The Retranslation of the Quran into English:
A Study of the Common Motivations behind 71 Retranslations

Ayman HADJ-YASIN[1]
Assistant Professor of Translation at Irbid National University (Jordan)
E-mail: a.yasin@inu.edu.jo

Abstract

The Qur'an has been translated and re-translated into English several times. A large number of studies have explored these translations from different points of view. However, exploring the motivations or justifications of retranslating this text into English has not received sufficient attention. This study aims to shed light on the most common motivations behind the retranslation of 71 Quran Translations in English by examining the paratextual materials of them, and provide specific interpretations of the statistical differences between these motivations in light of the conditions in which those translations were produced and received. The study showed that the most prominent motivations behind the re-translation of the Qur'an in English are respectively: bringing translation semantically closer to the Quran, raising the level of understanding the Quran in the target language, simplifying its language, providing a new reading of the text in the target language, and highlighting some of its content and stylistic features. These justifications or motivations have shaped the production, reproduction and reception of these retranslations in this language and should, it is argued, be understood in light of specific linguistic, historical and geopolitical transformations in the last two centuries, especially in the West. The study is divided into an overview, a literature review, data and methodology of the study, results of the study, a discussion of these results, and a conclusion.

Key terms: motivations of retranslation; paratextual materials; Quran Translation; retranslation.

الملخص

ترجم القرآن الكريم إلى اللغة الإنجليزية ترجمات عديدة. وقد ركز عدد كبير من الدراسات على جوانب مختلفة من هذه الترجمات، إلا أن دراسة الدوافع وراء إعادة ترجمة القرآن الكريم لم تحظ بالاهتمام الكافي حتى الآن. من هنا جاءت هذه الدراسة لتلقي الضوء على الدوافع والمسوغات التي لجأ إليها مترجمو القرآن إلى اللغة الإنجليزية في النصوص المحيطة (الملحقة) بتلك الترجمات من أجل تسويغ ترجماتهم الجديدة، مع تسليط الضوء على أكثر هذه الدوافع أو المسوغات شيوعا، وتقديم تفسيرات محددة لأي فروق إحصائية بينها في ضوء الظروف التي تم إنتاج تلك الترجمات فيها وظروف تلقيها في تلك اللغة. وقد أظهرت الدراسة أن أبرز مبررات إعادة ترجمة القرآن هي على الترتيب: الرغبة في تحقيق قدر أكبر من التكافؤ الدلالي مع النص المصدر، تقريب ذلك النص من أفهام متلقيه في تلك اللغة، ثم تسهيل الترجمة وتبسيطها، ثم تقديم قراءة جديدة له في اللغة الهدف، ثم إبراز جوانب محددة من محتواه وبعض ميزاته الأسلوبية وغيرها. وأوضحت الدراسة أن هذه التسويغات أو الدوافع ترتبط بتحولات لغوية وتاريخية وجيوسياسية محددة في العصر الحديث- ولاسيما في الغرب- أثرت في إنتاج تلك الترجمات وإعادة إنتاجها وفي طريقة تلقيها. وقد تكونت الدراسة من مقدمة عامة، ومراجعة للدراسات السابقة، ومادة الدراسة ومنهجيتها، ونتائج الدراسة، ومناقشة تلك النتائج، وخاتمة.

كلمات مفتاحية: دوافع إعادة الترجمة؛ النصوص المحيطة بالترجمة؛ ترجمات القرآن؛ إعادة الترجمة.

---

[1] Corresponding author: Ayman HADJ-YASIN, : a.yasin@inu.edu.jo.

Introduction

The Quran has been translated and retranslated into numerous languages in modern times, including English, which hosts the greatest number of Quran Translations. The first English translation of the Quran goes back to the 17th century when an Arabist known as Alexander Ross translated it using a Latin translation. The 19th century witnessed the emergence of three more translations by George Sale (1734), J. M. Rodwell (1861) and E. H. Palmer (1880). The 20th century saw a plethora of Quran translations since Muslims started to produce their own versions of the Quran in this language. However, most Quran Translations have been produced in the last two decades, which some writers attribute to the geopolitical environment following the 9/11 attacks (Faiq, 2019: 15).

More than 70 complete translations of the holy Quran have been produced in this language alone, which makes it an intriguing site of research. The question is why retranslating the Quran if the text was translated several times in this language before? This question can be approached by using one of the common theories of retranslation such as referring to the shortcomings in previous translations or the span of time between the first translations and the new translations or even the nature of the source text itself. A different approach is to identify the motivations behind those translations as presented by the agency of the translation themselves (e.g. the translator, the editor or the publisher) in the paratextual materials of those translations, which is the approach adopted by this study.

