in the case of the metaphorical and the literal sense of a word”. He (*ibid*) urges translators to render this kind of word with both senses in mind. Beekman and Callow (1974: 55) are averse to such an approach and call upon translators to make the unavoidable decision of choosing one interpretation by weighing the different piece of evidence that help disambiguate the intended sense.

Polysemy as a semantic phenomenon has far-reaching consequences for the process of translation, as Kussmaul (1995: 56) points out: “(t)o pick out the meaning of a polysemous word which fits into the context is certainly the first step to a good translation”. Perhaps as we proceed we will discover that there is an (over)emphasis on the role the context in polysemy perpetuated by the likes of Larson (1989: 118), who argues that “[a]mbiguities often arise when the translator knows only one or two senses of a word and does not know the context needed to signal the correct meaning”. In Cook’s view (2009: 232), ambiguity, by its very nature is “the bane of translators, who must decide whether it is intentional or merely casual”. Larson (1989: 24) insists that ambiguities be resolved and only the intended meaning be imparted<sup>1</sup>. In practice, as we shall see, this cannot always be done especially when such ambiguity is intentional.

## 6.2 Definition

At the outset, it is important to note the preponderance of what Devos et al (2003: 122-123,126) call “terminological jumble”, “lack of precision” and a great deal of “confusion” found in the literature that addresses semantic relations in general and polysemy in particular. Even the basic concept of ‘meaning’ is incontrovertibly questioned. ‘Meaning’, asserts Riemer (2010: 2)” is a very vague term”. Whenever possible, however, these areas of irregularities in the semantic analysis and application of problematic notions relating to polysemy will be noted.

According to Ullmann (1964: 158-159) “the most important” linguistic phenomenon that gives rise to lexical ambiguity is what is sometimes referred to as the ‘polyvalency’ of words which can take the form of polysemy or homonymy. Aristotle describes words exhibiting polysemy as “words of ambiguous meaning” (quoted in Ullmann 1964: 167). The word polysemy comes ultimately from Greek ‘poly’ (i.e. many) and ‘sema’ or ‘semy’ (sign or meaning) (Al-Haj 2015: 6, Yule 2017: 337). In other words, a word with many different meanings is said to show polysemy. Although this basic definition may sound very simple, Palmer (1988: 100) argues that “we cannot clearly distinguish whether two meanings are the same or different”. He gives the example of the word ‘eat’ in the sense of consuming food. He

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<sup>1</sup> Larson (1989: 24) calls this process ‘exegesis’. It is different from exegesis (i.e. *tafsir*) as a branch of Islamic knowledge and also different from Dickins’ et al (2017) notion of ‘exegetic translation’. It is akin to Nida’s (1969) ‘analysis’: an important stage which precedes the transfer of the ST content in the translation process in Nida’s model.

argues that “we can distinguish between eating meat and eating soup, the former with a knife and fork and the latter with a spoon... The problem is to decide whether this represents a distinct meaning of eat .... (ibid). He goes on to claim that “there is no clear criterion of either difference or sameness” (ibid: 101). This relatedness in meaning has always been subject to much controversy as Ullmann (1964: 164) regards most cases of “nearness of the meanings” as “doubtful”, echoing Bloomfield (1935: 436), who finds relatedness of meaning to lack “precise measurement”. Al-Haj (2015: 14) similarly expresses his reservations about relatedness of meaning because it “seems to be both subjective and a matter of degree”.

It is important to note, as Palmer (1988: 107) has done, that these multiple senses are not features of lexical items or words in the dictionary but also can be found in some grammatical elements such as the suffix ‘ed’, which can be used to refer to the past tense or to express a ‘state’, as in ‘he is interested’. It has been found that polysemy is not limited to one morphological class, and Dash (2010: 2) claims that function words (such as pronouns, conjunctions) are more likely to be polysemous than content words (those which “have stateable lexical meaning – the majority of words in the language”, Crystal 2008: 108) In addition, as Dash (2010: 2) observes, “(a) word can remain polysemous in spite of change of its part-of-speech”.

Cruse (2006: 133) states that a “word which has more than one distinct, established sense is said to be polysemous (or to show polysemy)”. Crucially, these senses must be “related by extension” (Yule 2017: 337) or in the words of Löbner (2013: 43), there must be “several interrelated meanings, i.e. an instance of what was meant by ‘minor variation’.” Lyons (1977: 551-552, emphasis removed) gives the example of the word ‘mouth’ in the following two expressions:

“Don't speak with your mouth full” and “The mouth of the river”

as a “single lexeme with several related senses (i.e... polysemous)”. The first literal expression, he (ibid) points out, “has given rise, by some discernible process of metaphorical or figurative extension, to the use of the same word in referring to other kinds of openings or apertures”. Cruse (ibid) assigns the task of identifying relatedness between the senses to the intuition of native speakers. Ullmann (1964: 164) notes that “the modern speaker, unaware of etymologies, will establish a link between them on purely psychological grounds”. So, he (ibid) opts for relying on etymology in identifying polysemy. Dash (2008: 30) and Dash (2010: 2) dispute the pivotal role of native speakers’ intuition and dictionaries and claim that “(c)rpora that contain



texts of actual language are more authentic and reliable than intuitive assumptions or dictionary data for supplying exhaustive list of citations of sense variations of words”.

The Pragglejaz group (2007: 16), notwithstanding, sticks up for contemporary mostly corpus-based dictionaries “which in corpus linguistic terms (are) considered adequate for general language analysis”. For Cruse (2006: 133), if the senses are not related, then they exemplify a different relationship known as ‘homonymy’ which involve “separate words that just happen to be associated with the same form”. Some researchers (like Kreidler 1998: 56 and Dash 2010: 4) even consider homophonous words with different forms but similar pronunciation to be examples of homonymy. For Palmer (1988: 101), it is “the dictionary which decides whether a particular item is to be handled in terms of polysemy or homonymy, because a polysemic item will be treated as a single entry, while a homonymous one will have a separate entry for each of the homonyms”. Yule (2017: 337) suggests using the aforementioned criterion (separate entries for the different senses of homonymous words and single entries for polysemous ones) when we are undecided about the different uses of a single word. For this reason, he explains (ibid), “(i)n most dictionaries, *bat*, *mail*, *mole*, and *sole* are treated as homonyms whereas *face*, *foot*, *get*, *head* and *run* are treated as examples of polysemy”. He points out (ibid: 102) that these dictionaries usually base their decisions on etymology. However, he states (ibid: 101-102) that such decisions made by dictionary-makers must be questioned and not to be taken for granted as they might be quite arbitrary. Speaking of arbitrariness, Berg (2001, vol 4: 156) claims that (s)ynchronically, homonymy is a kind of polysemy but even diachronic homonymy can become polysemy and vice versa because the criteria for distinguishing between homonymy and polysemy are themselves somewhat arbitrary”.

Yule (2017: 101-102) argues that words change in unpredictable ways and “the history of language does not always reflect accurately its present”. For example, the word ‘pupil’ (=student) is not intuitively felt to be related to a ‘pupil’ in the sense of ‘the black part in the middle of the eye’ “but historical evidence shows these different senses to be related” (ibid: 102). Conversely, Palmer (ibid) mentions the word ‘ear’ as a body part and ‘ear of corn’ as an intuitively related sense of the word ‘ear’. Yet, these two senses are not etymologically related, which means that they must be considered as examples of homonymy if etymology is taken as a criterion for distinguishing homonymy from polysemy. Leech (1981: 228) comments on the ‘ear’ example stating that from a historical point view, it is a case of homonymy “resulting from an accidental convergence of forms” which “becomes reinterpreted today in the context present-day English as a case of polysemy”. This prompts him (ibid: 227) to conclude that historical and psychological evidence “do not necessarily coincide”. Homonymy seems to be different from

polysemy since homonymy or ‘partial homonymy’ to be more accurate allows for lexical items that “differ in meaning, but are identical in form in one medium only (viz. speech or writing)” (Crystal 2008: 227).

Palmer (1988: 102-103) even rules out the possibility of using same spelling as conclusive evidence for polysemy. The words ‘flour’ and ‘flower’ are examples of words in a polysemous relationship on grounds of their common origin (Palmer 1988: 103). These cases show, as Todd (1987: 80) points out, that relying on etymology and spelling is not “foolproof”. Todd (*ibid*) offers a sensible solution to this conundrum, arguing that the overriding principle should be “to seek a core of meaning and any homonymous items sharing the core of meaning should be classified as polysemous”. Newmark (1988: 104) makes the general claim that polysemous words are “potentially metaphorical”.

Cruse (2006: 133) however, identifies a number of relationships that hold between polysemous items. For example, one sense might be hyponymous of the other sense as in the case of drink “(‘imbibe liquid’ and ‘imbibe alcoholic beverage’)” (*ibid*). Horn (1984) was the first to identify this semantic relation and referred to it as ‘auto-hyponymy’(cf. Horn 1984 for additional examples of this phenomenon). Ullmann (1964: 161) calls this “specialization in a social milieu” and considers it as some “kind of verbal shorthand”. So, “for a lawyer, action will naturally mean ‘legal action’; for the soldier it will mean a military operation” (*ibid*, emphasis removed). Löbner (2013: 54) calls this narrowing down of the basic meaning of a lexical item “differentiation” and cites the word ‘car’ when it applies to ‘automobile’ as opposed to its basic meaning as pertaining to any vehicle. Another form of relatedness between polysemous senses may be seen in the contrast between figurative and literal meaning as in the literal meaning of ‘head’ as a body part and a metaphorical meaning as the top position in an organization. Ullmann (1964: 159-167) refers to these forms of relationship that link polysemous senses as “sources of polysemy”. However, he includes forms which are not usually classified as polysemous in the narrow sense of the word. For example, he (*ibid*: 164) includes cases of homonymy in which the “the difference in meaning is not very great” despite the fact they are etymologically related. Another bizarre form of relationship that he believes is responsible for many cases of polysemy (*ibid*: 165-166) is what is called ‘semantic borrowing’ (i.e. “the meaning is borrowed, but the form is either native or fully assimilated (i.e. borrowed much earlier)”, Zabawa 2012: 33). Ullmann (1964: 165-166) points out that this can be seen in the Hebrew influence on Greek and ultimately English polysemous word ‘Lord’, which can be a designation of God in addition to its more common sense of ‘master’. He explains that this ‘borrowed’ sense was the result of the Jews being forbidden to refer to God by His name.

Establishing the difference between polysemy and homonymy has received a great deal of attention. Some say it is relatedness and native speakers' intuitions that can resolve this issue. Others base their judgement on historical grounds. Still others want to subject their decision to reliable tests. A good way to distinguish polysemy from homonymy endorsed by a number of writers is the test of 'antonyms'. According to Palmer (1988: 107), this test is based on the observation that a polysemic word will have a "variety of synonyms each corresponding to one of its meanings... (and) often also a set of antonyms". If the antonym is the same for the different senses, it is quite likely that the word is polysemic. Put differently, the "difference of antonym implies homonymy" (ibid). Also, Palmer (ibid: 104) with a bit of reluctance suggests using the test of ambiguity: "(a)n expression (strictly, an expression form) is said to be ambiguous if it has more than one possible distinct meaning" (Cruse 2006: 10).

Cruse (ibid: 10-11) defines the ambiguity test as one in which "it is not possible to avoid choosing between the alternative readings; that is to say, there is no interpretation which is neutral between the possibilities". Using the famous 'bank' example, Palmer (1988: 104) explains that in the sentence 'he went to the bank' seems to be ambiguous "since bank can mean a river bank or the place that deals with money". In this sentence the word bank is ambiguous (and therefore homonymous) on the grounds that "(i)t is not possible to activate both meanings at the same time without producing the effect of zeugma" (Cruse 2006: 11). Collins English Dictionary Online defines zeugma as "a figure of speech in which a word is used to modify or govern two or more words although appropriate to only one of them or making a different sense with each, as in the sentence 'Mr. Pickwick took his hat and his leave' (Charles Dickens)" so, Zeugma "occurs when a single occurrence of an expression has to be interpreted in two distinct ways simultaneously" (Cruse 2006: 192).

Kreidler (1998: 55) argues that ambiguity resulting from using homonymous forms is only momentary and "is not likely to be sustained in a longer discourse." Palmer (1988: 106) casts doubt on the conclusiveness of the ambiguity test citing the sentence 'I heard the girl crying', in which the two senses of the word 'cry' ('weep' and 'shout'), cannot be ruled out as representing ambiguity (and therefore homonymy) since it is difficult to decide whether there is a significant difference between the two senses. So, if the two or more meanings of a lexical item give rise to ambiguity, we can, in principle, say that the two senses are not related and therefore homonymous. Furthermore, if the two senses give rise to what is sometimes referred to as 'vagueness' then the two senses are related and therefore polysemous.

These rules of thumb for the distinction between polysemy and homonymy do not apply across the board and some semanticists like Löbner (2013: 39) consider polysemy and homonymy “two forms of ambiguity”. Not only that, Löbner (ibid: 43) describes the distinction between homonymy and polysemy as ‘vague’. According to Agler (2013: 1) vagueness is, paradoxically, a “highly polysemous term” and often confused with ambiguity, which has led linguists such as Crystal (2008: 23) to assert that “one of the issues in semantic discussion has been to circumscribe the notion of ambiguity so that it is not used in too broad a way. The term needs to be distinguished, in particular, from ‘generality’ of meaning”. The word ‘parent’, he (ibid) explains, can be used to mean ‘mother’ or ‘father’ but this does not render the word ambiguous (and hence homonymous). Later, he (ibid) points out that “(g)enerality and indeterminacy of meaning are sometimes referred to as vagueness”. But Zhang (1998: 26) argues that words like ‘parent’ and ‘person’ should not be relevant for the polysemy/homonymy dichotomy because these words do not exemplify the related phenomena of ambiguity or vagueness. Rather, they are for her (1998: 16) perfect examples of ‘generality’ because of the lack of specification of certain details (such as male or female). For Zwicky et al (1975: 2), terms such as ‘generality’, ‘indeterminacy’, ‘nondetermination’, ‘lack of specification’, ‘neutrality’ and last but not least ‘vagueness’ are clearly interchangeable and this shows that Zhang’s analysis (1998) has been instrumental in trying to shed light on the looseness of the term ‘vagueness’. However, Crystal (ibid) explains that the term ‘vagueness’ is popular since “many semanticists prefer to reserve this term for expressions whose meaning involves reference to a category whose boundaries are fuzzy”.

Kenny (2009: 36-37) illustrates that although the concept of vagueness is commonly used to refer to gradable adjectives (like ‘short’, ‘big’, ‘wide’, etc.), it can be found in nouns (like ‘heap’) verbs (such as ‘like’ and ‘know’), determiners (like ‘many’ and ‘few’), prepositions (like ‘near’) and locative adverbials. Vagueness as a criterion for the ‘polysemousness’ of certain lexical items is difficult to apply if we agree with the view of Ullmann, which might be considered somewhat extreme (1964: 116-128), echoing philosophers like Plato and Voltaire, that an inherent feature of our words is their vagueness. This results from “the generic character of our words (ibid: 118). Ullmann (ibid) adds that “except for proper names and a small number of common nouns referring to unique objects, words denote, not single items but classes of things or events bound together by some common element”.

