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A Syntactic Analysis of the Rhetorical Questions in the Translation of Qur'anic Text

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

{ قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ }

[البقرة: 32]

Dedication

I thank God Almighty first and foremost for the great grace that He has bestowed upon me, to the owner of a fragrant biography and enlightened thought, for he had the first credit in attaining higher education (my beloved father), may God prolong his life. To those who set me on the path of life, and took care of me until I became old (my mother) ,For everyone who advised me, guided me, contributed or directed me in preparing this research and connecting me to the required references and sources at any of the stages it went through and I especially thank the distinguished professor: Prof. Dr. Qasim Abbas , for helping me Supporting me and guiding me with advice, education, correction.

1. INTRODUCTION

Translating the Qur'an text is one of the biggest challenges that translators face that translation is not merely replacing words of the SL by their equivalent in the TL because Arabic and English have different cultural heritage. In addition, the process of translation becomes heftier when the text has a sensitive nature like the Holy Qur'an. The field of rhetoric in the Qur'an text is a complicated area of investigation since performative utterances require special attention from the translator to convey their pragmatic meaning and intended effect. One of the types of performative utterances is rhetorical questions. Studying rhetorical questions in the Holy Qur'an is a very distinguished topic simply because few studies tackled this issue because of the sensitive nature of these questions. Rhetorical questions have the same form as ordinary questions, but they do not seek an answer. Also, they have more functions in Arabic than in English. Thus, some translators of the Qur'an text encounter linguistic challenges in translating the Qur'anic rhetorical questions into English. This study is a modest attempt to overcome the main linguistic challenges faced by some translators of the Qur'an text. This study investigates the linguistic challenges of translating the rhetorical questions encountered. This study derives its significance from the fact that English and Arabic are linguistically and culturally remote languages. There are few studies that tackled rhetorical questions in the Qur'an in English, and this study is significant since it compares the adequacy of the translations. Furthermore, this study uses a qualitative approach rather than quantitative and analyzes data in light of the linguistic approach. Thus, it fills a gap in the literature of translation studies (Catford, J. (1965). In order to fulfill the purpose of the study, the current study will attempt **to answer the following questions:**

1. What are the main functions of the rhetorical questions used in the Qur'an text?
2. What are the main challenges of translating Qur'anic rhetorical questions ?
3. What are the adequate strategies for translating the Qur'anic rhetorical questions?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Rhetorical Questions

Rhetorical question: is a question addressed to acquire an effect in the minds of the human beings rather than seeking an answer.”Linguists have presented many definitions for the rhetorical questions.Snell- Hornby (1974, p.727) defines the rhetorical question as one “asked for the sake of effect, to impress people, no answer being needed or expected.” Similarly, Ba’albaki (1992) Defines the rhetorical question as:(.787p”) “Rhetorical question: is a question addressed to acquire an effect in the minds of the human beings rather than seeking an answer.”Richards and Schmidt (2002, p.459) define the rhetorical question as “a forceful statement which has the form of aquestion but which does not expect an answer.” i.e., the rhetorical question is an interrogative structure but does not seek information. The speaker has some purpose in his mind, either to give a command or to make a statement indirectly. According to Yusef (2000), rhetorical questions in Arabic have the following fourteen meanings: (التعظيم والتهويل indicating ,impatience) ect. However, in English, questions can either be open or closed. It depends on the type of reply they expect. i.e., Yes/ No. According to Larson (1984), the speaker may resort to using the rhetorical questions in English to achieve one of the following purposes: to make a suggestion, to show rebuke, to emphasize, to introduce a new topic, to exhort, to show surprise, to invite, to show politeness or to criticize.define the rhetorical question as “a forceful statement which has the form of aquestion but which does not expect an answer.” i.e., the rhetorical question is an interrogative structure but does not seek information. The speaker has some purpose in his mind, either to give a command or to make a statement indirectly.