According to some researchers, there are more than 71 translations of the Quran in English alone (Yazid, 2019: 136). The exact number is not known, but if one excludes partial translations or 're-edited' translations of previous translations, I think the number given by Yazid is closer to truth. In this study, I examine the paratextual materials of 71 translations, unpacking the justifications of these retranslations as presented in the prefaces of these translations in order to fully comprehend the socio-cultural context of Quran Translations and the crucial role translators have played in re-producing this text in English.

1. Literature Review: Motivations of Retranslation

Retranslation is the process or the product of re-translating a text into the same language (Koskinen and Paloposki, 2010: 294). The main concern of the ongoing research on this phenomenon revolved around understanding the motivation of this phenomenon as well as the complex relationships between new translations (retranslations) on one hand, and the original text and first translation on the other hand. But this phenomenon is much more complex than some researchers have assumed, as it involves not only the relationships between texts (retranslations, previous translations, and the source text) or the socio-cultural and historical environment in which retranslations were produced, but also the agency of translation (the translator, the publisher, the translation patron). Any explanation of retranslation in terms of one explanation or theory deems to fail. (Song, 2012; Flotow, 2009; Venuti, 2004; Susam-Sarajeva 2003, Brownlie 2006, Hanna 2006). All of these elements should be considered as potential explanations for this phenomenon in order to fully comprehend it, but this does not preclude us from identifying a specific cause or motivation for the creation of a particular retranslation, or even a number of retranslations.

However, given the fact that retranslating a certain text is done for a reason, the justifications given by the agency of translation to justify the production of a new translation in the paratextual materials constitute a good starting point to explain and understand the production of these new translations. However, these justifications can themselves be understood or explained in light of specific events or facts pertaining to the socio-cultural and historical context of translation. The most common justifications or motivations of retranslation are:

First, according to Antione Berman (1992), retranslations aim to restore the defects of previous translations by bringing the translated text closer to the source language. This indicates that retranslation is an improvement process from one (re)translation to the next in the scenario when many translations of the same text coexist. This justification is very common among publishers or translators and has roots in the history and practices of translation. (Haj-Yassin, 2016: 66).

Second, retranslations are undertaken because earlier translations produced in a particular language are no longer relevant. Translations created in a specific period and location may eventually become unreadable or inaccessible for the next generation of readers who aspire for a new translation due to language changes with time (Pym, 1998: 82; Vanderschelden, 2000: 4-5).

Third, the source text itself can be referred to as being an explanation for the emergence of a new translation. This is in fact true when a new edition of the source text appears and triggers some translators or publishers to start a new translation to replace the earlier translation which was based on the old edition of the source text. This applies especially when the new edition is significantly different from the previous one. Additionally, some may argue that the complicated and rich nature of the original text may make it 'prone' to be repeatedly retranslated (Basalamah and Sadek, 2020: 18).

Five, the role of translation agency, and especially the translator's subjectivity, is a potential motivating factor for retranslation. (Haj-Yasin, *ibid*: 76). The translator may retranslate a text for apparently 'personal' reasons such as adoring it or having worked on it for some time. Other translators may decide to retranslate a specific text only to relate their name to a certain (prestigious) text…etc.

Six, readers are a vital source of inspiration for fresh translations of foreign literature. They no longer function as passive takers or consumers of texts; rather, they participate in the process of creating meanings and is able to identify and reassess newly created texts, including translations and retranslations. Therefore, for new translations to be accepted and the justifications provided by the translators who created them to be convinced, this requires that the retranslated works be recognized as new or different by the target readers (Venuti, 2004: 25).

Seven, the emergence of a new reading or interpretation of a certain text in the translating language may also lead to the emergence of a new translation of this text. This new interpretation may be placed at the level of the translator (the translator discovers or adopts this new reading) or the level of a certain group in the society (a religious group for example). The new translation aims to replace previous ones on the basis of providing readings with a new interpretation of the original text taken to be the 'proper' representation of that text in the translating language.

These reasons or motivations are only relatively distinct, because in fact they may, under certain circumstances, overlap. For example, a translator may decide to retranslate a certain text because a new audience, with new perspective and values, has occurred in the translating language and because he or she adopts the same perspective and values of the new audience. Thus, retranslation may be justified by one or more of the reasons listed above, and it is the translator or publisher who prioritizes one reason over the other.

Saying this, it can be argued that retranslation is not just a textual practice that follows a single path or goal, but rather a complex practice in which a network of factors and influences intersect at different levels to account for its emergence in different ways (Taivalkoski-Shilov, *ibid*: 62). But the role of the agency of translation, mainly translators, in justifying new translations is crucial.