Ullmann (ibid) seems to support Bloomfield’s suggestion (1935: 141) that a distinction must be made between non-distinctive features such as the size, shape and colour of a word such as ‘apple’ and the distinctive or semantic features which are common to all apples. This does not,

however, help us establish which features give rise to vagueness. In fact, almost the same classification has been used by Devos (1995) and Devos et al (2003: 124-125) to demarcate two types of semantic vagueness. First Devos (ibid) mentions vagueness in criterion which involves the ‘indeterminacy’ or ‘uncertainty’ in the application of the term. For example, there is uncertainty over the classification of certain items such as ‘fruit’. The second type involves “the extent to, or the degree in which, we can or cannot apply certain words” (Devos et al 2003: 124). Devos et al (ibid) give some age-related words as examples (such as ‘old’, ‘young’, etc.). This second type, vagueness in degree, is regarded by Zhang (1998: 14-16) to be a separate category, which she calls ‘fuzziness’, and believes to be erroneously attributed to vagueness. Interestingly, she argues (1998: 14) that Peirce’s (1911: 748) definition of vagueness that “(a) proposition is vague when there are possible states of things concerning which it is intrinsically uncertain whether, had they been contemplated by the speaker, he would have regarded them as excluded or allowed by the proposition”. She regards this definition more fitting of ‘fuzziness’ than vagueness (Zhang 1998: 14).

It is important to know, as Devos et al. (2003: 123) note, that vagueness is not always a ‘pragmatic problem’ unless it is intended to be so. Rather, “vagueness is primarily a semantic phenomenon, and ... cannot always be imputed to language users” (ibid). Furthermore, using vagueness as a criterion for polysemy and ambiguity as a criterion for homonymy does involve some issues. To begin with, the two terms, vagueness and ambiguity, have been used by some researchers interchangeably. For example, Kooij (1971: 119) defines the phenomenon of ambiguity as one in which “(t)he meaning of a lexical element is vague in as much as its range of referential application is not unambiguously delimited”. Surprisingly, according to Devos et al (2003: 126), some, like Geeraerts (1993: 229) even lament the little attention that the distinction between vagueness and polysemy has received. In other words, the notion that vagueness is associated with polysemy seems to be questioned.

As Dickins (n.d: 1) argues that “(j)ust as there are problematic aspects of the demarcation between polysemy ...and homonymy ..., so there are also problematic aspects in the demarcation between polysemy ... and [sub-senses].” So, in the view of Dickins (ibid: 1, manuscript b: 29), there is a level of semantic analysis which is below that of a ‘sense’, which involves ‘semantic sub-variance’. Put differently, in contrast to polysemy, “semantic sub-variance is most obviously identified as involving word meanings which are not clearly distinct” (Dickins, manuscript b: 32) To illustrate the notion of such ‘sub-senses’, he (ibid: 29, and n.d : 1) cites the verb ‘do’ in the following:

- Max did the dishes/the bed/the job/his hair.

Dickins (ibid) illustrates that these instances of semantic sub-variance of the verb 'do' depend for their interpretation on the context. This gives rise to what he calls 'contextual determination or near-determination'. If the context fails to specify the specific sense "it is sometimes for stylistic or rhetorical purposes or it is a fault of the language speaker" (Dickins n.d : 11). In this connection, Leech (1983: 5) makes a distinction between context-independent analysis or semantic analysis and context-dependent analysis or pragmatic analysis. It is not only sub-variance as a separate semantic category which relies on the role of the context for their interpretation. Other semantic relations with the semantic effects they create also emphasize the contextual significance; as Zhang (1998: 30) concludes, "vagueness, generality, and ambiguity may be contextually resolved". To distinguish polysemy from sub-variance (i.e. sub-senses), Dickins, following Cruse (2006: 81-82), proposes using the commutation test which is a tool very commonly used by phonologists as "a process of sound substitution to show contrastivity" (Crystal 2008: 90). To see whether the word 'dog' as two distinct (polysemous) senses, for example, Dickins (n.d.: 2) applies the commutation test as the following examples illustrate:

-He bought a dog [not a bitch].  
- ....., a dog [not a pony].

It is clear the two senses of 'dog' here represents two distinct senses of the word 'dog'.

This 'commutation test' should not be confused with the coordination test (also known as the identity test (cf. Cruse 2006: 81-82) as a common test of ambiguity. According to Cruse (2006: 82) the form that is usually used in the identity test involves the verb-phrase anaphora. So, in 'John went to the bank and so did Bill', Palmer (1988: 106) expounds, the sentence should not be said with the two meanings of 'bank' (i.e. financial institution and a riverside) or, perhaps, as Zhang (1998: 21) puts it "(t)he VP-deletion that occurs in (this) sentence requires identity, at least sloppy identity, of senses between the two conjuncts".

Having investigated the different means of delineating the differences between polysemy and homonymy, it is easy to conclude as Lyons (1977: 235) does, that "the criteria for distinguishing pre-theoretically between homonymy and polysemy are uncertain". It is important to remember, however, as Löbner (2013: 44) points out that "while homonymy is a rare and accidental phenomenon, polysemy is abundant. It is rather the rule than the exception".

It is interesting to note that in computational linguistics polysemy has received a lot of attention since “it plays a role in improving the performance of the word-sense disambiguation algorithm” (Gale et al 1992: 233). For example, Gale et al (1992: 233, 237) discover the effect of discourse on the use of a polysemous words and find corroborating evidence for what they call “one sense per discourse constraint”, which affirms that “well-written discourses tend to avoid multiple senses of a polysemous word”. Guillou (2013: 11) argues that in light of its applicability in translation, this constraint might be refined and rewritten as “one sense per translation”. However, whether this applies across the board or not is open to speculation.

### 6.3 Polysemy in Arabic and the Arabic Linguistic Tradition

Ghazala (2008: 98) argues that one of the distinguishing characteristics of both English and Arabic is the presence of a large number of polysemous lexical items and believes that their number in English might exceed that in Arabic. Altaie and Ameer (2010: 28) claim that “(i)n Arabic, homonyms (and polysemous items) have tens of meanings, whereas in English the number may not exceed five senses”. This is difficult to verify given the fact dictionaries in Arabic and English are designed differently. So, while it is easy to count the number of senses in English dictionaries, it is rather difficult to count distinct senses in Arabic. Nonetheless, this suggests the prevalence of polysemy and homonymy in Arabic. Elewa (2004: 74) asserts that while polysemy is common, homonymy is relatively uncommon in Arabic although some learners of Arabic think otherwise due to the relative absence of vowels in modern orthography which can set many words apart.

In fact, according to Quṭrub (1984 : 69) the overwhelming majority of vocabulary in Arabic consists of words with single senses for single designations. Words which carry more than one sense do exist, but they seem to be the exception rather than norm and this is the view upheld by al-Suyūfī (1986: 1/369). As we have already seen in the previous paragraphs, there is a great deal of confusion surrounding the concept of polysemy and the notions associated with it. The state of affairs in Arabic is no different to that in English. First, scholars differ on the term used to refer to multiplicity of meanings. Sībawayh (1988: 24) states that in Arabic there are three types of lexemes. One type has to do with different words designating different meanings. According to Abū Ali al-Fārisī (2003: 215) this type represents the overwhelming majority of words in Arabic. The second type Sībawayh (1988: 24) presents is related to different words with the same meaning (synonymy). The third type, which concerns us here, involves words

having the same form but different meanings. This third type is akin to what is referred to in general semantic books as ‘homonymy’.

Al-Suyūṭī (1986: 1/369) states that people do not agree on the possibility of words having more than one sense or what is known as *المُشْتَرَكُ اللَّفْظِيّ* (al-muštarak al-lafḍī) but the great majority of them are of the view that words can have more than one sense because language is not something prescribed and many examples have been cited which prove their presence in the language. He (ibid) also points out that some consider their presence to be inevitable because words are finite while meanings are infinite. One of the early Arabic scholars who deny the existence of multiple senses is Ibn Darastawayh (2004: 112), who argues that if one word has more than one meaning, these two senses must ultimately refer to one basic core meaning. If two words accidentally happen to have the same form with different meanings, then these identical forms should have arisen out of phonological changes (ibid). Makram (2009: 12) gives a summary of the main reasons that led Ibn Darastawayh to adopt this view (ibid). Makram states that Ibn Darastawayh believes that it would be imprudent for Arabs to use a word with different senses because this would lead to obscurity of meaning, and language is supposed to make things clear as Allah Almighty has intended it to be. Abū Ali al-Fārisī (2003: 216) argues that if one word has more than one meaning, this can be attributed to different etymological derivations (or roots), or one meaning must be metaphorical and the other literal. According to Ṣimrān (2007: 88), Abū Ali al-Fārisī’s views are more moderate than Ibn Darastawayh’s, since Abū Ali al-Fārisī does not deny the existence of *المُشْتَرَكُ اللَّفْظِيّ* (al-muštarak al-lafḍī). It seems that Abū Ali al-Fārisī is different from Ibn Darastawayh in that he incorporates many cases of polysemy in addition to homonymy in his concept of *المُشْتَرَكُ اللَّفْظِيّ* (al-muštarak al-lafḍī). Although superficially they seem to deny the existence of *المُشْتَرَكُ اللَّفْظِيّ* (al-muštarak al-lafḍī), they seem to have an issue with the term but not with the concept given the fact that in their books they analyze the different senses of words and acknowledge the multiple application of these words in different contexts.

It seems futile to deny the existence of *المُشْتَرَكُ اللَّفْظِيّ* (al-muštarak al-lafḍī), bearing in mind the numerous books and dictionaries that have been dedicated to this issue (Anīs 1992: 192). Books like *المنجد في اللغة* (also known as *المنجد فيما اتفق لفظه واختلف معناه*) prove beyond any reasonable doubt that words with different related and unrelated senses do exist in Arabic no matter what they are called (Ali et al 2014: 39). The editors of the aforementioned book describe it “as the oldest dictionary of *المُشْتَرَكُ اللَّفْظِيّ* (al-muštarak al-lafḍī)” (written around the year 900AD), and according to Ma’tūq (2012) it contains about 900 polysemous words. Recently Anīs (1992: 192-193) finds the main reason for the disagreement among Arabic scholars regarding *المُشْتَرَكُ اللَّفْظِيّ*



(al-muštarak al-lafḍī) to depend on whether they adopt a synchronic or a diachronic methodology. He (ibid: 193) compares the development of meaning to that of sounds. He states (ibid: 195) that the most important trigger for the change of meaning (and polysemy) is a shift from literal (or basic) sense to a figurative meaning. This figurative (and typically metaphorical) meaning could be instigated by artists (i.e. poets) or ordinary people (ibid: 195). Furthermore, he asserts (ibid: 199) that in most words that involve المُشْتَرَكِ اللَّفْظِيِّ (al-muštarak al-lafḍī), if a word has a physical sense and an abstract one, the basic meaning is the physical one and the abstract one is the derived (or figurative) one. This is so, he points out (ibid), because scholars unanimously agree that physical senses supersede their abstract ones. He mentions other less significant reasons for the development of new meanings like misunderstanding of the original meaning and borrowing a word which accidentally happens to have the same form as another indigenous word such as the word بُرْج ('burj', tower) which is a borrowing from Greek if used in the sense of 'castle' although some dictionaries treat it like any other non-borrowed sense. He compares this to English which has the word 'race', which has the sense of 'game' from Germanic sources and the sense of 'ethnic group', which is a borrowed sense of Latin origin (ibid: 196). He (ibid: 201) concludes his analysis with phonological change as one reason for المُشْتَرَكِ اللَّفْظِيِّ (al-muštarak al-lafḍī), which did not attract the attention of early scholars.

Anīs (ibid: 198) believes that while it is sometimes difficult to pin down the reason(s) behind certain developments in meaning, one thing is certain; it is either that the form that has changed but the sense is retained or the meaning has changed and its form remains unchanged. The relationship that holds between senses of a single word in المُشْتَرَكِ اللَّفْظِيِّ can be one of antonymy (and, more specifically, contronymy) as in the word وَرَاءَ (warā'), which can mean أَمَامَ ('amām', front), in addition to the sense of خَلْفَ ('xalf', behind). However, al-Xūlī (2001: 144-145) is hesitant to refer to words with opposite senses as contradictory because some scholars reject the idea that a word can have conflicting senses. This reservation is reminiscent of the disagreement among semanticists whether to include contronyms as involving polysemy or homonymy (Ṣumar 1998: 168). The first approach, according to Ṣumar (ibid: 167), is adopted by Ullmann, while Schaff (1962), who stipulates that the multiple senses must be related, considers words with opposite meanings as representing homonymy. He (ibid: 146) gives more reasons for المُشْتَرَكِ اللَّفْظِيِّ like designating new concepts and inventions using existing words. Interestingly, this intentional creation of a new sense is meant to arouse the interest of the listener or for some stylistic motive. Also المُشْتَرَكِ اللَّفْظِيِّ can be in the form of metonymy (in which "the name of an attribute of an entity is used in place of the entity itself", Crystal 2008: 303) as in مِصْرٌ تَسْتَكْرُ (lit. 'Egypt denounces') in which مِصْرٌ ('Miṣr', Egypt) refers to the people or government of Egypt (al-Xūlī 2001: 147). Also he explains (ibid) that the different senses can be derived from

different unrelated origins, which is typical of lexemes displaying homonymy, as in the word *قال* (*qāl*), which is derived either from *قول* ('qawl', saying) or *قِيلُولَة* ('qaylūlah', a nap). He lists (*ibid*: 147-148) other minor relationships that hold between senses in *المُشْتَرَك الَّلَفْظِيّ* including euphemism, irony and different dialectal origins. *Ṣumar* (1998: 159-160) states that with regards to *المُشْتَرَك الَّلَفْظِيّ* there are different approaches. There is the old approach that we have already covered which gives internal reasons like phonological changes and external reasons like borrowing from other dialects. The new approach pertains to theories proposed by those who adopt the western treatment of the topic (*ibid*: 162-163). According to this approach, there are four types of *المُشْتَرَك الَّلَفْظِيّ* (covering both polysemy and homonymy). The first type consists of lexemes where there is one central core sense and some other marginal synonymous senses; this is reminiscent of *Nida's* (1975: 129-131) componential analysis approach. The other three types make use of the different analyses we have already dwelt upon.