2.2 QUR'AN TRANSLATION

Catford (1965. p.20) defines translation as “the replacement of textual material in one language (source language) by equivalent textual material in another language (target language).” Similarly, Bell (1991. pp. 5-6) defines translation equivalence as “the expression in another language (or the target language) of what has been expressed in another, source language, preserving semantic and syntactic equivalence.” However, Snell-Hornby (1995) claims that Catford’s definition is too general because languages like English and Arabic are linguistically and culturally remote languages. At the macro level, i.e., text level. On the other hand, Koller (1995) mentions certain conditions to achieve equivalence. These conditions are historical-cultural conditions, linguistic- textual, and extralinguistic factors, including the language of the ST and stylistic and aesthetic contextual properties. In the case of the Qur’an text the target text may include new structural textual, and rhetorical features to produce an acceptable and effective translation in the TL. The main reasons behind the emergence of these features in the TL are the connotative meaning and the semantic voids of the original text (House, 1973). In addition, due to the sensitive nature of the text, Qur'an translation is a unique case of non-equivalence in intertextual translation (Lefevre, 1975). Thus, in order to create the same effect of the original text in the TL reader, the translator should accept a certain degree of loss in order to convey the message (Abdul-Raof, 2001).

There are two opinions regarding the translatability of the Holy Qur’an. The first opinion is that translators can transfer the meaning of the Qur’an text from Arabic into any foreign language. The second type of translation is that which produces another version of the Qur'an text in a foreign language, to be as an alternative of the Holy Qur'an. This type of Qur’an translation is rejected by all Muslim scholars since there is no complete and total equivalence for the Holy Qur’an at all levels (Al-Ghazali, 1991). The Latin language is the first European language that the Holy Qur’an translated into. It was done under the instruction of Petrus , Abbot of Clugny. However, the first Qur’an in the English language was Alexander Ross’s translation in 1648. There are many translations of the Holy Qur’an into English performed by Muslim and non-Muslim translators nowadays, such as Yusuf Ali, Taqi-u-din, Asad, Abedl Haleem (Muslims), Dawood, and Arberry (non- Muslims).

2.3 Empirical Studies

Mousa (1995) studies the translation of rhetorical questions from Arabic into English. The research data in her study is drawn from three primary sources: The Holy Qur'an, literary works, and daily newspapers. Mousa (1995) discusses the best approaches and strategies for translating rhetorical questions from Arabic into English. She points out that there is no best approach for translating the Arabic rhetoric since the Arabic language characteristics differ in many aspects from English ones. The translation of rhetorical questions depends on the type of the text, situational context, and the intuition of the translator. In addition, She suggests the eclectic approach to translate the rhetorical questions. She presents four primary levels to analyze the rhetorical questions. These levels are the syntactic level, the semantic level, the pragmatic level, and the aesthetic level. Mousa (1995) concludes that the majority of Qur'anic translators ignore these levels and focus on the denotative meaning (the dictionary meaning) rather than the connotative meaning (the shades of the meaning). the rhetorical question in Arabic differ from English due to the fact that English and Arabic are linguistically and culturally remote languages. In addition, translating the rhetorical question into English is a problematic issue since it has locutionary and illocutionary forces (speech act theory). Also, she finds out that the translator should have a good knowledge of the functions of the rhetorical questions in both languages. Similarly, Alnaeim (2015) finds out that the functions of the rhetorical question in Arabic are more complicated than English ones. In addition, she suggests some techniques in order to convey the adequate meaning of the rhetorical questions, such as using particles. In her study, Alnaeim (2015) focuses on the different functions of Arabic Qur'anic rhetorical questions and English ones and their impact on the translation of the Holy Qur'an. The sample of her study consists of ten Qur'anic rhetorical questions translated by Muhammad Taqui-ud-Din Al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsen Khan and collected by a qualitative approach from different Surahs. She uses Al- Tahreer wa Al- Tanweer interpretation for Ibn Ashoor to determine the function of each rhetorical question, and she analyzes data according to the pragmatic analysis. After reviewing the literature, the current study finds some gaps in the previous studies. Most of the studies conducted on the Qur'anic rhetorical questions use a quantitative method.

3. METHODOLOGY

This section explains the methodology followed in conducting the current study. It starts with a description of the data selected, followed by a description of data analysis and a theoretical framework.

Data Source and Sample of the Study The sample of this study consists of many Qur'anic rhetorical questions selected randomly from different Surahs in the Holy Qur'an translated by seven translators selected on the basis of directionality. i.e., whether they are native speakers like Abdel Haleem, Dawood, and Al-Hilali or non-native speakers like Ali, Rodwell, Arberry, and Pickthal and on the base of religion, i.e., whether they are Muslims like Ali, Al-Hilali, Pickthal, Abdel Haleem, and Rodwell or non-Muslims like Dawood and Arberry. Data is collected from different Surahs and verses of the Holy Qur'an as the following: Collecting a list of interrogative sentences that occur in the Holy Qur'an.