Regarding the retranslation of Quran, researchers have focused in studying it on certain issues or use very limited data. For example, Yazid (2019) studied how ideology regulates the activity of Qur'an retranslations, examining the role of retranslation as an ideological tool against other competing translations with reference to certain translations, namely Hilali's and Khan's translation of the Quran into English (see for example, p: 136-140). Muwafi and Fareh (2021)

applied a Bourdieusian approach to understand Pickthall's translation of the Quran, showing how this translator succeeded in establishing his new translation textually and paratextually as the correct representation of the Quran, and challenging previous translations as being insufficient. These studies are useful but don't give a general outlook into the reasons or justifications used by the producers of the new translations of the Quran in English. The most relevant study to this research is Sema Külünk's study (2020). The researcher quantitatively and qualitatively analysed a considerable number of Quran retranslations into Turkish since the establishment of the new state of Turkey in 1923, trying to identify "respective social and political trajectories" behind these retranslations. He also tried to show how each translator strived to find a space for his/her translation using certain justifications such as appealing to the deficiency inherited in any translation of the Quran or claiming more intelligible Quran translations are needed in this language (*ibid*: 95).

There is thus a need for identifying and analysing the common motivations and justification behind the large number of retranslations of the Quran in English, as they appear in the paratextual materials of these retranslations. This field of research has not yet been explored in any comprehensive or depth way. The current study aspires to contribute to this area of research through exploring the motivations of undertaking the large number of retranslations in English as they present themselves in the paratextual materials of the translated texts, normally written by translators, but also editors and publishers. These materials include things such as translation's prefaces and notes.

2. Data and Methodology

As said before, this study focuses on the reasons or justifications given by the translators of the Quran to justify their translations into this language. The number of the translations analysed is 71, which is a very representative sample if we take into account the fact that the number of the translations of this text in this language does not exceeds 80, especially if one excluded partial and 're-editions' of previous translations. These Quran Translations were extracted mainly but not exclusively from a bibliographical study by Bruce Lawrence's well-known study *The Koran in English: a biography* (2017). Partial retranslations and wholly new editions of old ones have been excluded. There are very few translations which I failed to get access to, but this will not affect the results of this study in any significant way. The methodology developed here to approach the data of this study is descriptive, explanatory, and critical one. It starts with describing the translated texts and the materials related to them including the motivations of retranslation in each Quran Translation. It then moves to a higher step wherein certain interpretations or explanations are used to explain the frequency of these motivations. A limited place is then given within this perspective to evaluate statements or discourses made on the translated texts. This descriptive, explanatory and critical method draws on various tools and concepts in the work of Chesterman (2000, 2012), Hermans (1999), Venuti (1995, 1998, and 2013), Brownlie (2003b), and Song (2012), among others.

3. Results of the study

After examining the paratextual materials of 71 English translations of the Quran, and determining the motivations/reasons behind conducting them on the basis of the content of these translations' prefaces and publishers' promotional materials of the new translations, a table was created to reflect the frequency of citing these reasons or motivations in the paratextual materials of the new translation of the Quran in English:

Table 1: Frequency of the motivations of Quran Retranslations

Motivations of Quran Retranslation	Frequency of Citation
Semantic Accuracy	42
Stylistic equivalence	24
Increasing intelligibility	23
Readability or simplifying translation	34
Adopting a new reading or understanding of the original text	10
Nature of translation and/or nature of Quran Translation	3
Highlighting specific (scientific) features of the source text	4
Highlighting linguistic features of the text	1
Highlighting the different recitations in translation	1
Using translation to 'register' a new identity	1
Restoring previous Quran Translations' distorting framing of the Quran	1

4. Results Analysis

As shown in Table (1), justifying the retranslation of the Qur'an by appealing to producing an accurate text in terms of meaning was repeated in the paratextual materials of the English translations of the Qur'an 42 times. This reflects the fact that those translators regard "semantic accuracy" as their main purpose of undertaking these retranslations. They prioritize communicating the Quranic message to imitating the insuperable style of the Quran (repeated 24 ones). The reason for this is that the majority of Muslims who know no Arabic read the English translations of the Quran as an authoritative religious text, a practical guide to life and not as literary pieces of writing." (Halima: 124; Basalamah and Sadek, 2020: 18)). In fact, placing much attention on semantic accuracy in these translations comes in terms with a widely held conviction among Muslim translators and scholars that these translations are more akin to be 'interpretations' (exegetical translations) of the holy text than being a representation of that text in the target language. Some Muslim researchers went even one step further when they claimed that Quran Translations are no more than being renditions of only "some meanings of the Qurān" (Elimam, 2013: 175).