For *Ṣumar* (1998: 165), polysemy entails a development in the meaning of a word as a result of it acquiring a new sense, while homonymy occurs as a result of some phonological changes which have accidentally led to different words having identical forms as can be seen in the two words having the same phonological form *سَائِل* (*sā'il*), 'questioner' and 'liquid' which are derived from *سَأَلَ* ('sa'al', ask) and *سَالَ* ('sāl', become liquid) respectively. *Wāfi* (2004: 319) gives other aspects of *المُشْتَرَك الَّلَفْظِيّ* in Arabic. A new sense may develop because a general word is used in a special way in a specific culture. This includes many words denoting Islamic rituals like *صَلَاة* (*ṣalāh*) whose specific sense of 'a special form of worship' has been added to its general sense of 'supplication' (*ibid*: 319-320). This new specific sense has almost replaced the general sense to the point that the specific is what first comes to the mind of everybody who hears the word, which casts doubt on the assertion of some linguists who consider the literal or basic sense to be the one that first springs to mind when a word is encountered. *Wāfi* (*ibid*) asserts that the opposite is also true. A general sense may develop out of an existing specific sense as in the word *بَأْس* (*ba's*) which originally has the sense of *حَرْب* ('ḥarb', warfare) but has acquired a new general sense of *شِدَّة* ('šiddah', hardship). *Wāfi* (*ibid*: 321) further elaborates on this point that in some extreme cases, a new metaphorical sense may wipe out the literal sense, giving the example of the word *مَجْد* ('majd', glory or honour) whose original sense of 'a camel's belly being full of food' was replaced with the metaphorical sense of 'being full of honor, hospitality etc.'.

It is interesting to note that the issue of *المُشْتَرَك الَّلَفْظِيّ* (*al-muštarak al-lafḍī*) has not only attracted the attention of Arabic linguists but also scholars from other disciplines. *al-Rāzī* (d.1210), a Muslim scholar in the field of *أصول الفقه* (Principles of Fiqh [jurisprudence]), proposes a definition of *المُشْتَرَك الَّلَفْظِيّ* (*al-muštarak al-lafḍī*): that it denotes a lexical item which

was formed from two or more different ‘genuine’ or literal meanings and this sets these senses apart from other figurative senses. (quoted in al-Munajjid 1999: 56). Al-Munajjid (ibid: 56) mentions the distinction that scholars in the field of the Principles of Fiqh make between **المُشْتَرَكِ اللَّفْظِيِّ** (‘al-muštarak al-lafḍī’, polysemy or homonymy) and **المُجْمَل** (‘al-mujmal’, vague or general lexemes). They explain that the presence of an appropriate linguistic context makes a word belong to **مُشْتَرَك** (muštarak) and the absence of such a context renders a word **مُجْمَل** (mujmal). Topal (2020: 169) gives a summary of the features of **مُجْمَل** (mujmal) stating that:

what makes a word mujmal is that its intended meaning is obscured to the hearer/reader in a way that it cannot be discovered through *ṭalab* (pondering) or *ta’ammul* (deliberation), and that it requires *istifsār* (asking for clarification) on the part of the hearer/reader from the speaker/writer.

Al-Ġazālī(1993: 189), the famous Islamic philosopher and theologian (traditionally known in the West as Algazel) considers a word **مُجْمَل** (mujmal) if it has multiple senses and there is no clue as to reveal the intended meaning. Al-Munajjid (1999: 72) cites al-Ġazālī(d. 1111), who has dwelt on the various types of **مُشْتَرَك** (muštarak). One type of **مُشْتَرَك**, which is of some direct relevance to God’s names, is the one which involves senses that are superficially similar but in essence they have different realities in the real world such as the word **حَيٍّ** (‘ḥayy’, living) to describe God, a human being, and a plant. The quality (or sense) of having a life for God is completely different from the mode of living that a human being or a plant has. Also, in the field of Fiqh, al-Šāfi‘ī (d. 820 AD), who is one of the four major *madhhab* (School of Law) scholars of Islam, is quoted as saying (al-Munajjid 1999: 60) that Allah addresses the Arabs in the language they know and they are aware that a word can have different senses and those who deny the presence of these words are certainly oblivious of the language of the Arabs. Similarly, just as Arab linguists differed in their analysis of **المُشْتَرَكِ اللَّفْظِيِّ** (al-muštarak al-lafḍī), Arab scholars and logicians also do not agree on **المُشْتَرَكِ اللَّفْظِيِّ** (al-muštarak al-lafḍī).

To sum up our discussion, Altaie and Ameer (2010: 27) argue that “(t)he definition of homonymy in Arabic is similar to the definition of polysemy in English, i.e. they are considered to be one. This might explain why some authors make use of the term ‘homonymy’ to refer to cases which are apparently of a polysemous nature such as Ilyas (2013: 92), who (mis)attributes the two senses of **شُهَدَاءَ** (šuhadā’) (plural of **شَهِيد** ‘šahīd’ [martyr] and plural of **شَهِيد** ‘šāhid’ [witness]) to homonymy. The difference between them is that “homonyms in Arabic may have some relation or no relation in their meanings, while polysemes in English have a relation in meaning”. This seems to suggest that Arabic scholars do not make a clear-cut distinction

between polysemy and homonymy, using the general umbrella term *المُشْتَرَكُ اللَّفْظِيّ* (al-muštarak al-lafḍī) to refer to all cases of multiple senses for a single form.

## 6.4 Polysemy in the Quran

Berg (2001, vol 4: 155) states that “on the whole, the Islamic exegetical tradition embraced polysemy in the Qur’ān” and it is regarded “one of its miraculous features”. He (ibid) explains that polysemy in the Quran “was not considered a defect” and “(t)he possibility of ambiguity or equivocation” as a by-product of polysemy, and the difficulty that this might entail is alleviated by “biographical materials ..., the circumstances of revelation literature ... and other narrative texts that offered historical explanations or allusions”.

According to Šāhir (2006: 71), a large number of books that address the presence of multiple senses of a lexical item in the Quran use the expression *الْوُجُوهُ وَالنَّظَائِرُ* (al-wujūh wa al-naḍā’ir) or *الأشْبَاهُ وَالنَّظَائِرُ* (al-’ašbāh wa al-naḍā’ir). He (ibid) points out that upon close scrutiny what one finds in these books is what is called *المُشْتَرَكُ اللَّفْظِيّ* (al-muštarak al-lafḍī) but according to Makkram (2009: 31) none has used the word لَفْظ (‘lafḍ’, lexeme) and has chosen instead to use *كَلِمَةٌ* (‘kalimah’, word). The books that address *الْوُجُوهُ وَالنَّظَائِرُ* (al-wujūh wa al-naḍā’ir) are numerous and this issue has attracted the attention of scholars of Islam perhaps as early as the era of the Prophet’s companions and has continued to appeal to scholars since then. The main reason for this interest is that scholars constantly improve on the material or lists compiled by their predecessors (cf. Makkram 2009: 33-39 for a comprehensive list of books on the topic).

Makkram (ibid: 45) points out that many scholars find the presence of *وُجُوهُ* (wujūh) to be one of the miracles of the Quran, which the Prophet Muhammad has encouraged scholars to familiarize themselves with. al-Suyūfī (1974 vol 2: 144) defines *وُجُوهُ* (wujūh) as a lexical item with a number of denotations. Berg explains (2001, vol 4: 155, citing Abdu Sattar 1978: 138) that “Wujūh refers to words employed several times in the Qur’ān but with at least two and perhaps as many as forty different meanings”. As for *النَّظَائِرُ* (al-naḍā’ir), he adds (ibid: 977), it refer to synonyms. al-Ṭayār (2019: 246) mentions in this connection that by *وُجُوهُ* (‘wujūh’, aspects or senses) are meant clearly sound senses that exegetes discuss and not mystic or ulterior senses which only individuals with esoteric knowledge<sup>1</sup> can comprehend as some mystic cults

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Ṭayār’s expression is *الخواص من الناس* (literally ‘privileged people’) but here it has been explicated to bring out the implied meaning.

claim<sup>1</sup>. Šāhir (2006: 74), explains how these books include the word النَّظَائِر (al-naḍā'ir) in their titles although they make no mention of synonymy. A possible reason, he (ibid) suggests, for this is that each sense in a polysemous word has its own synonyms. This seems to be a plausible explanation but he (ibid) regards those authors who do not include it in their titles as being more specific and adopting a better methodology. al-Munajjid (1999: 83) gives a more comprehensive definition of وَجُوهُ (wujūh), stating that it refers to a word which has one form (i.e in spelling and diacritics) mentioned in a number of places in the Quran but each time with a different sense. So, according to this definition, he adds (ibid), each mention of the same word belongs to النَّظَائِر ('al-naḍā'ir', matches or equivalents) and each different sense of the word belongs to وَجُوهُ ('wujūh', aspects). al-Ṭayār (1422AH : 93-94) gives a different view of the meaning of النَّظَائِر (al-naḍā'ir) stating that it refers to similar contexts in which a particular sense of a polysemous word is used.

The aforementioned definitions do not, however, take into account cases in which the word in one specific context lends itself to a number of possible interpretations or senses although, al-Munajjid himself (ibid) cites many examples which show this form of polysemy such as the word عَسْعَس (ʿasʿas) which according to al-Zarkašī (1957 vol2: 209) can mean أَقْبَلَ ('aqbal', approach) or أَدْبَرَ ('adbar', depart). So in light of the above definition, for the word أُمَّة ('ummah) we can have the sense (وَجْه 'wajh') of عُسْبَةَ ('uṣbah', nation) and the sense of سِنِينَ ('sinīn', years). For the first sense there are five نَظَائِر ('al-naḍā'ir', other places where the word is used with a matching sense) while for the second there are only two (al-Munajjid :1999). To understand better the nature of books on الْأَشْبَاه وَالنَّظَائِر (al-'ašbāh wa al-naḍā'ir) and whether or not they are solely dedicated to what we normally describe as polysemy, an entry in one of the early (if not earliest) pioneering volumes الْأَشْبَاه وَالنَّظَائِر فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْكَرِيم ('al-'ašbāh wa al-naḍā'ir' in the Holy Quran) by Muqātil bin Sulaymān on this issue will be cited below:

الكريم : (al-karīm) has six aspects (senses or nuances)

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Ṭayār's expression is "some صُوفِيَّة (Ṣūfīyyah) and بَاطِنِيَّة (Bāṭinīyyah)". Because both are sometimes translated as 'mysticism' and because صُوفِيَّة (Ṣūfīyyah) for some is considered a form of بَاطِنِيَّة ('Bāṭinīyyah', occult) (also بَاطِنِيَّة 'Bāṭinīyyah' is a hyperonym of صُوفِيَّة 'Ṣūfīyyah'), I choose here to follow Dickins et al (2017: 86), who argue that with this type of semantic repetition, the translator's first port of call should be idiomatic translation or as they put it "sacrifice a certain amount of accuracy for a greater degree of idiomaticness".

- 1- good or beautiful as in { أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ كَمْ أَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيمٍ } [Do they not observe the earth, how much of every **good** kind We cause to grow therein?, Al-Hilali and Khan, Q26: 7]
- 2- having high rank in the sight of Allah as in { انه لَقَوْلِ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ } [The Quran is the Statement delivered by a **noble (or high ranking)** messenger, Q 81: 19]
- 3- generous as in { ذُقْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْكَرِيمُ } [Taste you (this)! Verily, you were (pretending to be) the mighty, the **generous**, Al-Hilali and Khan Q44: 49]
- 4- Muslims as in { كِرَامًا بَرَّةً } [**Muslim** and obedient, Q80: 16]
- 5- ever pardoning and forgiving as in { يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَبِّكَ الْكَرِيمِ } [O man! What has made you careless concerning your Lord, **the Most Forgiving**? Q82: 6]
- 6- as a verb, where it signifies ‘to prefer or bestow honour’ as in { وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ } [ We have **honoured** the children of Adam, Q17: 70]

The following observations can be made:

- a- These 6 senses can be merged into 3 discernible meanings, namely ‘generous’, ‘noble’ and ‘good’.
- b- Some senses are generalized (such as ‘Muslims’) while others are narrowed down (such as ‘forgive’ as a form of generosity).
- c- Some of these senses in their respective contexts can be further analyzed into multiple senses (such as sense 4, in whose context the word can have multiple meanings such as ‘give someone preference over your own selves’, according to al-Qurṭubī 1964 vol 19: 217).
- d- There are other senses in some contexts which are absent in the above analysis (such as ‘not created’ and ‘promoting praiseworthy qualities’ in the verse [انه لقران كريم] Q56: 77). In this regard, Sells (1989: 8,77-78) talks about the limitations of translating *karīm* as ‘generous’ or ‘noble’ because of the various practices and different associations of the epithet in the Quran and Pre-Islamic Odes, which stand in marked contrast to its modern usage. The untranslatability of the term owing to its polysemous nature<sup>1</sup> leaves one wondering how translators would tackle the term when used to refer to God.

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<sup>1</sup> Al Ghamdi (2015: 245) seems to suggest that those different senses are only associated with only non-divine referents. Quran exegetes and authors of books on the meaning of God’s names do not lend any support to this claim as they list the various senses of الكَرِيم (Al-Karīm) as a Divine attribute.

Al-Zarkašī (1957 vol2: 208) lists the different approaches to polysemy explaining that some say that Allah does not intend both senses to be understood while others affirm that this is quite probable. al-Zarkašī (1957 vol2: 208) seems to support al-Qušayrī (d. 1072 CE), a famous Muslim theologian, who states in the introduction to his exegesis of the Quran that if a lexical item has two senses and one sense seems to be more apparent then it is this sense that should be selected. In addition, if the two senses are both possible in a given context, whether they express real or metaphorical meanings (such as عَيْن ‘ʿayn’ for ‘eye’ and ‘spy’), then evidence for the probability of one sense must be sought elsewhere. If all fails and the two senses do not contradict each other, then some argue that both senses must be meant but al-Qušayrī holds the view that in this case we should sit on the fence and withhold passing any judgement. Al-Qušayrī admits that it is not logically impossible that a speaker can contemplate two senses at the same time but this is highly improbable.

Al-Ṭayār (1422AH : 455) points out that this semantic indeterminacy might be exploited for deviant practices such as misattributing a sense to a word which may happen as a result of first conceiving a particular sense then trying to find evidence for this sense which they may find in extremely metaphorical, uncommon or rare usages. In this way, he (ibid) continues, they stick to this out-of-the-ordinary sense and abandon the more apparent sense (ibid: 456). Al-Ṭayār notes that, from a more positive perspective, semantic uncertainty, has enriched Quran exegeses arising from different perceptions. Al-ʿizz Ibn ʿabd AlSalām (d.1262, n.d: 216) states that with regards to common nouns whose actual denotation (or sense) is not apparent there are those who consider all senses to be collectively acceptable. So in interpreting رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (‘Rabb al-ʿālamīn’, Lord of the worlds) the senses of الإلهية, الملك, السؤدد and الإصلاح (‘deity’, ‘kingdom’, ‘sovereignty’ and ‘rectification’, respectively) should be amalgamated. Other scholars, he further explains (ibid), stipulate that if there is a contextual proof or a hint then one particular sense should be chosen as in interpretation of رَبِّ (Rabb) as مَلِك (‘malik’, king or master) in the verse ربنا رب السموات والارض because the sense of مَلِك (‘malik’, king or master) is more appropriate in this context. Otherwise, for these scholars, it is considered مُجْمَل (‘mujmal’, generalized, vague or indefinite) and only Allah knows its specific sense. al-Ṭayār (2019: 230-231) in his book on the principles of exegesis points to the presence of الْمُشْتَرَكِ اللَّغَوِيِّ (‘al-muštarak al-luġawī’, semantic polyvalence) in the Quran in two forms. One involves words having the same derivation (polysemy) such as the word قَسْوَرَة (qaswarah), which can mean ‘lion’ or ‘shooter’<sup>1</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> In Arabic, this is الرامي من الرجال and if translated literally it would mean ‘someone who is good at throwing and hitting the target’. It is sometimes translated as ‘archers’ because in ancient times the most popular kind of weaponry in warfare was archery.

while the form has to do with words not etymologically related (homonymy) such the word مُسْتَمِرٌّ (mustamirr) in the verse:

{وَأِنْ يَرَوْا آيَةً يُعْرِضُوا وَيَقُولُوا سِحْرٌ مُسْتَمِرٌّ}

[Q54: 2]

**Saheeh Interantional:** And if they see a miracle, they turn away and say, "Passing magic."]

which can mean ‘passing<sup>1</sup>’ or ‘strong<sup>2</sup>’ depending on whether a given exegete thinks it is derived from مَرَّ يَمُرُّ (to pass, go away or disappear) or from أَمَرَ يُمَرُّ (to become strong) respectively.