Classifying the interrogative sentences into genuine or rhetoric according to their purpose, whether seeking an answer or not. Determining the function of each rhetorical question by referring to Tafsir Al-Tabari, Tafsir Ibn- Katheer, and Tafsir Al- Zamakhshari. Selecting only fifteen rhetorical questions to analyze according to their pragmatic functions. **Data Analysis** In this study, the researchers followed the research process outlined below. After selecting the topic, five steps are involved in collecting and analyzing data. These are the following: Step1: Categorizing the selected rhetorical questions according to their pragmatic functions. Step2: Giving the translations of the verse translated by the seven translators according to their religion, starting with Muslim translators (Abdel Haleem, Yusuf Ali, Al-Hilali, and Pickthal), then non-Muslims (Rodwell,

Dawood, and Arberry). Step3: Analyzing these translations based on the linguistic approach. Step4: Assessing the adequacy of translations done by seven Qur'an translators. Step5: Determining the strategies used to achieve the pragmatic function in these questions.

Sample of rhetorical questions and their translations:

1 - قَالَ تَعَالَى (وَقَالُوا مَا هَذَا الرَّسُولُ يَأْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشِي فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ لَوْلَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ فَيَكُونُ مَعَهُ نَذِيرًا) .

TT : Yusuf Ali " And they say: ' What sort of a messenger is this, who eats food and walks through the streets?' (1990, p.1034).

-in this verse we have One of the secondary meanings of the rhetorical questions used in the Holy Qur'an is Exclamation. Although the exclamation is interrogative in form, it has a pragmatic meaning of exclamatory assertion (Al-Malik, 1995). It is used to express surprise, astonishment, or any other strong emotion

2-قال تعالى (فَهَلْ لَنَا مِنْ شَفْعَاءَ فَيُشَفِّعُو لَنَا).

TT: Yusuf Ali "Have we no intercessors now to intercede on our behalf?" (1990, p.413).

-in this verse we have the meaning of the rhetorical questions used in express the speaker's hope and the Holy Qur'an is Wishing. It is used to desire toward some situations that are different from those that exist

3-قال تعالى (أَفِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ أَمْ أُرْتَابُوا أَمْ يَخَافُونَ أَنْ يَحِيفَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَرَسُولَهُ بَلْ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ)

TT:Yusuf Ali" Is it that there is a disease in their hearts? or do they doubt, or are they in fear, that Allah and His Messenger will deal unjustly with them? Nay, it is they themselves who do wrong.

-The original style and language need to be taken into consideration on the part of the translator. Many aspects can be included in this respect: “ the author's conscious choice of words and their overtones, his structural devices, figures of speech, and such stylistic subtleties” (Ilyas, 1989:65).

4-قال تعالى (أَفَصْفَاكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِالْبَنِينَ وَاتَّخَذَ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنَاثًا إِنَّكُمْ لَتَقُولُونَ قَوْلًا عَظِيمًا)

TT:Yusuf Ali "Has then your Lord, (O pagans) preferred for you sons, and taken for himself from among the angles daughters?" (1990, p.788) .

-here we have One of the most important meanings of the rhetorical question is disaffirmation since it is used to express a refusal to grant the truth of a statement or such a thing.

5-قال تعالى (وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً)

TT: Yusuf Ali " And which Sibghah (religion) be better than Allah's? "

The difference between Source language and Target language in Qur'an translation is Translation of the Qur'an text has been a difficult topic for discussion and research by translators and research specialists because of its sacred status. The wording of the Qur'an is so precise that no word is out of place, redundant or used haphazardly in a way that serves no

purpose. Available translations of the Qur'an are often being judged as imprecise and looked at out of its context (ie, the Qur'an). To overcome this ambiguity in Qur'an translation, translators have adopted different strategies such as transliteration, explication, cultural substitution, and footnotes. Even though, available translations of the Qur'an have been critiqued by Muslim scholars and researchers at different degrees. Practically, translation of the Qur'an, being the Word of Allah, brings to the surface the limits of translatability. The wording, the structure, the rhetoric and lexical choices vary from the Qur'an Arabic to standard Arabic, let alone a foreign language. It is fair enough to bear in mind while performing a Qur'an translation that you are dealing with Allah's Words and not human also Metaphors (majaz in Arabic) are an important part of language style. In the Quran, they play a vital role in different interpretations of the Quran. The use of metaphors in Quranic verses may often cause semantic problems and varied interpretations for translation.