Another reason for the importance placed on semantic accuracy in justifying the undertaking of these retranslations of the Quran may be the need to prevent misinterpretations of the Quran's message. It seems the extent of the distortion that affected translations of the Holy Qur'an by non-Muslim Western translators apparently prompted Muslim scholars and translators to respond to that challenge by producing new translations of the Qur'an, especially in the English language. Those misrepresentations become more serious in a geopolitical situation highly marked by tensions and conflicts such as the one that we have had in the last few decades. According to some researchers, some of these misinterpretations have been exploited by terrorist groups in mobilizing and radicalizing young Muslims and justifying their violent actions against other groups (Al-Tarawneh, 2021: 104), and have negatively impacted Westerners' attitudes toward Islam and the Quran on several issues, including the status of women in Islam and relationship between Islam and violence (Al-Tarawneh, 2022). Translators and their patronage seem to have been engaging in combating misinterpretation and misrepresentations of Islam and Muslims through correcting distortions in previous translations of the Quran and this may explain why a considerable number of the translators of the Quran have prioritized meaning in translation over anything else.

Producing new Quran Translations to increase its intelligibility in the receiving language was repeated in the paratextual materials of the sample examined by this study 23 times (see Table (1)). Translators and their patrons seem to have done their utmost to help readers to make sense of the Quran, widely regarded in the West as difficult and, to some extent, vague. This fact comes in terms with a widely held belief among Muslim scholars today that Quran Translations should be viewed as an aid to enable readers to understand the message of the Quran. Readers who struggle to read and comprehend the original language or earlier translations are among the target audience of these retranslations.

The fact that some Western readers of the Quran have referred to what seems to be a vague order and disjointed topics of the suras of the Quran, and in some cases the verses within the same *sura*, might have also played a role in crafting the retranslation of this text in such a way that makes it easier to be understood and to respond to the claim of the 'disjointed' Quran in the West.

Table (1) also shows that producing new Quran Translations in English on the basis of readability ranks also high in the data of this study as this motivation was repeated 34 times in the paratextual materials of these retranslations. Readability in the context of translation means that the target text "has appropriateness in sentence construction" making it "[…] easily read and understood." (Fitriana, 2020: 265). So defined, readability and increasing the level of understanding the Quran in English are closely related to each other to the extent that it becomes difficult sometimes to distinguish them in the paratextual materials of the translators of the Quran.

In addition, producing easily read retranslations of the Quran reflects the impact of addressing new readers of the Quran in a language which is constantly changing. With this in mind, there is always a need for new translations of a canonical text such as the Quran to meet the needs of the new generations of readers through addressing them with the language and idioms related to them. Moreover, simplifying the translations of the Quran in English can be accounted for by the fact that these retranslations have been addressed to a wide and varied audience than religious officials, Quranic Studies scholars and researchers, historians of religion, translators and other interested professionals. This might have motivated the production of these new translations to address the new audience with its various backgrounds, especially laypeople who have little or no background on the Quran and Islam.

The aforementioned motivations, semantic accuracy (repeated 42 times), increasing intelligibility (repeated 23 times) and readability (repeated 34 times), has in fact shifted the concern from the distinctive form and effect of the Quran to its universal message (Basalamah and Sadekthis, *ibid*: 19).

Prioritizing meaning over style in these translations does not necessarily mean that Quranic style has been ignored, but rather relegated next to semantic accuracy, wherever there is a clash between them in translation. According to some researchers, the circumstances of the past few decades, particularly the impact of contemporary technology, which has essentially limited communication to the transmission of "information" over anything else, have shaped this primary interest in meaning over the poetic or artistic quality of foundational religious texts (Jasper, 1993: 1).

However, producing translations closer to the original text in terms of style is still important as a motivation and justification of the undertaking of the new translations of the Quran in English. Table (1) shows this motivation or justification was repeated in the paratextual materials of the data examined 24 times. The emphasis on producing new translations of the Quran in terms of meaning and style (stated 42 and 24 respectively) indicates how the form and content of the Quran is still seen by many as sacred and should be mimicked in translation as closely as possible, semantically, pragmatically, and stylistically.

The high frequency of producing English Quran translations on the basis of semantic accuracy and faithful style (both repeated 65 times) on one hand, and increasing intelligibility and accessibility of language (both repeated 49 times) clearly proves that the translators of the Quran in English

tried to strike a balance between the original text and language and the target language. This seems necessary because the acceptability of any new translation seems to depend not only on the change it allows (producing simpler and clearer translations), but also the continuation with the previous tradition of Quran Translation which has placed considerable attention on semantic accuracy and stylistic peculiarities.

It is also interesting that no new translation was undertaken because of the aging of previous translations (see Table (1)). The reason for this is, I think, clear: the span of time between one translation and the other, since the 19th century up to date, is very short (see Bruce Lawrence, 2017)

Table (1) shows that three translators used the principle of the complete untranslatability of the Qur'an as a justification for retranslating the Qur'an into English. A clear example is Tarif Al-Khalidi who elevated this principle into a mythological truth, arguing that "all translation is in essence a Sisyphean activity, inevitably falling short of perfection". (2008: 11). Another telling example is Ali Salami's translation of the Quran, which he published in 2016. Salami pointed out in the introduction to his translation that production of new translations, especially when it comes to a deep text such as the Qur'an, paves the way for ideal translations that surpass previous translations. (*ibid*: 2). This justification seems to be common in the field of Quran translation because the Qur'an is still full of rich meanings and subtle references that will inevitably lead to more translations. (Ali, 1998: 198).