After reviewing books that deal with الأُجُوهَ وَالنَّظَائِرَ (al-wujūh wa al-naḍā'ir) , it appears that the phenomenon that these books analyze bears a significant resemblance to polysemy in the sense that books on الأُجُوهَ وَالنَّظَائِرَ look at what their authors consider to be different distinct senses of many lexical items. However, many of the words compiled can be seen as representing vagueness if we put them to the various tests we have already discussed. As we have already seen, vagueness<sup>3</sup> according to one definition involves items with polysemic senses. If we accept this, then most lexical items listed in these books clearly embody polysemy. But if we acknowledge the presence of a separate category named ‘vagueness’ as distinct from polysemy and a further point of contrast with homonymy, then many lexemes in these books would be included under this category. al-Munajjid (1999) has compiled a list of all the words on which the five major sources of الأُجُوهَ وَالنَّظَائِرَ (al-wujūh wa al-naḍā'ir) agree. In this list he includes (1999: 97), for example, the word أَخٌ (‘ax’, brother) which in the Quran can refer to many types of relationships relating to family, religion, tribe, closeness and friendship. He dismisses this word as representing المُشْتَرَك (al-muštarak) because al-’aṣfahānī (1412AH: 68) points out that the literal sense of أَخٌ (‘ax’, brother) can be borrowed to refer to many forms of affiliation, be they tribal, religious or trade, and borrowed (metaphorical) senses in al-Munajjid’s analysis are not part of المُشْتَرَك. However, it can be argued that the use of أَخٌ (‘ax) as an example of الأُجُوهَ (al-wujūh) can be dismissed on the grounds that it is a general (vague or indefinite) lexeme which

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<sup>1</sup> Another possible alternative is ‘transient’.

<sup>2</sup> Other possible alternatives include ‘tremendous’, ‘powerful’ and ‘well-devised’ but looking at 50 translations, translators seem to favour the sense that first springs to mind when encountering the word مُسْتَمِرٌّ (‘mustamirr’, continuous, ‘customary’, often-repeated, etc.).

<sup>3</sup> Note for some writers such as Zwicky et al (1975: 2), terms such as ‘generality’, ‘indeterminacy’, ‘nondetermination’, ‘lack of specification’, ‘neutrality’ and ‘vagueness’ are interchangeable.



subsumes many forms of relationship. Another example of general words al-Munajjid (1999) cites which lend themselves to the vagueness analysis is probably a word like ايمان ('faith') (ibid: 104-106). The various وُجُوهُ (wujūh) of this word revolve around the basic meaning of 'belief' and the concomitant practices associated with 'faith'. Consider the verse:

{وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضَيِّعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ}

[Q2: 143]

**Al-Hilali and Khan:** And Allah would never make your **faith (prayers)** to be lost (i.e. your prayers offered towards Jerusalem)

Here the word ايمان ('imān) means literally 'faith' but the context of revelation makes it clear that the part of 'faith' which will not go to waste is the believers' prayer. The above translation has communicated the explicated sense of the Arabic ايمان ('imān) . Also included in al-Munajjid's (1999) list are other general words which in the Quran have some specific senses in addition to their general (indefinite) senses such as اِتِّبَاع ('ittibāf', adherence) (1999: 112), جَعَلَ ('jaʿal', making) (ibid: 115), حَسَنَةٌ ('ḥasanah', a good act) (ibid: 120), حَقٌّ ('ḥaqq', truth) (ibid: 125), and خَيْرٌ ('xayr' goodness) (ibid: 137), among many others. Al-Munajjid (ibid: 137) comments on the word خَيْرٌ (xayr), stating that it is a general comprehensive word which covers all aspects that have been mentioned in books on الوُجُوهُ وَالنَّظَائِرِ (al-wujūh wa al-naḍā'ir) and authors of these books should not restrict its meaning based on the co-text and the contexts of revelation without being mindful of its general meaning.

Interestingly, al-Munajjid (1999: 111) quotes the two contexts of the word بَعْل ('husband' or 'Baʿal', the name of an idol) in the Quran which can be classified as exhibiting a polysemous or homonymous relationship and this depends on whether we consider the sense of the name of an idol to be derived from the sense of 'husband', or it may be that the idol's name may have been borrowed from other linguistic varieties (i.e. is homonymous) as indicated by the various sources al-Munajjid (ibid) has cited.

It is important to know that books on الوُجُوهُ وَالنَّظَائِرِ (al-wujūh wa al-naḍā'ir) do not focus on multiplicity of senses when it involves one particular word in a particular context. Consider, for example, the word وَصِيدٌ (waṣīd) in the verse:

{وَكَلَّبْنَاهُمْ بِأَسْفُلِ ذُرَاعَيْهِ بِالْوَصِيدِ}

[Q18: 18]

**Ali: their dog stretching forth his two fore-legs on the threshold)**

This has a number of meanings which many exegetes (e.g al-Ṭabarī) have mentioned (such as ‘threshold’, ‘entrance’, ‘dust’ and ‘foyer’), yet in books on *الْوُجُوهُ وَالنَّظَائِرُ* (al-wujūh wa al-naḍā’ir) this has not been of much interest. That does not mean that Muslim scholars do not attach much importance to this issue as attested by the time and effort spent to delineate the various interpretations or senses that a word can have. It is true that there are not many books dedicated to this kind of *مُشْتَرِكٌ* (polysemy or homonymy) but scholars who study the principles of Quran exegesis have discussed the rules that govern the interpretation of any word that has multiple senses in a given context. Early Muslim exegetes have also touched on this issue such as al-Ṭabarī, who states, albeit in passing (2001, vol7: 490), that when a word has a number of senses, the most conspicuous sense in the language of the Arabs should take precedence over any other linguistic sense. The importance of linguistic sources cannot be emphasized enough as al-Ṭayār (2019: 41), who after enumerating the various sources on which Quran’s exegetes rely (i.e. Quran, prophetic traditions, language, early righteous Muslims’ statements, and Biblical sources), states that it is clear that language is the most widely utilized source that early and succeeding exegetes have made use of. Al-Ṭayār (ibid: 181) further explains that a linguistic (i.e. language-based) interpretation of lexical items can add variety to the meaning of lexemes provided that it does not clash with exegetes’ interpretations and the new supplemented sense is conceivable in a particular context.

Sometimes the discussion of semantic polyvalence can be in the form of dedicated sections in exegetical material such as al-’aṣfahānī’s chapter (d: 1108CE) (1984: 98) in his exegesis on the possibility of intending two different senses with the same expression. al-Ṭayār (2019: 102) gives an account of the possible reasons for the lack of consensus among exegetes on the meaning of certain lexical items and the resultant multiple senses. This can be attributed to the language itself or it may be the context or the source on which they have relied. Also, this disagreement might only be superficial and stem from the expression of a general meaning by means of a specific one and those who gather the words of every exegete, without being selective, phrase the general as though it involves separate senses (cf. Ibn al-Qayyim, 1428AH, vol1: 345). Elsewhere Ibn al-Qayyim (d.1350CE: 307) states that it is quite common in the Quran that words can encompass a number of meanings and exegetes select among the different meanings (al-Ṭayār, 2019: 102). Selecting one particular sense depends on their personal judgment and independent reasoning (ibid). al-Ṭayār (ibid: 182) argues that if an exegete gives preponderance to any linguistic sense, his selection does not entail a rejection of every other linguistic sense of the word but if there is such a rejection it is only based on

exegetical grounds. A case in point is the word نَجْم (najm), which can mean ‘shrub’ or ‘herb’ in addition to their common meaning of ‘star’. If an exegete chooses to spell it out as ‘shrub’ in a particular context, that does not mean that he refuses to accept its more standard meaning of ‘star’ (al-Ṭayār, *ibid*). al-Šawkānī (d.1834) (1414AH, vol1: 14) instructs that the Prophet’s interpretation takes precedence over any interpretation, be it linguistic or otherwise, and that we should stick to the interpretation which is in accordance with the linguistic sense because the Quran is in Arabic and was revealed in the language of the Arabs.

Al ṭayār (2019: 188) recommends the use of lexical analysis, which is instrumental in identifying the sense of any word and then this should be linked to the contextual meaning. In other words, the exegetes’ interpretation (sense) can in many cases coexist with the linguistic sense (*ibid*: 190). The exegete may exercise personal judgement in selecting the most probable sense even among those interpretations put forward by the early righteous generation and this exercise is dependent on independent reasoning (*ibid*: 208). New senses based on independent reasoning may be accepted provided they are based on good knowledge and not on malicious inclinations (*ibid*: 205). However, al-Ṭayār (*ibid*: 215) adds that this does not mean that somebody can claim that since they are an Arab they can understand Quranic discourse without any reference to the views of the pious predecessors as this means that they fall short<sup>1</sup> of doing what is required. Differences between exegetes occur as a result of multiple probable interpretations but not every type of disagreement is commendably acceptable and some disagreements are not even worth considering<sup>2</sup> (al-Ṭayār, *ibid*: 229).

Ibn Taimīyyah (1972: 38-55) discusses at length differences between exegetes and makes a distinction between two types of differences. Contradictory difference is the first type. This is identified by al-Ṭayār (2019: 248) as one in which the two views are mutually exclusive<sup>3</sup> or irreconcilable. The second type of differences can be termed ‘alloforms’<sup>4</sup> which means that one

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<sup>1</sup> The word al-Ṭayār uses is مُقَصِّر (muqaṣṣir), which is an adjective that literally means ‘not doing enough’ and it has been modulated here, transposed and explicated to provide the appropriate match in this context.

<sup>2</sup> al-Ṭayār is alluding to the famous catchy line *وليس كل خلافٍ جاء مُعْتَبَرًا \*\*\*\*\* إلا خلافتُ له حظٌّ من النظر* (“not every difference is recognized but only those differences which merit consideration”) which al-Suyūfī(1974: 45), quoting another scholar, has used in his book but he is credited with giving it salience.

<sup>3</sup> al-Ṭayār’s words are *يلزم من القول بأحدهما عدم القول بالآخر* (literally “expressing a particular view entails not expressing the other view”).

<sup>4</sup> This can be rendered (slightly) literally as ‘differences by way of diversification’ which is called اختلاف تنوع. In linguistic terms, Dickins (personal communication) proposes the following terms: ‘alloforms’, ‘variance’ and

exegetes phrases his views using words different from the other exegetes in a way which is similar to what is termed near-synonymy (cf. Ibn Taimīyyah, 1972: 38). al-Šāyḡ (1995: 16-17) distinguishes between three types of ‘alloforms’ or ‘diversification’ in light of Ibn Taimīyyah’s classification. The first has to do with names and attributes in which exegetes use different designations for the same kind of referent such as God’s names and attributes, which all refer to one God (i.e Allah). The second type is related to the exegetes’ tendency to use examples to clarify a certain general concept. Ibn Taimīyyah (1972: 43) likens this to an inarticulate speaker of Arabic<sup>1</sup> being taught the meaning of the Arabic word خُبْزُ (‘xubz’, bread) by showing him a piece of loaf<sup>2</sup>. The third type of alloform arises as a result of the existence of more than one possible sense due to الاشتراك اللفظي (semantic polyvalence) or تَوَاطُؤُ (‘tawāṭu’, literally ‘congruity’). تَوَاطُؤُ (tawāṭu’) as defined by al-Jurjānī, (d.1413) (n.d: 167) is any general term whose meaning is found equally in each of its members such as the word ‘human’, whose sense is included in all mankind. These terms which display تَوَاطُؤُ (tawāṭu’) are construed by Ibn Taimīyyah (2005: vol3: 123,129) as ‘common nouns’ (i.e “ones whose application is not restricted to arbitrarily distinguished members of a class. E.g. girl is a common noun that may be used in reference to any individual characterizable in general as a girl”, according to the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics). A common noun, he (ibid) explains, has members

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‘allonty’ (cf. ‘allophony’, ‘allomorphy’, where *ont* just carries the more general sense of ‘being’) as good English alternatives for the Arabic expression. The Arabic label, according to Ibn Abī Al-ʿizz (1997: 778-779), can indicate: 1- one statement or action is as legitimate as the other(s), such as the difference in the *adān* (call to prayer) format although one form may be strongly endorsed; or 2- the meaning of one expression is subsumed in the other expression. The other type (اختلاف التضاد), by contrast, according to Ibn Abī al-ʿizz (ibid) is the difference in which one statement or action is correct and the other statements or actions should be dismissed.

<sup>1</sup> Ibn Taimīyyah’s word is أَعْجَمِيّ (‘aʿjamī) which in the dictionary لِسَانُ الْعَرَبِ (‘lisān Al-ʿArab’, ‘The Tongue of the Arabs’) is defined as someone who cannot express himself clearly even if he is of Arab origin. أَعْجَمِيّ (‘aʿjamī) is usually contrasted with the word عَجَمِيّ (‘ʿajamī’, non-Arab) which in لِسَانُ الْعَرَبِ (lisān Al-ʿArab) refers to any person who is a non-Arab regardless of whether they speak Arabic fluently or not. Ibn ʿuṭaymīn, however, argues in this video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CxNn95HB5OQ>) that عَجَمِيّ (ʿajamī) refers to someone who does not speak Arabic. If Ibn ʿuṭaymīn is accurate, then the word that Ibn Taimīyyah should have used might be عَجَمِيّ (ʿajamī).