4 . ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This section is devoted to the findings of the selected Qur'anic rhetorical questions translated by seven translators, namely: Ali, Abdel Haleem, Rodwell, Arberry, Al-Hilali, Pickthal, and Dawood. The findings are presented according to the functions of these questions as determined by Tafsir Al-Tabari, Tafsir Ibn- Katheer. Then, they are followed by a discussion for each rhetorical question, including analyzing the translations and determining the best strategies to achieve the purpose of these questions.

Results

The analysis of data showed three functions of the rhetorical questions. These functions include :

A.Exclamation

One of the secondary meanings of the rhetorical questions used in the Holy Qur'an is Exclamation. Although the exclamation is interrogative in form, it has a pragmatic meaning of exclamatory assertion (Al-Malik, 1995). It is used to express surprise, astonishment, or any other strong emotion.

B. Wishing

the second meaning of the rhetorical questions used in the Holy Qur'an is Wishing. It is used to express the speaker's hope and desire toward some situations that are different from those that exist.

C. Disaffirmation

One of the most important meanings of the rhetorical question is disaffirmation since it is used to express a refusal to grant the truth of a statement or such a thing. The results of this study show that there is no best approach to translate the rhetorical questions in the Holy Qur'an. Thus, translators can use one of the two types of translation according to the linguistic approach: semantic or pragmatic. If the translators tend to use semantic translation, they have to use the strategy of elaboration and explication, whether by adding footnotes at the bottom of the page or paraphrasing within the text. On the other hand, if the translators tend to use the pragmatic translation, they have to use the conversion strategy. i.e., render a question into a statement .

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the data, the current study revealed that rhetorical questions have six main functions: which are exclamation, wishing, disaffirmation, giving a command, threatening and strong assertion, and this answered the first question of the study which is “What are the main functions of the rhetorical questions used in the Holy Qur’an?” Comparing the types of questions in Arabic with English ones answered the second question of the current study and showed that the main challenges of translating Quranic rhetorical questions are whether to render the rhetorical question into a question or into a statement, (i.e., whether to explicit what is implicit or not). In addition, the study focused on the best strategies to make these pragmatic meanings of the questions explicit. Regarding the third question, which is “What are the adequate strategies of translating the Qur’anic rhetorical questions?” the study pointed out that there are different strategies to translate them, such as the strategy of elaboration and explication, whether by adding footnotes at the bottom of the page or paraphrasing within the text. In conclusion, the current study has demonstrated that translating Qur’anic rhetorical questions into interrogative forms may not convey the illocutionary forces of the source text leading to misunderstanding. However, the results have shown that transferring the Arabic rhetorical questions into English ones may convey some and not all of the illocutionary forces that are embedded in them. Also, it has indicated that since the Holy Qur’an is considered the sea of rhetoric, the functions of Arabic rhetorical questions differ somehow from English ones. Thus, Qur’an translators should have good knowledge of the functions of rhetorical questions in English as well as in Arabic. Furthermore, the study has shown that the aforementioned translators tried to compensate for the translation loss by using different

strategies, such as explication and elaboration. It has also attributed these results to the sensitive nature of the Holy Qur’an and the difficulty in rendering the speech of Allah, which is full of rhetoric.

Rhetorical questions which are characterized by their question formation and non-questioning meaning are extensively used in English – let alone Arabic – with the purpose of serving as an indirect way of suggesting an idea that might be challenged if asserted directly. It is very helpful for the translator to have good knowledge of the functions of rhetorical questions

in English as well as Arabic in order to be able to transfer such functions from one language into the other successfully. Sometimes, question forms in the two languages do not necessarily match. If the receptor language does not use a specific question form to convey a specific function, a different and appropriate form will need to be used; so adjustments in such a case are inevitable. It is important to focus not only on the functions, but on the form of rhetorical questions as well. Different forms can have different secondary functions.

Special care and tremendous attention should be given when attempting to

translate the rhetorical questions which are enormously found in The Glorious Qur'an. Many intricate functions can be traced, and if not analyzed and treated with intensive carefulness may lead to introduce different notions than those originally intended.

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