Table (1) also shows that ten retranslations of the Quran in English were justified explicitly or implicitly by presenting a new reading of the holy book. To start with, Richard Bell's well-known translation of the Quran, published in 1937 under a significant title, *The Qur'an Translated with a Critical Rearrangement of the Surahs*, sought to present a new reading of the Quran, by rearranging its suras and at times even verses within *suras* to create a text which can function as a source to understand the Prophet's life and message.

Other retranslations are justified by 'modern' thought or 'progressive' agendas such as in the case of Bakhtiar's translation, *The Sublime Quran* (2007), which attempts to take a kind of a feminist perspective in translating the text, bringing "both men and women to equity so that the message of fairness and justice between the sexes can be accepted in Truth by both genders" (Bakhtiar 2007, xxi). Another similar example is the translation done by Edip Yuksel *et al* (2007: 10), *Quran: A Reformist Translation*, which seems to follow a seemingly pure Quranic interpretation in translating the Quran, and abandon the rigid preconceptions of all-male scholarly and political hierarchies that have shaped our understanding of the holy book. When translation is freed from these preconceptions, the Qur'an will appear to clearly convey, among other things, a message that includes freedom of belief, promoting equality between men and women, encouraging critical thought and the search for true knowledge, and questioning and even rejecting false authority (*ibid*: 11).

To this one can also add the translation by Safi Kaskas in 2016, which aims at producing a 'conciliatory' translation that can free the translated Quran from a dominant reading and biased toward non-Muslim. One example of this is his translation of the Quranic key verse on the topic of *jihad* against non-Muslims which the dominant translations translate as 'kill them wherever you find them', and Kaskas translates it as: "[If they start a fight] kill them wherever you find them, and expel them from wherever they expelled you". (Kaskas, 2016: 19).

But the clearest example of a translation that seeks to challenge the traditional understanding of Islam and especially the Quran is Sam Gerrans' translation published in 2016 under the title: *The Qura'n: a Complete Revelation*. This translation is concerned with giving a precise rendition of the Quran based on the Quran itself through investigating the core meanings of the Quranic words using lexicons, pan-textual and detailed analysis (Gerrans, 2016: xx-xxii), in addition to basing

his translation on modern critical or revisionist readings of the history and content of the Quran and the emergence of early Islam.

In contrast to these progressive or independent readings, the translation by Hilali and Khan (1996) and the translation of Amatullah Bantle *et al*, known as *Saheeh International* (1997), were both produced to solidify a certain ideology: the Wahhabi (Salafi) ideology despite being presented under the justification of doing justice to the original text. These two retranslations highlight the role of retranslation as an ideological tool, which have been sometimes used to legitimizes power relations through making the voice of a certain religious establishment (the Wahhabi kingdom) more visible in translation (Yazid, 2019: 137).

The translation of the Quran by Usama Dakdok (2009), a convert Christian from Islam, is obviously motivated by polemic agendas against Islam rooted in the hostile atmosphere toward Islam in the United States after 9/11 in the States. Dakdok repeats in his introduction to his translation the most common criticisms and misconceptions about the Quran in traditional orientalist discourse, and maintains in translation the dominant understanding of key words and verses in the Quran in such a way that makes the book appear aggressive, exclusivist and intolerant.

Furthermore, the undertaking of the translation of Sami Aldeeb (2016), published under the title *The Koran: Arabic text with the English translation*, was justified by offering a new reading of the Quran. His translation was promoted as being chronologically ordered according to the Azhar, an authority for Sunni Muslims, with reference to Jewish and Christian writings, textual variations, abrogations...etc. According to the translator, the new translation allows, due to its chronological order, to easily understand the sequence of the revelations which brought Islam into existence (: 6). However, the framing of the introduction of this translation is clearly critical toward the Quran, seeing it as an old text significantly and obviously in contradiction with modern thought and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Throughout his translation, Aldeeb notifies the reader within the translated text or the footnotes about all kinds of what he contends as 'gabs' and 'errors' in the original text.

The translation by Arthur Droge (2013) was also inspired by a new reading of the original text. Driven by 'academic' or 'scholarly' reasons, this new translation is considered to be a clear critical work of scholarship and is widely regarded as one of the best translations available to date. It brings together various Muslims and non-Muslims in translation and reveals passages of the text that have been the focus of modern Western Qur'anic scholarships. It is an effort to make available all the significant historical and linguistic knowledge which bears on the interpretation of the Quran in modern critical Western research. However, the tone of the translation is 'academic' and open-minded.