<sup>2</sup> In philosophy, this is known as the ‘ostensive definition’. It involves conveying the meaning of a term by pointing out to examples or direct demonstration (e.g pointing) of the defined item. An ostensive definition is particularly useful in explaining the meaning or use of a word “when the overall role the word is supposed to play in the language is already clear”, according to Wittgenstein (2009: 18). For example, to explain the meaning of the word ‘car’, one can point to any car regardless of its size or brand.

which are clearly distinct from each other and al-Ṭayār (1428AH: 108) gives the examples of proper nouns such as John and William<sup>1</sup>, which are used for the general concept ‘human’. This is typical of what we know about concepts in hyponymy-hyperonymy relationships. Al ṭayār (ibid: 109-110) distinguishes between two types of مُتَوَاطِئٌ (mutawāṭi’), reiterating Ibn Taimīyyah’s (1972: 50-51) dichotomy; one has to do with identifying the reference of an anaphoric expression if more than one reference is possible (i.e in linguistic terms this is called anaphora (or anaphor) resolution, Crystal 2008: 25). One example of this can be found in the verse:

{ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّى}

[Q53: 8]

**Al-Hilali and Khan:** [Then he (Jibrael (Gabriel)) approached and came closer]

The الضمير المستتر (implied pronoun<sup>2</sup>) in this sentence can refer to the Angel Gabriel or the Prophet Mohammad (al-Šāyḡ 1995: 22) or God ( al-Ṭayār 1428AH: 109). The second type of المُتَوَاطِئُ (mutawāṭi’), which Ibn Taimīyyah (1972: 51) mentions and al-Šāyḡ ( 1995: 22) and al-Ṭayār (1428AH: 110-111) explain in detail concerns qualities with no specific reference such as فَجْرٌ (fajr), شَفْعٌ (šafḡ) and وَثْرٌ (witr), (‘dawn’, ‘even number’<sup>3</sup> and ‘odd number’, respectively). Early exegetes differ as to which فَجْرٌ (‘fajr’, dawn or daybreak) the verse refers to. Ibn Taimīyyah (1972: 50) argues that in some cases it is quite possible that all references mentioned by the righteous predecessors could be equally applicable. al-Ṭayār (1428AH: 111) comments on Ibn Taimīyyah’s words that in cases where only one meaning is intended, we need strong evidence to make us select one specific sense or reference.

An important branch of the science of Quran exegesis is تَرْجِيحٌ<sup>4</sup> (‘tarjīḡ’, settling on a particular view) and is based on a number of principles (ibid). Al-Ḥarbī (1996: 35) defines تَرْجِيحٌ (tarjīḡ) as the process of establishing the validity of one statement or opinion and discrediting or

<sup>1</sup> al-Ṭayār uses the Arabic names عَمْرُو (ʿamr) and زَيْدٌ (Zayd) but I choose to use the functional or cultural equivalent of these names in English speaking countries.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Wehr’s dictionary gives a number of alternatives for ضَمِيرٌ مُسْتَتِرٌ (ḡamīr mustatir) such as ‘hidden, concealed, latent; understood, implied (pronoun)’.

<sup>3</sup> شَفْعٌ (šafḡ) is any even number. Other alternatives include ‘double’ and ‘pair’.

<sup>4</sup> Bakkour (2012: 215) defines تَرْجِيحٌ (tarjīḡ) as “(p)reference of one of the two conflicting pieces of evidence over the other”. ‘Weighting’ might be considered a possible alternative for ‘preference’.

challenging other statements or opinions. This process is based on a number of principles such as the maxim that every opinion that contradicts the Quran, the prophetic traditions or the consensus of Muslim scholars<sup>1</sup> should be rejected. Another example which might be of direct relevance to our analysis is deduced by al-Ḥarbī (1996: 505-510). This rule states that if a word can be used either in a semantically polyvalent or a monosemic manner, its monosemic interpretation should be given precedence. In practice, however, this rule should be treated with caution as exegetes have always offered a number of interpretations (or senses) for many words in the Quran and they have not always selected one sense for all words in the Quran and dismissed other senses solely on the basis of their meanings when they came into existence. Also, as we have seen, many exegetes point out the possibility of words carrying multiple senses which can be equally legitimate in a particular context. As a rule which might appear contrary to the aforementioned rule is one stated by Ibn Ṣuṭaymīn (2016). He explains that if there are two equally valid interpretations for a given segment in the Quran or Sunnah (prophetic traditions), both interpretations or senses must be assigned. There are two conditions for the application of this rule, he (ibid) adds: first, the two interpretations must not contradict each other and second there should not be any proof that lends greater support for the validity of either of them. This is also reiterated by al-Sabt (n.d: 819-820) in his book on the principles of exegesis, who argues that in the absence of a contextual evidence, a lexical item with multiple meanings must be taken to mean these meanings unless there is a valid reason not to do so. This principle, he states (ibid: 807), has the advantage of resolving many points of disagreement cited in Quranic exegeses. There are many pieces of evidence that give support to this rule such as the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) giving two explanations for the same Quranic expression on two separate occasions (ibid). This is not limited to words but some verses have been revealed twice in relation to two separate incidents<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, numerous incidents have been cited in which Quranic exegetes approve the coexistence of multiple senses or interpretations (ibid: 808-809). Also, it is not allowed to assign a specific sense to a word with multiple senses in the absence of a compelling proof for that particular sense (ibid: 795). This

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<sup>1</sup> al-Ḥarbī's words are إجماع امة محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم, which can be translated rather literally as "consensus of the entire Prophet's nation (peace be upon him)", but as Ibn Ṣuṭaymīn (2009: 64) points out, what is meant here is the agreement of independent Muslim scholars مجتهدى الامة after the death of the Prophet Muhammad on an Islamic issue (or ruling) حكم شرعى.

<sup>2</sup> This is called سبب النزول (literally 'cause - or reason - of revelation'), which may be translated rather loosely as 'the context of revelation'. Backour (2012: 251) defines it as the collective "circumstances accounted for the revelation of some verse or verses". Many dictionaries of Islamic terms give 'occasion of revelation' as the appropriate English match.

principle in the above book comes after the statement of a general rule (ibid: 794) that the majority of words in the Quran refer to two or more senses. This large number includes meanings of an unequal degree of prominence and meanings which may or may not coalesce and meanings which can or cannot be intended concurrently (ibid). This pertains to the characteristic of inimitability and eloquence of the Quran. Although he emphasizes (ibid: 794-800-, 819-820) the point that these meanings must not contradict one another, this must be exercised with caution. For example, in the verse {والليل اذا عَسَسَ} [by the night as it departs (or approaches), Q81: 17], the word عَسَسَ (ʕasʕas) can mean ‘depart’ or ‘approach’ (or ‘darken’). They appear to be contradictory, yet al-Sabt disagrees with the view that عَسَسَ (ʕasʕas) cannot be assigned the two seemingly contradictory senses and explains that since there is intra-contextual corroboration for both meanings, the two senses are equally applicable and this is line with the expressiveness of the Quran, which signifies that it can express numerous meanings using few words (ibid: 800). al-Sabt (ibid: 804) adds another explanatory rule that if the early exegetes decide to pass over a probable sense and they follow one another in stressing a specific sense, this indicates the prominence of that sense.

We have already presented some examples of polysemy in the Quran, although these barely scratch the surface of this widespread phenomenon. Analysis of many (if not all) of God’s names attests to the prevalence of ‘semantic polyvalence’ in them contrary to Al Ghamdi’s (2015: 180) inaccurate assertion that “it is rarely found among the divine names” and that “most early Muslim linguists and theologians<sup>1</sup>, ...argue that ...divine names are monosemous and that each Name has only one meaning in all Quranic contexts”.

## 6.5 Translation of Polysemy in the Quran

A question might crop up now as to the relevance of these theoretical aspects of meaning for translation theory. Catford (1965: 35) points out the need “for translation-theory to draw upon a theory of meaning; without such a theory certain important aspects of the translation process cannot be discussed”. Not only are semantic theories relevant but also philosophical theses are involved such as the ‘indeterminacy of translation’, a thesis propounded by the American

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<sup>1</sup> Al Ghamdi cites al-Ġazālī as a chief proponent of this stance but al-Ġazālī’s book(let) on God’s names النهج الاسمي paints a clearly different picture.

analytic philosopher W.V. Quine (1960), which states that different translations of a sentence can be incompatible with each other “but at the same time all equally compatible with the semantically relevant facts expressed by the original sentence” (Palumbo 2009: 61).

It has been noted by Ravin and Leacock (2000: 1) that polysemy “poses a problem in semantic theory and in semantic applications, such as translation or lexicography”. Beekman and Callow (1974: 101) explain that languages develop “multiple senses quite independently of each other”. Baker (2011: 262) points out that a polysemous item in the SL will rarely have a match in the TL which expresses the same range of meanings and failing to render a sense of a polysemous word will result in loss of whole layers of meaning.

Newmark (1988: 25) reminds translators to look for signs of deliberate ambiguity, in which case the translator’s task is to reproduce it “even if it means expanding the original”. Newmark (ibid) insists that if the final decision is not his (the translator’s), he has to disambiguate according to his available means and those interpretations or senses which are less likely to be correct have to be appended.

Newmark (1988: 108) suggests a number of maneuvers when a translator faces a word with a double meaning. The translator’s priority should be “to reproduce it with a word containing the same double meaning” (ibid). If this is not feasible, a translator can then consider “distributing the two senses of the lexical unit over two or more lexical units” (ibid). If all else fails, Newmark (ibid) says, rounding off his procedures, a translator can sacrifice one of the two meanings.

Fatani (2005: 664) criticizes the lack of bilingual dictionaries that document the various senses (common or otherwise) of Arabic words in the Quran which might be of immense benefit to translators. Elimam (2014: 131) argues that translators of the Quran seem to declare their commitment to preserving the meaning of the Quran rather than the form. Nonetheless preserving the meaning is a laborious task since “the language of the Qur'an is very concise and some words/aayahs offer more than one meaning” and the translator is faced with the conundrum of whether or not to reproduce these multiple meanings in their translations (ibid). Many Quran translators hold the belief that “translation is literally impossible” and at best it is an ongoing process of interpretation “especially with documents that must be used constantly” (Irving 1985: xxiv). In this regard, Irving (ibid) asserts that “almost every day I learn a new rendering of a word or phrase; then I must run this new thread of meaning through other passages”. Abdel-



Haleem (2010: 16) argues that even at the level of prepositions<sup>1</sup> such as the Arabic ب (*bi*) in the beginning part of each chapter in the Quran, in بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ a word can have a range of meanings which are equally applicable in this context: “beginning, dedication, accompaniment, and instrumentality”. Since there is no single English equivalent that covers the same range of meanings as the original Arabic preposition, translation loss is inevitable (ibid). As a consequence, the translator is left with just one option and that is one word that carries only one meaning of the multiple meanings embedded (ibid). Abdel-Haleem’s view is tied just to local polysemy and not to intertextual polysemy, where the meaning of a recurrent polysemous word is linked to the specific context and this results in imposing one sense on a particular word and ultimately leads to “denial of the context and misrepresentation of the material” (Abdel-Haleem 2004: xxxi).

In his discussion of lexical equivalence, Enani (2009: 16) argues that one issue that creates problems for translators is their tendency to assign a single sense to every word without exerting any effort to look for any other sense. This, he explains (ibid: 16) leads to ‘word for word’<sup>2</sup> translation rather than sense for sense<sup>3</sup> as Arberry’s translation of the Quran clearly reflects. So any translator who cannot envisage an equivalent for the word رَحْمَةً (*rahmah*) in English other than ‘mercy’ is not likely to find the right word to fit the context. This particular example represents some researchers’ confusion between ambiguity and vagueness in the word رَحْمَةً (*rahmah*) and its different manifestations which are intentionally subsumed in the meaning of رَحْمَةً (*rahmah*). Enani (ibid: 18) casts doubt on translators’ freedom to select more than one equivalent for any single word. He argues (ibid) that a dictionary like Hans Wehr does not resolve such uncertainty because it gives a number of equivalents without any differentiation between them. However, the Quran, in particular, has a unique style, and a person who becomes engrossed in it will definitely think of many senses for any word, many of which are emotionally

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<sup>1</sup> In Arabic these are called حروف الجر and Wehr’s dictionary offers two equivalents: ‘preposition’ and ‘genitive’. They are referred to as حروف جر not in the sense that they are single letters but since they do not have the features of nouns (such as the capacity to be prefixed by ال, the Arabic definite article) or the characteristics of verbs (e.g. the capacity to be prefixed by the present tense marker ياء المضارعة). They are considered حروف جر, where جر (literally ‘dragging’, ‘pulling’) refers to the effect they create لانها تجر معنى الفعل قبلها الى الاسماء بعده al-Galāyayīnī (1994, Vol3: 168) (“because they ‘pull’ meaning of the verb before it is attached to the nouns after them”). Another possible reason is the change of case they bring about to the noun after them from nominative to genitive من الرفع الى الخفض (الكسر); ibid).

<sup>2</sup> His words are ترجمة لفظية, the closest match in English being ‘literal translation’.

<sup>3</sup> Alternatively, we can call this ‘idiomatic translation’.

loaded. Furthermore, Enani expresses his preference (ibid) for conveying the meanings or senses no matter how many words we need. This resonates with Nida and Reyburn's (1981: 72) call for "significantly different interpretations of the text" to be noted. Hasan (2013: 209) comments on this advice for the translator stating that it should be used sparingly with major interpretations only and "he/she should not provide the reader with all probable interpretations as this burdens the reader and makes it an over-translation rather than a translation".

However, if we adopt the definition proposed by al-Zurqānī (1943, vol2: 111) of Quran translation as the expression of the meaning of speech of one language by means of another which involves being committed to all its meanings and implications, then being selective in determining the sense of a word meaning makes it a form of exegesis which does not require much elucidation.

Numerous studies have been carried out to investigate the translation of polysemous words from Arabic into English and vice versa. As we have already pointed out in our discussion of polysemous words in the Quran, the main focus of dedicated studies on semantically polyvalent words is those lexical items in which the context plays a pivotal role in disambiguating the intended meaning. However, no comparable studies have addressed polysemous words in which the intended meaning(s) cannot be resolved contextually and multiple senses are evenly or unevenly matched. While we do not agree with Hasan's assertion (2013: 274) that "the issue of polysemy in Qur'ān translation has not yet been approached", we can say that it has not been adequately dealt with. Hasan (2013: 143), for example, looks at "the issue of polysemy as a source of ambiguity in Qur'ān translation in terms of language and culture". Large as it might seem, Hasan's study only addresses some culturally specific polysemous words in the Quran where context supposedly plays a role in delineating the intended meaning.

As we have described earlier, many studies that are dedicated to polysemy do not fully reflect the true nature of this phenomenon. Hasan's study is no exception in that many lexemes that have been selected for analysis show many characteristics of 'vagueness', a phenomenon which does not bear the (arguably) recognized hallmarks of polysemy. Words like رَحْمَةٌ ('rahmah', mercy), ظُلُمَاتٌ ('ḍulumāt', darknesses), فِتْنَةٌ ('fitnah', trial or persecution), ظُلْمٌ ('ḍulm', injustice) and أَدَّى (''addā', perform) are all general 'vague' words which encompass many forms whose specific sense is revealed through the context. Hasan asserts that polysemous expressions in the Quran are "general, rich and flexible" and this generality complicates the task of the translator because they have to choose between a general or a more specific target language equivalent (ibid: 123). This general view of polysemy is even supported by some translation theorists with

a linguistic background such as Catford (1965: 95-96), who argues that polysemy “is not a case of one item having several meanings, but of one item having wide or general contextual meaning, covering a wide range of specific situational features”. However, it seems that retaining the general sense of the original normally best conforms to the task of the translator despite Enani’s conclusion (1990: 17) that resorting to a general equivalent (even in cases where the source text uses general expressions) does not render the translation adequate. Elaborating on the details of the general sense is the duty of Quran exegetes. Hassan (2013) seems to base his selection on his assumption that the context in which the word is found gives rise to a new sense or as Ravin and Leacock (2000: 5) put it, summarizing Geeraerts’ (1993,1994) view, that “context alters the senses of the words found in it”. Hasan’s view of linguistic context is based on Crystal’s (2008: 108) definition of (linguistic) context as “specific parts of an utterance (or text) near or adjacent to a unit which is the focus of attention”. Not all items selected for analysis in Hasan’s study display similar vagueness. آية (āyah), أخ (’ax) and إمام (’imām) are some of his selected words that display distinct multiple senses and potentially or ambiguously polysemous. Hasan (2013: 258) offers his solution to the presence of multiple senses or interpretations of cultural items. He suggests (ibid) that “the translator can borrow the expression to alert the reader that it is a culture-sensitive expression. Through either an informative footnote or paraphrasing, the translator could inform the reader of these probable interpretations”.