Although Shakir's and Serwar's translations of the Quran are generally seen as following the Shite reading of the Quran, in contrast to the dominant Sunni translations, it is only the translation of the Quran of Mir Ahmed Ali, published first in 1988, that resorts clearly to the Shite interpretation of the Quran as the main motivation for conducting a new English translation of this holy book (Ali, 1988/2020: 22). His translation is not only shaped by the traditions of Shite sources, but also following it in the commentary notes throughout the whole translation.

Four translators, as shown in Table (1), justified the undertaking of new retranslations of the Qur'an by the fact that they wanted to highlight the presence of scientific discoveries in this text. The clearest example is without doubt the translation by Rashad Khalifa in 1981, who infused his translation with what he took to be 'mathematical' truths in the Quranic verses. Rashad contends that the Quran has complex geometrical values of its Arabic letters and verses, reflecting this claim in the way he chooses the English words in translation.

Khalifa's translation, and the other three similar ones, disclose something important about the context of Quran Translations in English, because given "its perceived function as the main point of reference in the modern world", science is used here not only to "support specific

interpretations", but also "to "prove" the wisdom behind Qurʾānic rules" (Pink, 2006: 485). Those translators of the Quran seem to use this strategy to respond to the needs and curiosity of modern readers whose lives are highly affected by science and its huge impact on modern societies. This motivation tells us more about the new context of the translation of the Quran in English than about the content of the Quran itself, indicating one of the most enduring challenges that Muslim translators of the Quran in English have been trying to deal with in the 20th century.

Only two translators justified their undertaking of a new translation of the Quran in English by a desire to highlight other respects of the Quran. To start with, Ali Quli Qara'I's translation, which he published under the title *The Qur'an with an English Paraphrase* (2003) aims to provide an access to the Quran, using a formal equivalence approach, wherein each phrase of the translation stands exactly for the corresponding Arabic phrase. Likewise, a group of translators published a new translation of the Quran online in 2020 under the title *Bridges Foundation Translation* to highlight grammatical shifts between the source and target text and the various 'recitations' in the new translation of the Quran.

Table (1) shows one translation to be motivated mainly by the translator's intention to create a new translation to register a new identity. The reference here is to Sher Ali's Translation of the Quran, published in 1955, which was an effort to mark the split from the Ahmadiyya's movement through producing a new translation to replace the previous one produced and used by the other group or sect.

Finally, the translation by Muhammad Ali, published in 1916, was clearly justified by restoring the distorting framing of previous translations of the Quran. Although some translators of the Quran in English allude to this motivation in the prefaces of their translations of the Quran, they did this in such a way that can hardly be seen as a motivation for retranslation.

4.1. Final Remarks

The justification of the new translations of the Quran in English are sometimes reflected clearly in the title of the translation. When the focus is on creating a modern translation shaped by contemporary thought we find titles such as *The Qur'an: A Translation for the 21st Century* (Adil Salahi, 2019); when the motivation behind the new translation is to produce a clear translation we find titles such as *The Quran: The Final Book of God—A Clear English Translation of the Glorious Quran* (Peachy and al-Johani, 2012); when the focus is on simplifying translation we find titles such as Tahir Kiani's translation titled *The Easy Quran: A translation in simple English*; when the focus is on creating a text with a specific reading we find titles such as *The Quran: a Reformist Translation* by Edip Yuksel *et al* (2007); *The Qur'an Translated with a Critical Rearrangement of the Surahs* by Richard Bell (1937); and *The Quran: a Contemporary Understanding* by Safi Kaskas (2014). This is logical given the fact that translations' title are parts of the external framing of the translated text.

Almost all the prefaces' examined by this study include sections on the justification of the new translation. This fact clearly shows the importance of ensuring the acceptability of these new translations of the Quran through giving a convincing justification of the new translation. Any translation of the Quran should, as one researcher claimed, "presuppose its importance for the community of faith, for those who hold the canonical treatment of the text as authoritative for faith and practice." (Halima, *ibid*: 124). Some translators even show clearer understanding of the problematic situation of creating a new translation when good translations already existed in the target language. This is very clear for example in the introduction of Tarif Al-Khalidi's and Adil Salahi's translations of the Quran, published consecutively in 2008 and 2019. Referring to the new translations of the Quran, Ahmed Ali, an Indian translator of the Quran in English, states that every Quran Translation must carry within it something that distinguishes it from all previous

translations. (Ali, 1988/2020: 19). Even very early retranslations of the Quran in English sought to justify their new translations of the Quran in the paratextual materials. An example of this is the well-known translation by Yousef Ali (1934) who pointed out that the question *why a new Quran Translation* is legitimate, urging readers to compare any part of his translation with other translations, claiming that if they found that his translation has slightly helped them understand the meaning of that part, or presenting it in a way that approximates its beauty and greatness, then his humble attempt had achieved its objective. (*ibid*: iii)

It is significant how almost all justifications given for generating new translations of the Quran into English pertain to the receiving language (e.g. making the text clearer in translation, highlighting its 'scientific' respects, simplifying the language of translation). The only exception is in those cases where few translations were also justified by the nature of the text itself (e.g. its deep meaning and unique style). This clearly proves the huge impact of the context of translation on shaping the production and reception of the Quran in modern times.