Brakhw’s study (2014) of twenty-four senses of twelve polysemous words in the Quran reveals similar finding to Hassan’s study (2013) that many translators do not observe the context when they render polysemous words that are context dependent. Brakhw’s study pays particular attention to the meaning stated by Quran commentators and how successful translators are in transferring the intended meanings of polysemous words. Brakhw concludes (2014: 195) that in his selected sample, most polysemous words have been translated using literal or formal equivalents which, he asserts, are not suitable because they do not consider the context of the polysemous item. Paraphrase is the second common strategy among translators of polysemy but with limited success in conveying the intended meaning(s). The least common strategy in Brakhw’s analysis (ibid: 196-199) is ‘explication’ despite its usefulness in clarifying the ambiguity arising from the use of polysemous words. He finds (ibid: 197), quite bizarrely, that translators like Al-Hilali and Khan have resorted to transliteration to make up for the inevitable loss of meaning in transferring polysemic words and then they provide parenthetical explanation. Al-Hilali and Khan, he concludes (ibid: 201), surpass other translators in recognizing polysemy and conveying the intended meaning. Indeed, Al-Hilali and Khan often give the various senses the word can have. Although some might criticize this strategy because it gives rise to ambiguity, they may not be aware that “linguistic ambiguity may enrich the text when both meanings are

intended, and the translator should attempt to reproduce it” (Dastjerdi and Zamani 2009: 50). Also, Brachw points out (2014: 203) Arberry adopts a literal or word-for-word approach in handling polysemy. Although Brachw’s study sheds light on useful strategies to deal with polysemy, most of the comments on Hasan’s study are relevant here. For example, his selected sample<sup>1</sup> lends itself very easily to vagueness rather than ambiguity. Words that he investigated such as يقين (yaqīn, lit. ‘certainty’), فِتْنَةٌ (‘fitnah’, trial) or بُهْتَانٌ (‘buhtān’, outrageous lie) are all general words whose denotations depend on the particular context in which they are used. Al-Amri (1433AH: 26) calls these ‘exegetical’ senses which must be distinguished from ‘real’ cases of polysemy. With these general (or vague, in a rather positive sense of the word) words, Al-Amri (ibid: 19) suggests leaving their general denotations intact (which is what most translators in his selected sample have consistently done) and if there is a need to explain their specific sense in particular contexts, this should be done in the form of footnotes or bracketed explanations, and this specification or interpretation must be based on authentic or traditional sources and not on so-called rational reasoning. He (ibid: 21) further explains that where there are “real” distinct senses it is better to render these words according to their intended meanings ignoring any etymological significance. In any case, these studies confirm the fuzziness in distinguishing between vagueness and ambiguity. It is difficult to find studies in Arabic where lexical ambiguities arise from what Catford calls (1965: 94-95) ‘shared exponence’ “when the ambiguity is itself a functionally relevant feature”, which is utilized to achieve some artistic effects such as in puns.

Ḥumar (1998: 252-253) believes that one of the significant problems that a translator faces is limited applicability or monosomousness of a lexical item in one language and the extended range or polysemousness of a ‘corresponding’ lexical item in another. In Arabic, he cites the word مَكْتَبَةٌ (maktabah) which has a number of equivalents in English (e.g ‘library’, ‘bookstore’ and ‘book collection’). This particular example might not explain the extent of the problem of polysemy because it may be argued that the Arabic word مَكْتَبَةٌ (maktabah) is vague, a designation which, according to Bensacia and Eldjoun (2014: 10), signifies “a single lexeme with a non-specific meaning (monosemy)”. However, “an English speaker might consider this Arabic word to be polysemous (and ambiguous) while an Arabic speaker might not recognize any distinct senses which may be seen as vague” (ibid).

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<sup>1</sup> Admittedly, he acknowledges its limitations (2014: 208), being a relatively small sample.

## 6.6 Polysemic Divine Designations in the Quran

We shall now begin to scrutinize the treatment of some divine names with multiple senses by our selected translators. Enquiring into the root of the sacred name is not of paramount importance for our analysis since there is not always a recognizable link between the traceable genesis of the word in Arabic and its outgrowth. For example, Justice (1987: 36) cites the word طِفْلٌ ('tifl', child) which “is, to a first approximation, no more haunted by the verb from a homophonous root meaning ‘obtrude’, than is ‘charleyhorse’ by ‘horse’ or for that matter ‘hoarse’ or ‘hearse’”. Another unassailable fact which makes putting Arabic and English derivational patterns side by side rather futile in our case is that in contrast to Arabic, “most nouns in English are things-in-themselves, not parts of verbs, which are processes” as Justice (ibid: 37) has demonstrated. Also, we will not be preoccupied with the evolution (expansion and contraction) of senses under scrutiny as this is attributable to “diachronic accumulation (which) in itself brings subtlety which turns to vagueness only as literary culture itself unravels”.

### 6.6.1 الفَتَّاحُ (Al-Fattah)

According to al- 'aṣṣafahānī (1412AH: 621) فَتَّحَ (fatḥ) denotes ‘unlocking’ or ‘unravelling’ in either a concrete or abstract sense. Al-Bayhaqī (1401AH: 39) explains that when referring to God, الفَتَّاحُ (Al-Fattah, ‘the unlocker’, ‘the unraveller’) means the one who judges between His servants, an opener of that which is sealed of His creations’ affairs and a succourer.

{قُلْ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا رَبُّنَا ثُمَّ يَفْتَحُ بَيْنَنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَهُوَ الْفَتَّاحُ الْعَلِيمُ}

[Q34: 26]

|                      | [Q34: 26] الفَتَّاحُ (Al-Fattah) |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Asad                 | the One who opens all truth      |
| Pickthall            | The Judge                        |
| Ali                  | the one to decide                |
| Abdel Haleem         | The Judge                        |
| Saheeh International | The Judge                        |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | (Most Trustworthy) Judge         |
| Arberry              | The deliverer                    |

Most translators have selected one of the above stated Arabic senses. Another important observation is the above translators' laying aside of the literal (and primary) sense of فَتْح (fath) apparently because it does not suit the majesty of God to portray Him as an 'opener'. Perhaps a better equivalent is Arberry's whose rendition 'deliverer' qualifies for a partial match for the multiplicity of the senses imbedded in the Arabic version. 'Deliver' can impart the senses of 'to give a judgement' and 'save, rescue' (according to OED), which makes 'deliverer' a better candidate than the circumscribed senses designated by other translators. 'Deliverer' also has Biblical overtones since its use is recurrent in the Bible as in Psalms (22: 8, KJV) "He trusted on the Lord that he (sic) would **deliver** him". The only issue with Arberry's rendition is the dearth of explanatory details to spell out the distinctiveness of the divine name. Asad adopts a literal interpretation but attempts to modify this literal interpretation with the phrase 'all truth'. Admittedly, the context above is on the side of those who opt for 'the judge' sense (cf. Amjad and Farahani, 2013: 137) but the other senses are not at variance with it. Also those translators who selected "the Judge" have, perhaps unwittingly, masked the difference between the divine names الْفَتَّاح (Al-Fattāh) and الْحَكَم (Al-Hakam), which are near-synonymous by giving them the same rendition, as can be seen in the following table:

|                      | [Q34: 26] الْفَتَّاح (Al-Fattah) | {أَفْعِزَّ اللَّهُ أَبْتَعَى حَكَمًا} (Hakam) [Q6: 114]                   |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Asad                 | the One who opens all truth      | <b>anyone</b> but God for <b>judgment</b> [as to what is right and wrong] |
| Pickthall            | The Judge                        | judge   |
| Ali                  | the one to decide                | judge   |
| Abdel Haleem         | The Judge                        | judge   |
| Saheeh International | The Judge                        | judge   |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | (Most Trustworthy) Judge         | judge   |
| Arberry              | The deliverer                    | judge   |

And finally, yet importantly, none of the translators has been successful in replicating the intensive *fāṣṣāl* pattern of the Arabic name, although Asad and Al-Hilali and Khan attempt to offset this with the phrases "all truth" and "the most trustworthy" respectively. These attempts embody both compensation in place and kind (see Compensation; section 4.3). By cherry-

picking one sense translators seem to have done irreversible damage to the rich *mélange* of senses ingrained in the divine names and have sapped target readers' enthusiasm to assimilate all possible meanings. Some translators may have erroneously assumed the target readers' lack of interest to come to grips with the multiple senses of divine names and Quranic terms in general. Real evidence, however, debunks these impressionistic notions. Many respondents to Elimam's questionnaire (2017: 67) lament the paucity of possible meanings of Quranic verses.

### 6.6.2 الْقَيُّوم (Al-Qayyūm)

This is an intensive *faḥḥūl* pattern derived from the noun قِيَام ('qiyām', standing or rising) which signifies God's taking care of His creatures' affairs or Allah's self-standing and absolute independence (Ibn Maṣṣūf 1414AH vol12: 504).

|                      | الْقَيُّوم [2: 255] (Al-Qayyūm)                   |
|----------------------|---|
| Asad                 | the Self-Subsistent Fount of All Being            |
| Pickthall            | the Eternal                                       |
| Ali                  | the Self-subsisting, Eternal                      |
| Abdel Haleem         | the Ever Watchful                                 |
| Saheeh International | the Sustainer of [all] existence                  |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | the One Who sustains and protects all that exists |
| Arberry              | the Everlasting                                   |

Quite unexpectedly, some translators above choose the sense of 'eternal' and 'everlasting', a sense not found in the major exegetical references (such as al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kaṭīr and or even al-Rāzī on whom Asad and Abdel Haleem rely heavily). Al-Jalīl (2009: 161-162) hints that evidence for this sense was first recorded by Ibn Taymīyyah (1422AH: 55). "Eternal" and "Everlasting" seem to echo many invocations of God in the Bible (such as Genesis 21: 33 "everlasting God" and "eternal God" in KJV and New Living Translation respectively). Asad's rendition appears to be influenced by his dependence on al-Rāzī, whose exegesis is like an "encyclopedia" (Mahomoud 2000: 149), and includes many aspects which are not strictly exegetic in nature (such as philosophy, theology and natural sciences). Such reliance may have resulted in interpretations which are arguably esoteric or unorthodox to say the least, such as the above.

Ali's rendition reflects his endeavor to mirror the polysemic nature of the Arabic name and successfully compensates for the absence of an English equivalent which has the same range of denotations. However, what seems to mar his translation is the lack of consistency since he uses the same word "eternal" to render the name الصَّمَد (Al-Ṣamad) in [Q112: 2]. Al-Hilali and Khan's translation seems to gloss the polysemic Arabic name but what they have actually done is resorting to semantic repetition (involving 'sustain' and 'protect' which are in a hyperonym-hyponym relationship) to accentuate God's guardianship of His creations. According to OED, the word 'sustain' means "strengthen or support physically or mentally". So, 'sustains' clearly has a broad meaning (i.e. it is a hyperonym) under which the sense of 'protect' falls (i.e. it is a hyponym). It is probable that Al-Hilali and Khan want to bring this aspect of Divine sustenance to the fore.

### 6.6.3 الأَكْرِيم (Al-Karīm)

Al-Zajjājī (1986: 176) lists three senses of الأَكْرِيم (al-kaṛīm) used by (ancient) Arabs which are applicable here. They are: 'the abundantly generous' الجَوَاد (al-jawād), 'the all-glorious, honorable' العَزِيز (al-ʿazīz) and 'the immensely forbearing' الصَّفُوح (al-ṣafūḥ). Ibn Maḍḍūr (1414AH vol12: 510) expounds on this, saying that كَرِيم (kaṛīm) encapsulates all the laudatory characteristics of virtue, honor and eminence. This is how our selected translators deal with this polysemic name:

|                      | [Q82: 6] الأَكْرِيم (Al-Karīm) |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Asad                 | bountiful                      |
| Pickthall            | the Bountiful                  |
| Ali                  | Most Beneficent                |
| Abdel Haleem         | generous                       |
| Saheeh International | the Generous                   |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | Most Generous                  |
| Arberry              | generous                       |

All the above translators pick up the sense of 'being generous' and its near-synonyms (i.e. 'bountiful' and 'beneficent') as good translations for the Arabic الأَكْرِيم (Al-Karīm). This is the primary sense of the word (at least in its modern-day usage) and translators seem to favour the sense in polysemic words which is congruous with its literal (or common) interpretation unless



that sense depicts the divine in unflattering terms. Sells (2007: 53) disapproves of the above translations on the grounds they do not evince “‘generosity’ as as the matrix of ethnic value”. Nonetheless, it has to be said, that the above translators (with the possible exception of Arberry) have observed contextual consistency when the word كَرِيم (karīm) is used in reference to undivine entities (such as plants) as the following table depicts:

|                      | [Q82: 6] الْكَرِيم (Karīm, God’s name) | [Q26: 7] زَوْجٌ كَرِيمٌ (‘karīm’; ‘zawj’ means every type of plant) |
|----------------------|--|---|
| Asad                 | bountiful                              | noble (kind)  |
| Pickthall            | the Bountiful                          | fruitful (kind)   |
| Ali                  | Most Beneficent                        | noble (things of all kinds)   |
| Abdel Haleem         | generous                               | noble (kinds of thing)  |
| Saheeh International | the Generous                           | noble (kind)  |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | Most Generous                          | good (kind)   |
| Arberry              | generous                               | generous (kind)   |

Arberry’s translation is adjudged to be academic in nature and impetus (El-Magazy 2004: 6) and in academia consistency (a concept which is commensurate with being faithful and stable) of all types is seen as a virtue (cf. Li and Ge, 2009: 98) which strengthens dependability. That might explain the literal (or imperfect) rendition Arberry has given to كَرِيم (karīm) when used to describe plants. But it has to be noted that such verbal consistency is not always maintained by Arberry and he, abstrusely, alters his choices when الْكَرِيم (al-karīm) is used to describe mortal beings (as “honoured” in [Q 81: 19] and as “the noble” in [Q44: 49]). Another thing to mention about the above translations is the translators’ attempt to keep الْبَرَّ (Al-Barr), the near-synonymous counterpart of الْكَرِيم (Al-Karīm), distinct by varying their lexical choice:

|                      | [Q82: 6] الْكَرِيم (Al-Karīm) | [Q52: 28] الْبَرَّ (Al-Barr)                             |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Asad                 | bountiful                     | benign   |
| Pickthall            | the Bountiful                 | the benign   |
| Ali                  | Most Beneficent               | the Beneficent   |
| Abdel Haleem         | generous                      | the good   |
| Saheeh International | the Generous                  | the Beneficent   |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | Most Generous                 | AlBarr (the Most Subtle, Kind, Courteous, and Generous), |

|         |          |            |
|---------|----------|------------|
| Arberry | generous | All-benign |
|---------|----------|------------|

Al-Ṣabḍ al-Jabbār (2012: 266) explains the difference between the two names stating that **الْبَرّ** (Al-Barr) subsumes perfection in fulfilling obligations while **الْكَرِيم** (Al-Karīm) embraces God’s all-encompassing bountiful blessings. None of the above translators reflect the nitty-gritty of the nature of these two attributes. Al-Hilali and Khan use a translation couplet (a combination of transliteration and near-synonymy) to render the name. In **الْبَرّ** (Al-Barr) we witness one of the few occasions Al-Hilali and Khan convey the multiple senses of divine names despite their propensity to transmit the range of possible senses with other lexical items of great import. Notwithstanding the criticism levelled at Al-Hilali and Khan for their excessive use of elaborate bracketed information, many find these details instrumental in unshrouding the meaning of the word as evidenced by Elimam’s study (2017: 63) which targets current and prospective readers of different Quran’s translations. Keeping footnotes and bracketed notes to a minimum which are believed by many to have a distracting impact has not made Abdel Haleem’s translation fare any better than other translations (ibid). This also explains, Elimam’s investigation discloses (ibid), why, for example, Arberry’s translation, however faithful, has not gained an equal status to many other translations.

#### 6.6.4 **الْوَالِيّ (Al-Walī)**

**الْوَالِيّ** (Al-Walī) in the general sense in which it is used in the Qur’an is literally the opposite of ‘enemy’ (al-Jalīl 2009: 459). Al-Zajjājī (1986: 113-114) speaks of ten senses for this attribute all harking back to its basic sense of ‘so close by as to be without any separation’. As a divine designation, he enumerates (ibid) the following meanings:

- a- being Himself in charge of disposing the affairs of His servants
- b- giving succour
- c- providing or facilitating sustenance
- d- bestowing favour
- f- having absolute authority

Consider the following translations by our translators:

|      |                                       |
|------|---------------------------------------|
|      | [Q42: 28] <b>الْوَالِيّ</b> (Al-Walī) |
| Asad | Protector                             |

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Pickthall            | the Protecting Friend                          |
| Ali                  | the Protector                                  |
| Abdel Haleem         | the Protector                                  |
| Saheeh International | the Protector                                  |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | The Walee (Helper, Supporter, Protector, etc.) |
| Arberry              | the Protector                                  |

The above translators concur with one another in rendering *الْوَالِي* (Al-Walī) as “the protector”. This suggests mutual influence or a desire to maintain conformity when there is not any compelling reason not to acquiesce. Pickthall seems to wield power and influence over subsequent translators and the agreement of subsequent translators can be testimony to this. We see above one example of Pickthall’s imprecise transfer of divine names, suggesting that Kidwai’s praise for Pickthall’s ability to successfully fill lexical and terminological lacunas in English Quran translations might not be justified in all cases. Apparently, the sense the above translators have settled on, and which has become to some extent recognized, does not disclose the essential characteristics of the attribute. None of the books consulted explicitly mention ‘protection’ as a prominent component of the meaning of this attribute. While protection is a corollary to and an after-effect of being in charge of someone’s affairs, it represents a slanted or specific view of the attribute (see section 4.13 on hyponymic translation).

Al-Hilali and Khan’s customary employment of transliteration does contribute to a better understanding of Quranic terms. Elimam’s study (2017: 63) reveals that, contrary to a popular belief, a large number of readers (half of his sample) incline towards the transliteration of Quranic terms, a figure which can be attributed, he suggests, to the readership’s passion to commit these Arabic words to memory. Apart from their gratuitous (at least for some readers) use of transliteration, Al-Hilali and Khan effectively mirror the polysemous nature of the divine designation. Their adherence to exegetic fidelity<sup>1</sup> pays off here. Although they are definitely aware of the many senses, they limit their choice to three senses, most probably because they do not desire to overwhelm their readers.

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<sup>1</sup> Asubtitle of Al-Hilali and Khan’s translation is *interpretation of the meanings of the Noble Qur'an (word of God) with Arabic text in the modern English language. A summarized version of At-Tabari, Al-Qurtubi, and Ibn Kathir with comments from Sahih Al-Bukhari*. This reliance on the aforementioned summative sources depicts their adherence to presenting the Quran in an exegetically justifiable manner.

To a lesser extent Pickthall’s rendition subtly expounds the multiple meanings the divine name can bear by combining a literal (linguistic) meaning (i.e ‘friend’) with the auxiliary aspects of being watchfully attached (‘protecting’). Many commentators have expressed disapproval of his use of ‘friend’ since its modern usage “implies that the person is equal in status to you, which naturally does not apply to God” (Hawarmani 2019). Attributes of God should be transferred with the utmost rigour and precision. Many translators of the Quran are of the opinion that the Bible translators’ employment of the word ‘friend’ in connection with the deity (as in James 2: 23, KJV) is not sufficient grounds to give credence to its use by some Muslim translators. This is not limited to Biblical references, but there has been an unchecked employment of the term ‘friend’ in Sufism. For example, Professor Jawid Mojaddedi, an early and medieval Sufism specialist, has written a book entitled *Beyond Dogma: Rumi’s Teachings on Friendship with God and Early Sufi Theories* (2012) where there is extensive mention of the term ‘friend’. This use of “friend” here and on many other occasions by Pickthall (such as Q4: 125) might pinpoint the inclination of some translators to embrace Biblical or Sufi concepts without carefully looking into the undesirable ramifications of their use. There is here, however, a counter-argument in that that الله Allah describes the prophet Abraham as His خَلِيلٌ (‘xalīl’, literally ‘bosom friend’), which vindicates its use. Al-Qurṭubī (1964: vol5: 401) refutes this by saying that ‘friendship’ with fellow human beings can be described as خُلَّةٌ (xullah) but not with God and the original sense of the word (which denotes ‘something that permeates’) discredits this interpretation. Al-Qurṭubī (ibid: 399-400) dwells on the various senses of being خَلِيلٌ (xalīl) with Allah such as sincere love and affinity or Ibrahim being ‘the chosen one’.

Another issue with Pickthall’s rendition (along with many translators) is his characteristic inconsistency. Generally speaking, Pickthall’s inconsistency has not always given rise to more varied equivalents as Emara’s (2016: 242) scrutiny of Pickthall’s translation of the verb أتى (‘atā’, primarily, or vaguely, ‘to come’) reveals. While Pickthall has only 22 matches for this rather vague word (Emara classifies it as, rather, a polysemous) word, Ali provides a fairly liberal 38 glosses in sharp contrast to Arberry’s relatively unvarying tokens (13 in total).

Let us now compare two renditions of the same name, one with the definite article ال and one without:

|      |                               |                        |
|------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
|      | [Q42: 28] الْوَالِي (Al-Walī) | [Q2: 257] وَلِي (Walī) |
| Asad | Protector                     | near                   |

|                      |  |                                   |
|----------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Pickthall            | the Protecting Friend                          | Protecting Guardian               |
| Ali                  | the Protector                                  | the Protector                     |
| Abdel Haleem         | the Protector                                  | the ally                          |
| Saheeh International | the Protector                                  | the ally                          |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | the Walee (Helper, Supporter, Protector, etc.) | the Walee (Protector or Guardian) |
| Arberry              | the Protector                                  | the Protector                     |

In neither verse does the context seem to prompt the selected sense(s) so the variation here cannot be attributed to contextual consistency. Asad adopts almost a literal (etymologically based) translation in [Q2: 257]. Similarly, Pickthall, Abdel Haleem, Saheeh International and Al-Hilali and Khan are all undecided on a single or multiple senses in interpreting (and translating) وَلِيٍّ (Walī) as a divine attribute. Had they been committed to conveying all the possible senses, they would have averted this unnecessary contrariety. Even Al-Hilali and Khan who often seem to be willing to accept the various senses a word can bear have provided a mixed variety of substitutes.

### 6.6.5 الْمُهَيِّمِينَ (Al-Muhaymin)

Although مُهَيِّمِينَ is in the diminutive form, it expresses greater intensity of the attribute because it has no corresponding augmentative form (Ibn Durīd 1987 vol3: 1272). For Ibn Durīd (ibid), it means a ‘trustee’ or ‘overseer’ of someone else. Later, Ibn Mandūr (1414AH vol13: 436) gives a more detailed analysis and delineates the various of senses of this name which are traceable to two different origins<sup>1</sup>, one derived from مُؤَامِنٌ<sup>2</sup>, which means ‘a witness’<sup>3</sup> and the other from الْمُؤَيِّمِينَ (‘al-mū’īmin’, trustworthy). He makes mention of other possible senses such as الرَّقِيبُ (‘Al-Raqīb’, the watcher), القائم على خلقه (‘the Guardian over all His

<sup>1</sup> Another possible derivation suggested by Professor James Dickins (personal communication) is Greek *hēgemōn* (English ‘hegemon’ has the same etymon), “from *hēgeisthai* ‘to lead’”, according to OED.

<sup>2</sup> To avoid having successive glottal stops (which are not easy to articulate), the second glottal was first changed into ياء (مُؤَيِّمِينَ) and later into هاء which is the current form (i.e. مُهَيِّمِينَ ‘Muhaymin’) (Ibn Mandūr 1414AH vol13: 436).

<sup>3</sup> Literally, it means ‘make safe or protect against threats’ since ‘a witness’ stands up or corroborates the statements or actions of an individual.

creatures’). al-Ġazālī(1987: 72) defines المهيمن (Al-Muhaymin) as an attribute which denotes God’s total authority and which subsumes His guardianship, preservation and overseeing of His creatures. Abū Hilāl al-Ġaskarī (1412AH: 260) explains that مُهَيِّم (Muhaymin) means taking charge of the wellbeing of an individual. This is how our translators grappled with the various above senses:

|                      | [Q59: 23] المهيمن (Al-Muhaymin)               |
|----------------------|---|
| Asad                 | the One who determines what is true and false |
| Pickthall            | the Guardian                                  |
| Ali                  | the Preserver of Safety                       |
| Abdel Haleem         | Guardian over all                             |
| Saheeh International | the Overseer                                  |
| Al-Hilali and Khan   | the Watcher over His creatures                |
| Arberry              | the All-preserver                             |

Despite the fact that all the above translators have recourse to and make good use of exegetical materials which provide multiple senses, this is not manifested in their renditions. It has to be said though that none has been affected by the word’s commonest (or literal) sense of ‘being hegemonic’. In Quran translation, it is not proper for a translator to take a leap in the dark in as much as “etymologies are usually forgotten” and sometimes “lead a life of their own” (Justice 1987: 36), to cite a polyglot philologist. So it is indispensable for anyone involved in the pursuit of a genuine representation of the essence of the Quran to avail themselves of the available resources. All things considered, however, Asad’s rendition embodies a new sense irretrievable from any famous exegesis. He is acutely aware of the various senses this name carries. He comments (n.d: 223) in a footnote<sup>1</sup> on the lemma of this name indicating that it is derived “from the quadrilateral verb *haymana*, "he watched [over a thing]" or "controlled [it]"”, but he chooses to give it a radical twist. It is on the grounds of such unorthodoxy that commentators such as Kidwai (2017: 243) voice their dissatisfaction, though not in so many words, with Asad’s translation for “bristl(ing) with unpardonable liberties with and intrusion of some whimsical, even pugnacious notions ... and passing these off as the intended meaning of the Quran itself”. Ali (1987: 1725) in a footnote intimates his dissatisfaction with his choice exclaiming “How can a translator reproduce the sublimity and the comprehensiveness of the

<sup>1</sup> [<http://www.muhammad-asad.com/Message-of-Quran.pdf>]

magnificent Arabic words, which mean so much in a single symbol?... "Preserver of Safety" (means) guarding all from danger, corruption, loss, etc". Pickthall again does not maintain consistency and treats many near-synonymous names as absolute synonyms. He uses "guardian" to render وَلِيّ (Walī) [Q2: 107], حَفِيز (Ḥafīḏ) [Q11: 57] and وَكِيْل (Wakīl) [Q17: 2], for example. This rendition of his and many other terms we have already cited demonstrates what Kidwai (2017: 241) regards as Pickthall's "proclivity for brevity".

Abdel Haleem similarly undermines consistency by using the same word 'Guardian' for another divine name حَافِظ 'Ḥāfiḏ' in [Q12: 64]. However, Abdel Haleem often does his best to keep divine names clearly distinct. For example, he renders وَكِيْل (Wakīl) as 'guardian' as in [10: 108] when it appertains to non-divine beings and reserves 'protector' for divine invocations. Failing to observe consistency is a chink in Al-Hilali and Khan's armour. In addition to God's name الْمُهَيْمِن (Al-Muḥaymin), 'Watcher' is used to render a number of other divine designations such as الرَّقِيب (Al-Raqīb) in [Q4: 1] and حَفِيز (Ḥafīḏ) in [Q42: 6] (along with 'protector'). Ali gives non-conflicting renditions, 'preserver of safety' being solely allocated for الْمُهَيْمِن (Al-Muḥaymin). Arberry does not use the same rendition 'all preserver' with any other divine name and he seems to be mindful of the gravity of maintaining consistency in the rendition of God's names.

It is quite incomprehensible that many translators select one sense and brush aside other probable senses despite many readers' eagerness to become illuminated about the various meanings, as attested to by Elimam's inquiry into target readers' expectations (2017: 63). His sample of prospective readers all (or the overwhelming majority) of whom display a keen interest to come to grips with all the probable meanings an ayah (i.e. verse) has to offer. By depriving readers of an insight into all the senses, Elimam argues (ibid), what translators, quite inadvertently, have done is to undermine the richness of the Quranic text. The only exception is perhaps Al-Hilali and Khan's translation which sporadically demystifies the various senses a word may bear. Elimam's survey cited above seems to confirm one thing: translators and reviewers alike, have a tendency to impose their own subjective judgements which are largely aesthetic in nature on what readers are likely to want, which runs in the face of what different readers really demand. As a testimony to this, most respondents to Elimam's questionnaire put Al-Hilali and Khan's and Saheeh International's translations on top of their lists of recommended translations for Muslims (2017: 67), which casts aspersions on some negative subjective appraisals of these translations.

## 7. Conclusions

### 7.1 Main Findings of the Study

We have not been able to discover any simple pattern in the treatment of culturally sensitive items such as divine names. Translators resort to different strategies and none of them is perfectly consistent in their application. As we have already seen and as van Doorsaler (1995: 248) rightly puts it, “a translator does not always act logically in a rule-governed way, but can introduce justifiable and non-justifiable exceptions”. Prior to van Doorsaler’s assertion, Hermans (1991: 167) safely posited that “no translation of any size or substance follows one norm<sup>1</sup> only. In any case, as competing norms coexist and overlap, observing one norm may mean infringing on another”. Hermans (*ibid*) further adds that surely there can be a dominant norm and other less dominant or peripheral norms as well.

In fact, translation theorists are partly to blame since they have not advanced any coherent methodology whereby we can find the solution to every translation conundrum. It is probably not much of an overstatement to say that the literature on translation amounts to “a mass of uncoordinated statements” in the words of Wilss (1982: 11), a famous German translation scholar. Moreover, Gutt (2010: 2) deprecates the scientific study of translation because it has been “preoccupied for too long with debating unfruitful issues, such as whether translation should be literal or free, or whether translation is possible or not”.

So far, we have alluded to the indeterminacy of Quran translations as a specialized genre, which lends enormous support to Steiner’s generalization (1975: 295) that translation “is not a science, but an exact art”<sup>2</sup> and any translation is destined to contain imperfections attributable to translators’ ‘partial’ understanding. Our study supports some of descriptive translation

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<sup>1</sup> Norms are “guidelines, or even rules, which a translator needs to follow in order to produce an acceptable translation” (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997: 113). Common norms include adequacy and acceptability.

<sup>2</sup> Newmark (1995: 19) expresses a similar view; “In fact translation theory is neither a theory nor a science, but the body of knowledge that we have and have still to have about the process of translating”.



hypotheses such as the idea that in contrast to non-translated texts in the TL, comparable translated texts tend to be simpler (Palumbo 2009: 106-107). Manifestations of simplification which we have seen in our study are representative of Laviosa's (2002: 62) judgment that "the range of lexical variety is narrower in translational English" in comparison with non-translated texts. But as Palumbo (2009: 107) indicates, the untypical TL usage which we have seen sometimes runs counter to the idea of simplification. Our analysis does not irrevocably validate the conclusions reached by Ahmed (2018) (and to a lesser extent those of Al-Sahli 1996: 421) of the insignificant effects that cultural and religious orientations of some Quran translators can exert on 'translation accuracy'. Put differently the translator's native language or religious beliefs are not absolute precursors to the intelligibility of the TT or preservation of content information of the ST.

Some salient findings of this study are listed below:

1-For the most part, our selected translators have not been able to successfully replicate the more pronounced differences between near-synonymous divine names. This calls into question Newmark's contention (1995: 30) that "it is often possible to achieve closer interlingual than intralingual synonymy". As we have already seen, these distinctions between divine names have a lot to reveal about God's impeccable essence and are not just a rhetorical device or a mere embellishment. Newmark's statement (1995: 21) on authoritative texts may be of relevance here: "if the text is well written (i.e. the manner is as important as the matter, and all the words a vital component of the ideas), and/or if the SL writer is an acknowledged authority on his subject, the translator has to regard every nuance of the author's meaning (particularly, if it is subtle and difficult) as having precedence over the response of the reader". The translator of the Quran has to be acutely aware that he or she is both a translator and a commentator. This overrules Longfellow's stipulation that "the business of a translator is to report what the author says, not to explain what he means; that is the work of the commentator. What an author says and how he says it, that is the problem of the translator" (quoted in De Sua 1964).

2-Another important finding of this study is that it lends support to the view that one is unlikely to find matchable polysemous items between languages. We have seen how it is often inconceivable to find a single item in English that bears the same range of senses that a polysemous divine name has, hence the need to be selective. Where it is possible to find an interlingual match for a polysemous name, that equivalent represents a limited

number (usually two) of polysemic correspondences and usually involves a metaphorical sense in tandem with a literal one.

3- Polysemy may be exploited to advance interpretations or senses that can be deviant or misinformed as Asad has occasionally done.

4-We can fairly surely establish that literal translation has provided a safe haven for a considerable number of translators of the Quran to render God's names. Considering the sensitive nature of these names, for Quran translators, literal translation of God's names has been a safeguard against any misrepresentation of divine attributes. Where they depart from a literal translation it is usually because of the presence of established or recognized equivalents. Also, a likely cultural (usually biblical) equivalent can be a contributing factor in abandoning a literal match. Early translators of the Quran such as Pickthall and Ali are forthright about this, to the extent that Ali has to vindicate his (rather rare) non-literal choices stating (1937: v) "where I have departed from the literal translation to express the spirit of the original better in English, I have explained the literal meaning in the notes". In other words, literal translation is not something which should be recoiled from. Although recent translators of the Quran such as Abdel Haleem and Saheeh International have adopted a comparable literal orientation in their Quran translations, they have not made this explicit in their prefaces probably because of the significant stigma attached to the term. This bad reputation has been perpetuated by some critics branding some inaccuracies in translations as 'literal'. We have seen in this thesis some misinformed decisions that have resulted from nonliteral, allegorical, metaphorical or divergent interpretations. So literal senses (or the most common senses) are just as culpable as other non-literal readings or maneuvers.

5- Translators usually avoid literal (common or primary) senses if they have overtones of anthropomorphism or they do not tally with God's sublimity.

6-We have also seen in this thesis that some translators are averse or sensitive to wordiness chasing a mirage called 'structural fidelity' at the expense of 'lexical fidelity' which is a more worthy enterprise. These translators, typically Pickthall and Arberry, have occasionally escaped from greater prolixity and run headlong into greater obscurity. This is an impressionistic view and practical evidence based on TL native speakers' evaluation has suggested that a 'wordy' translation of the Quran can be the best translation from

among less ‘wordy’ alternatives (Al-Sahli 1996: 274). Al-Sahli (1996) concludes that by its very nature English tends to be more wordy as a TL than Arabic as a SL.

7- The influence of earlier translators on subsequent ones is conspicuous, which demonstrates a subtle desire for conformity. Particularly influential are many of Pickthall’s renditions (which may not be so forceful) since some subsequent translators may be hesitant to take a chance on innovative matches which may adulterate God’s exalted attributes.

## 7.2 Recommendations

Palumbo (2009: 9) points out significant changes in how translation as a practice is conceptualized. One of these shifts has been initiated by some scholars such as Tymoczko (2005) who is “re-examining translation as a practice, characterizing it as a group process (as in some non-Western theories) rather than the result of an individual endeavor”. Recently, Palumbo (2009: 9) has argued that translation is seen more as a collective effort than an individual undertaking. An overwhelming majority of Quran translations (totaling around 60) were done by individual translators despite target readers showing a preference for a Quran translation done by a team of translators, as discovered by Elimam (2017: 64). Also, the effect of translating into a speaker’s first language is inflated. Pokorn (2005: 119,122) puts the blame on Western translation theories which often stigmatize translating into a non-native language as ‘inferior’ despite the absence of empirical evidence to support this view. Similarly, Adab (2005: 227) argues that with the increasing adoption of English as a lingua franca and the different expectations of addressees, to insist on direct translation into the translator’s mother tongue is “unenforceable and impractical”. Rather we should encourage translators to make use of available technologies and revisions by native speakers or other second language speakers who are familiar with the culture and expectations of addressees so as to ensure acceptability (ibid 238-239). This is not intended to discredit or belittle the efforts of individual translators; as Larson (1998: 514) notes, a good translator should seek to improve the quality of their translation by soliciting help and welcoming criticism.

It seems reasonable here to quote the suggestions laid out by Al-Jabari (2008: 15), who proposes a three-stage framework for any future translation of the Quran which aims to avoid

the shortcomings and inaccuracies of earlier attempts. He suggests that Quran translation should adopt the spirit of teamwork, in the following manner:

- 1- The first stage must be carried out by a group of scholars headed by an exegete whose job is to interpret the meaning of the Quran to the translators. This is a vital stage since many translators who are not as qualified as Quran exegetes have to make subjective judgements about issues like different interpretations. Although Quran translators often declare that they have not engaged in any form of intervention (i.e. “a manipulation of the source text beyond what is linguistically necessary”, House 2008: 16), their personal choices typify a version of the TT occasionally influenced by some impressionistic tendencies. Ali has made a fleeting mention of this in his introduction (1937: v); “in translating the text I have aired no views of my own, but followed the received commentators. Where they differ among themselves, I have had to choose what appeared to me to be the most reasonable opinion from all points of view”.
- 2- The second stage should be carried out by a group headed by an Arabic native-speaker translator. This group is responsible for translating the meaning of the Quran into English according to the interpretation of the most authoritative Muslim exegetes.
- 3- At the third stage a native English scholar of translation who is an expert in Arabic heads a group of English scholars. This group is responsible for working on finding a natural sounding and easily comprehensible English text.

It is preferable, Larson (1998: 514) suggests, to enlist the help of some reviewers representing different sections of the target audience with varying degrees of education. Translators also need to benefit from certain developments in the field of translation such as the increasing reliance on language corpora to verify authentic usage especially if the translator is a non-specialist working in specialized domains or when he or she fears that a ST element may inadvertently have crept in (Palumbo 2009: 27).

Future translators of the Quran are encouraged to build on previous translations, but this, I believe, should not be done in the same manner as some recent translators have attempted. For example, it seems reasonable to assume that Abdel Haleem has benefitted a lot from Asad’s translation. Al-Hilali and Khan’s translation has also made use of Pickthall’s translation, as is reflected in their occasional word-for-word replication of Pickthall’s renditions.

I suggest that future translators benefit from websites that list different translations side by side and select the best version that: 1- is a passable substitute of the original Arabic, and

although it will never measure up to it at least salvages what can be salvaged; 2- reads well in the target language. It is better, I suspect, to have two versions for any future endeavors to translate the Quran. One would be an abridged version which is targeted at individuals seeking some sort of initiation into Islam or the Quran. This version should aim at brevity of expression with corresponding clarity of meaning. Many translation techniques such as explicitation, transliteration, and calque should be dispensed with. Rather, naturalness in expression (i.e. well-formedness, idiomaticity, acceptability and authenticity, cf. As-Safi and Ash-Sharifi 1997) should be the order of the day. Since the target reader is not likely to be attentive to detail, issues like polysemy and near-synonymy may not concern prospective readers.

The other version should be an elaborated version with a view to presenting the Quran to more initiated TL readers. This version should not deprive the readers of any piece of information that they need to process the text. Aldahesh (2022: 203) asserts that, ideally, Quran translators “should give maximum equivalence at all levels of meaning. When a tension emerges among them, the priority should be the informative level of meaning”, even if this leads to the employment of multiple translation techniques (couplets) which, ironically, has stood the test of time as being “the best practical way to compensate for the loss of meaning at the informative level and at the aesthetic and expressive levels” as well (ibid). In simplified terms, since translators have most likely consulted external sources to fully grasp the intended meanings, they should not deprive readers of the information which substantiates their understanding. It is unreasonable that they know that a certain ST concept is capable of denoting a number of senses and fail to impart this to prospective readers, who will, by being informed, better appreciate the plethora of senses the Quranic text intends to convey. While it may seem like overkill, a translator must cater for the various needs of his or her readership. Ideally, in the writing of a Quran translation a translator has to rely on books of tafsir (Quran exegeses) which provide the context for any translation, reliance on language alone potentially leading to a rigid, out of context translation (Lahmami 2016: 297). Translators should acquaint their readers with all possible interpretations provided that these purports are bound by the prophetic traditions and the statements of the righteous predecessors.

I will illustrate the difference between an abridged version and an elaborated version by using *الْحَكِيم* (Al-Hakīm), which is a common divine designation having a number of compatible interpretations: *المُحْكَم خَلَقَ الْأَشْيَاءَ* (the One Who perfected His creations), *المُصِيب فِي أَعْمَالِهِ* (He who is always right in His actions) *واسِعَ الْعِلْمِ وَالْمُطَّلِعَ عَلَى عَوَاقِبِ الْأُمُورِ* (all embracing in His knowledge, Who is acquainted with the outcome of all affairs), according to al-Bayhaqī (1401 AH: 59) and al-Saʿdī (cited in Al-ʿabd Al-Jabbār 2012: 183). The following is a suggestion of how the

translation of this name could appear in an abridged version contrasted with its interpretation in an elaborated version:

| (abridged version) ‘Al-Ḥakīm’ الْحَكِيم | (elaborated version) ‘Al-Ḥakīm’ الْحَكِيم  |
|---|--|
| The All-wise                            | Al-Hakeem (the All-wise, flawless in His actions, faultless in His creation and who has optimal knowledge) |

Considering the importance of God’s names in Muslim’s belief, future translators are advised to attach a comprehensive list of God’s names (e.g in the appendix) where they explain the names’ significance and include information which can be absent from the main body of the translation. We can use الْحَكِيم (Al-Ḥakīm) as an illustration. In the appendix translators can dwell on the benefits derived from the awareness of the different senses the divine name الْحَكِيم (Al-Ḥakīm) can bear. These benefits include full submission to God’s actions, decrees, commands, and prohibitions. Acquainted with the knowledge that God is All-wise, Who perfectly knows what is to the benefit of the believer and what is to his or her detriment, the reader then further appreciates God’s all-encompassing knowledge, total sovereignty, and infallible justice. These pieces of information are not implicit in the name itself but develop as a result of a deeper reflection on the name by making a direct link with other divine names and attributes.

Needless to say, imperfections and blemishes are bound to creep into a work of such magnitude such as Quran translation so translators, past and future, need not be put down as long as they do their homework. Translation critics are not asking for identity/sameness but rather they are demanding equivalence/approximation. Along these lines, Hatim and Mason (1993: 8) declare that “equivalence is the closest possible approximation of ST meaning” and Abdul-Raof (2001: 6), who has been engaged in a critical analysis of Quran translations, testifies to the same view arguing that approximation is the dominant criterion in translation studies.

### 7.3 Suggestions for Further Study

Based on the outcome of this study, here is a list of some proposals for further study:

- 1- Transparent names of places and people such as سِجِّين (‘sijjīn’, literally ‘imprisoned’), عِلِّيِّين (‘‘illiyīn’, literally ‘elevated place’) and أَبُو لَهَب (‘Abū Lahab’, literally ‘father of

flame’) are a good site for translation criticism. These names can be analyzed to see how Quran translators tackle them.

2- A comparative study can be done to investigate whether different types of readers of the Quran are passionate about becoming acquainted with the minute distinctions and the different senses of lexical items especially those relating to divine names. This can further add up to their understanding of the Quran and God’s attributes.

3- The translation of God’s names in the Quran can be contrasted with their translation in prophetic traditions (Hadiths), where translators seem to have more freedom and are less bound by formal considerations of grammatical structure and lexical choice.

4- Quranic concepts and lexical items that are of sensitive nature such as God’s attributes and culture-specific types of worship (such as ‘ṣalāh’ صلاة ‘prayer’, ‘zakāt’ زكاة ‘compulsory charity’ and ‘dīkr’ ذِكر ‘God’s remembrance’) can be studied to see whether translators have employed translation techniques comparable to the ones they made use of in rendering divine names.

5- This study can be replicated with translations of the Quran into other languages to establish whether the issues that translators of the Quran into English encounter are on a par with the ones faced by translators into other languages. Especially significant are languages such as Urdu and Indonesian spoken in predominantly Muslim countries.

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