Most retranslations appeared during the second half of the 20th century. This observation can be accounted for by the fact that after World War II, there was a noticeable increase in efforts to make the Quran available in various languages, primarily driven by a specific theological motivation: to translate and explain the meaning of the Quran at the same time. As a result, the number of translations done by Muslims surpassed those done by non-Muslims. In addition to two important factors, the first is the need for making the Quran accessible for Muslim emigrants in other countries, especially in the West, and the intensification of Islamic missionary efforts worldwide (Bobzin, 2006: 343).

The retranslation of the Quran into English reveals something important about its new context since the 19th century onwards. Although it is possible that the defense of the translation of the Qur'an and the increasing number of Quran Translations in English can be seen as part of the need to support its conversion or as a response to some competing orientalist translations (trying to present an unfavourable image of Islam), the fact is that it presents a new challenge to Muslims living in the age of globalization and information: reading, interpretation and the challenge of democratizing understanding through translation. (Basalamah, S. and Sadek, J. (2020: 18)

Conclusion

It could be said in conclusion that the production of a Quran translation that is semantically correct and easily read and understood is the most common motivation behind selecting this text to be retranslated into English. Other motivations or justifications include bringing translation's style closer to the original text, re-reading it following a specific interpretation (progressive, sectarian, polemic and scholarly), and highlighting specific features of the original in translation such as its 'scientific' respects. Correcting previous mistakes in earlier translation and the aging of previous translation were shown to be almost absent from the list of the motivations of the new translation of the Quran in English.

The findings of this study seem to suggest that the Quran is still a foundational text whose meaning is important to a large number of readers, hence the constant translation and retranslation of the text in English and other major languages. The study also showed that new academic trends and socio-religious needs necessitate new ways of interpreting the Quran, and that retranslations exist in the case of the Quran because they give its readership the occasion to read an original work in the light of a new language, situation and culture.

More research on the Quran retranslation is still needed, especially in other major languages in order to shed more light on the motivations behind undertaking new Quran Translations, the context in which they were produced, and their textual and socio-cultural effects.

Bibliography

Ali, Muhammad. (1998). *Measuring and Weighing Terms in the Qur'an: Their Meaning with Reference to Six English Translations*. (PhD theses, Durham University). Available at Durham E-Theses Online: http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/1057

Al-Tarawneh, A. (2021). 'The Role of Quran Translations in Radicalizing Muslims in the West and Misrepresenting Islam'. 102 *Journal of Religion and Violence*, 9 (1): 2021. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351409099_The_Role_of_Quran_Translations_in_Radicalizing_Muslims_in_the_West_and_Misrepresenting_Islam

Al-Tarawneh, A. (2022). 'Combating the Misrepresentation of Women in Quran Translations: Translational interventions'. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 23 (1): 71-83. https://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2713&context=jiws

Basalamah, S. and Sadek, J. (2020). Debates around the translation of the Qur'an: between jurisprudence and translation studies. In S. Hanna, Hanem El- Farahaty and Abdel- Wahab Khalifa (eds.). *The Routledge Handbook of Arabic Translation*, p: 9-26. London: Routledge.

Berman, Antoine. (1992). *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany*, (S. Heyvaert, Trans.). Albany & New York: State University of New York Press.

Bobzin. H. (2006). Translations of the Quran. In Jane D. McAuliffe (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, 340-358. Leiden: Brill.

Brownlie, S. (2006). 'Retranslation and Narration Theory'. *Across Languages and Cultures*, 7 (2): 145-170. https://akjournals.com/view/journals/084/7/2/article-p145.xml

Elimam, A. S. (2013). *Marked Word Order in the Quran and Its English Translations*. London: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Faiq, Said. (2019). *Arabic Translation Across Discourses*. Milton Park: Taylor & Francis.

Fitriana, E. (2020). 'Quality of Liz's Expressive Utterances in Eat Pray Love Movie Based on the Techniques Applied'. In D. Djatmika *et al* (Eds), *Proceedings of the First International Conference on Communication*, 235-266. Italy: AIE Publishing,

Flotow, L. v. (2009). 'This Time "the Translation is Beautiful, Smooth, and True": Theorizing Retranslation with the Help of Beauvoir'. *French Literature Series*, 36(1): 35-49. file:///C:/Users/Lenovo/Downloads/9789042026490-B9789042026490-s004.pdf

Haj-Yasin, A. (2016). *Al-Munqidh mina al-Ḍalāl in English with Special Focus on Retranslation*. [Unpublished PhD thesis, Salford University, United Kingdom].

Halimah, A. (2014). 'Translation of the Holy Quran: A Call for Standardization'. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*. 5(1): 122-133.

Hanna, Sameh. (2006). *Towards a Sociology of Drama Translation: A Bourdieusian Perspective on Translations of Shakespeare's Great Tragedies in Egypt*. [Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, University of Manchester, United Kingdom].

Hassen, Rim (2018). 'From a Slave to a Translator: Conficts and Mediation in Fatma-Zaïda's Translation of the Quran'. In D. Roig-Sanz & R. Meylaerts (eds.) *Literary Translation and Cultural Mediators in 'Peripheral' Cultures Customs Officers or Smugglers*, 211-234. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Interpretation of the meanings of the Noble Quran (Muhammad Al-hilali and Muhsin Khan, Trans.) (1996). Saudi Arabia: King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Quran.

Jasper, D. (1993). 'Introduction: The Painful Business of Bridging the Gap'. In David Jasper (ed.), *Translating Religious Texts*, 1-4. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.

Koskinen, K. & Paloposki, O. (2010). 'Retranslation'. In Yves Gambier & Luc Van Doorslaer (Eds.) *Handbook of Translation Studies* (1): 294-298. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.

Lawrence, B. (2017). *The Koran in English: a biography*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Muwafi, D. and Fareh, S. (2021). 'Translation as a Social Activity: Towards a Bourdieusian Understanding of Pickthall's Translation of the Quran'. *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies* (IJAES). 21(2): 65-84.

Pink, J. (2006). Modern and Contemporary Interpretation of the Qurʾān. In Andrew Rippin & Jawid Mojaddedi (eds.) *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to the Qurʾān,* 479-492. 2-edition. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Pym, A. (1998). *Method in Translation History*. Manchester: St. Jerome.

Song, Z. (2012). The Art of War in retranslating Sun Tzu using cultural capital to outmatch the competition. *Translation and interpreting studies*, 7(2):176-190.

Susam-Sarajeva, Ş. (2003). Multiple-entry visa to travelling theory: retranslations of literary and cultural theories. *Target*, 15(1): 1-36.

Taivalkoski-Shilov, K. (2015). A character's and (re)translators' voices in six Finnish retranslations of Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe. *Target* 27(1): 58–7

The Holy Qur'an: the Final Testament Arabic Text, with English Translation and Commentary. (Mir Ali, Trans.). (1988/2020). Eighth edition. New York: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Inc.

The Koran: Arabic text with the English translation in chronological order according to the Azhar. (Sami Aldeeb, Trans.). (2016). Switzerland: The Centre of Arab and Islamic Law.

The Generous Quran. (Usama Dakdok, Trans.). (2009). Marble Hill: Usama Dakdok Publishing, LLC.

The Magnificent Qur'an. (Ali Salami, Trans.). (2016). Miraj Publishing and Distribution.

The Meanings of the Holy Quran. (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Trans.). (1934).). Delhi: Kutub Khana Ishayatul.

The Qur'an: A Complete Revelation. (Sam Gerrans, Trans). (2016). Chicago: Quranite.

The Qur'an: An English Translation. (Ali Quli Qara'I, Trans.) (2003). California: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

The Qura'n: a Contemporary Understanding. (Safi Kaskas, Trans.). (2014). Virginia: Bridges for Reconciliation.

The Quran: a Reformist Translation. (Edib Yuksel, et al, Trans) (2007). London: Brainbow Press.

The Quran: The Final Book of God—A Clear English Translation of the Glorious Quran. (David Peachy, & Muhammad Al-Johani, Trans.) *(2012).* Durban: World Assembly of Muslim Youth.

The Qur'an: A New Translation. (Tarif Al-Khalidi, Trans.). (2008). London: Penguin.

Vanderschelden, I. (2000). Why Retranslate the French Classics? The Impact of Retranslation on Quality. In M. Salama-Carr (Ed.), *On Translating French Literature and Film II*, 271-293. Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V.

Venuti, L. (2004). Retranslation: the Creation of Values. *Bucknell Review*, 47(1): 25-38.

Yazid, Haroun. (2019). Translation as an Ideological Mechanism: A Study of Ideology and Interpellation in English Translations of the Qur'an. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Durham University, United Kingdom.

Conflict of Interest

How to cite this article according to the APA: