

## **The English Translation of the Quranic Text: The Structural Asymmetries**

**Yahya Dkhissi**

English Department Studies

Chouaib Doukkali University, El Jadida, Morocco

### **Abstract**

The structural patterns that results from the translation of the Quran are some of the issues that have been widely studied (El-imam, 2013; Al-Amri, 2015). The current study, however, illustrates the pervasive syntactic asymmetries in the syntactic output of the translated Quranic text into English. Most translators shift from the word order in Arabic to word order in English to establish a grammatical equivalence between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) with little consideration of the syntactic typological significance of Arabic as a source language and English as a target one. This study aims to determine the mismatch of the grammatical functions and the syntactic typology of TL vis-à-vis ST. Word order, tense shift, case asymmetry, Ellipsis, passive structures, selectional restrictions and cross formations are some of the grammatical issues that illustrate the syntactic asymmetries in the English translation adopted in this paper. The findings show that different grammatical categories exhibit syntactic asymmetries that would distort the implications or exegesis of the original ST. The findings also suggest that the English version of the translation adopted in this paper needs to be structured according to Chomsky's (1981) principles and parameters demonstrated by the Arabic structure before the translation task is carried out.

**Key words:** grammatical categories, quranic translation, structural typology, syntactic asymmetry

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## 1. Introduction

As the word of Allah, the wholly Quran is esteemed to be the most prestigious religious book which has never been subject to structural, stylistic or rhetoric alterations or distortions. The different translations of the Quranic text have demonstrated that it is a difficult task from its very inception and the very aim of its revelation might not be achieved. Transmitted to the prophet Muhammad in Classical Arabic makes the Quranic translation of the Source Text (ST) into a Target Text (TT) result in a variety of linguistic problems that need to be carefully studied and analysed with respect to the current concepts and approaches in morphology and syntax.

The objective of the present paper is to explain the morphological and syntactic mismatch of ST and TT namely as flexible versus strict word order respectively. Thus, this study shows that a translator needs to be aware of the universal principles and the parametric patterns of ST and TT to provide a closer exegesis of the ST. The major claim is that the morpho-syntactic structure delimits the interpretation of the ayahs in their communicative-contextual framework.

This study sets out to answer the following research questions with respect to the linguistic marked patterns of Quranic Arabic:

1. Why would the Quran be untranslatable?
2. Does Classical Arabic make the Quran an unmarked case for translation?
3. What morphological and syntactic losses does the English translation exhibit?
4. Are the syntactic asymmetries of the English Quranic translation a delimiting issue to consider?
5. How would a grammatical analysis help the Quran's translator?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. The Quranic translations: a brief history

The translation of the Quranic text started with the message sent as a form of letters by the Prophet Muhammad to the governors of neighbouring nations calling on them formally to embrace Islam. Given the variety of languages used by these neighbouring tribes, the messengers could not transmit the text written originally in Arabic but in the native language of the recipients of the message. Salman Al-Farsi was the first to translate the meaning of Sourat of Al FatiHa to Persian. 'Amr ibn Ummayyah translated some verses 'Ayahs ' about Jesus Christ and his mother Mary to the Negus, the king of Abyssinia (Yahaghi, 2002; Abou Sheishaa, 2001; İhsanoğlu, 1986 (as cited in Al Amri 2015)). As Islam spread beyond the boundaries of Arabia, Muslim scholars started teaching the principles of Islam to non-Arabic-speaking audiences. İhsanoğlu (1986) states that "there is Syriac translations made by non-Muslims, in the second part of the first century AH [7th AD]." Besides a translation of the Quran into Berber, which dates back to 127 AH, the Quran was translated into Persian and Indian in the period 961-976 AD, while the Quranic translation into Chinese is assumed to be carried out about 713 AD (Abou Sheishaa, 2001; İhsanoğlu, 1986). Early translations of the Quran into European languages were carried out based on some translations that were partially important for some priests who were studying Islam for missionary reasons.

Following the lines in El imam (2013), the first full translation of the Quran into English dates back to 1648; while in the 19th and 20th centuries, orientalist such as Henry Palmer (1980), Richard Bell (1937), and Arberry (1955) translated the Quran into English. Muslims, on the other hand, have felt the need to produce faithful translations into English and other European languages by the early 1900s (Kidwai, 2007; Mohammed, 2005; Ali, 2002: I-10). Translations were carried out by Mohammad Khan (1905), M. M. Pickthall (1930), Ali (1934-37, and recently by Abdel Haleem (2004). Indeed, the Arabs' interest in translation became a religious and political issue in time of Caliph Haroun Al-Rashid, who appreciated the work translators do. Recently, Abdel Haleem's (2008) translation was produced in an era, which features a growing interest in the Quran in the West. According to Kidwai (2007), the number of editions of translations of the Quran rose from 296 in 1980 to 890 in 2002 for different reasons. Some recent events, for example, 9/11 and the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq, by the American-backed forces have drawn more attention to the power of the Quran and its reader's thoughts.

## 2.2. Previous accounts

According to the literature, a translation of the Quran is a mere attempt to remain as close as possible to the text in order to produce not the exact text but a periphrastic copy of it. Thus, Burman (1998: 713) writes that literalism conveys "more of the feel and shape of the Quran." Various studies have mentioned the linguistic and stylistic problems of translating the Quran and the limits of the literal translatability of the Quranic text (Abdul-Raof, 2004; Lawindi, 2001). Abdul-Raof (2005) focuses on the translation of Quranic cultural references or its stylistic features, while Ali (1992) refers to the Quranic ellipted structures and the prepositional phrases. The literature on Quran translation has not engaged with a systematic comparison of the output of different translators dealing with the same linguistic feature in the same target language (TL), nor examined the issue of the translator's style. Meanwhile, syntactic issues and grammatical asymmetries, as the most distinctive aspects of Quranic style, have received little systematic attention from scholars interested in syntactic problems relating to the translation of the Quran.

The research carried out so far has tried to examine the syntactic difficulties that the translator might encounter and would probably cause a loss of the meanings in the original ST. For instance, Omer (2017) aims to examine equivalence with respect to the grammatical aspects that save the translator from occurring in semantic loss of the intended meaning of verbal similarities in the Quran. El-imam (2013) refers to some of the grammatical aspects like sentence order shift while stressing the function of backgrounding or foregrounding parts of the sentence in the Quran. Among the examples, he cited, is the placement of the object before the verb to function in exclusivity as in Sourat Al-FaatiHa (The opening): (A: 5):

(1)

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

*Thee only we serve; to Thee alone we pray for succour.*

Undoubtedly, the typological and morpho-syntactic differences among languages cause many syntactic asymmetries. Tense is an obvious syntactic problem that every translator encounters in the process of translation given that the use of tense in Quran is guided by contextual considerations. For example, the Arabic past tense can have different significances depending on the context where it occurs. Sadiq (2010) gives the following verse from Sourat Annisaa (The Women) (A: 113):

(2)

وَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا لَمْ تَكُن تَعْلَمُ وَكَانَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ عَظِيمًا

*God has revealed to you the Scripture and wisdom, and has taught you what you did not know. God's goodness towards you is great.*

"كان" 'past form of the verb to be' does not refer to the past time in (2), rather it indicates a general fact about the favour that Allah gives to men as always great. In these auxiliary constructions, two ST inflected verbs in (2) are found "تَكُنْ تَعْلَمُ" 'you did not know', and both are carrying finite Tense and Agreement as opposed to TT where the auxiliary is inflected. Word order is another aspect that varies from one language to another. Abdul-Raof (2004) shows semantic loss because of the inability of the translator to maintain the same order of ST in TT. For example, in Sourat An-Nur (The Light) (A: 2):

(3)

الزَّانِيَةُ وَالزَّانِي فَاجْلِدُوا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا مِائَةَ جَلْدَةٍ

*The adulteress and the adulterer whip each one of them a hundred lashes*

The term 'adulteress' in (3) is clefted before the term 'adultery' the fact which denotes that the action is more on adultery excluding the possibility of rape. Al-Samraai (2006) proposes emphasis (التوكيد) as another device that differs from Arabic to English. He explained that emphasis in Arabic occurs in three ways: through repetition, synonyms or using certain words such as "لام" and "فَذُ". These words do not have their exact equivalents in English, which may result in a syntactic asymmetry and therefore partial loss in meaning.

Duality is another problematic area that is challenging in the Quranic text translation. Duality does not exist in English while Arabic has specific pronouns and morphemes for it. English uses second and third persons to render the words "هما" "and" "أنتما" the fact which may lead to semantic loss in Quran, as exemplified in the following verse from Sourat Yusuf (A: 25).

(4)

وَأَسْتَبَقَا الْبَابَ وَقَدَّتْ قَمِيصَهُ مِنْ دُبُرٍ وَأَلْفَيَا سَيِّدَهَا لَدَا الْبَابِ

*As they raced towards the door, she tore his shirt from behind. At the door, they ran into her husband.*

In the verse the "ا" /aa/ in "أَسْتَبَقَا" 'raced' and "أَلْفَيَا" 'ran into' is a long vowel used to indicate duality, referring to "Yusuf" and the woman. However, since there is no dual form in English,

the translator makes recourse to the English plural pronoun ‘they’, which may not transmit the same message since only two participants are acknowledged.

Similarly, Abdelaal and Rashid (2016) discuss the grammatical losses that occur in the English translation of the Quran and the extent these losses cause semantic loss. They briefly investigate that loss in syntactic order (foregrounding or backgrounding some categories which create structural shift) may distort the meaning partially or completely. In the same line of research, Klaudy (2012) distinguishes between two types of word order shifts optional and obligatory. She claimed that obligatory word order shift occurs due to the linguistic necessity to get a grammatical correct TT sentence, while the optional one occurs to preserve the communicative structure.

In addition to word order shifts, tense shift was the major concern of Salman’s (2010) work. After a review of tenses in English and Arabic, Salman concluded that tense shift occurs due to many linguistic circumstances. In his study, Salman identified two types of translation shifts, level shifts and category shifts. Sub-types of each level of shifts were exposed, surveying three translations of the Quranic text including Ali’s, Shakir’s, and Pickthall’s where four types of translation shifts were listed in terms of their frequency in the three translations involved in the study.

Another type of shift is the translation shift. According to Hatim and Munday (2004), translation shift is “the small linguistic changes that occur between the source text and the target text” (p. 26). Shift is the change in form when translated from one language to another to attain a linguistic equivalence between the target text and the source text. In the same line of research, Chesterman (2009) considers the translation shift model to be a comparative model of translation. Chesterman assumes that these types of models “show the translations in relation to other texts and are based on contrastive research” (2009, p. 7). Rezvani and Nouraey (2014) investigate the frequencies of different types of translation shifts that occur in translations from Arabic into English in seven translations of the Quran without examining the accuracy of texts after the translation shift occurs.

### 3. The grammatical properties of the Quranic text

#### 3.1. The language of the Quran

A major issue that we will discuss in this paper is concerned with the structural mismatch of the English translation of Quran is the nature of ST that is written in a more flexible classical Quranic Arabic. As the literal word of God, the Quran is mostly an eloquent text and the translators of the text cannot expect to produce a translation that substitutes for the Quran. The Quranic structures are so selective in that Arab grammarians categorize the structure of their language as Quranic Arabic and non-Quranic Arabic (Mustapha, 1998). The Quran itself enhances this fact where it states that God has chosen Arabic as a medium of discourse as in Sourat Al Baqara (The Heifer) (A: 2) and Sourat Ash-Shuaraa (The Poets) (A: 195), respectively:

(5)

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْءَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

“We have revealed it in Arabic Quran, so that you may understand”.

(6)

بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ  
"In a clear Arabic tongue".

### 3.2. The marked word orders of the Quranic text

Word order typology is the study of the syntactic order of the constituents of a sentence in a given language. Greenberg (1963) classifies word order patterns where Subject (S), Verb (V) and Object (O) display three main classifications: SVO, VSO, and SOV; though this classification is limited to certain syntactic cases. According to Greenberg (1963), different languages have different word orders but only one word order is dominant in each language. As a Semitic language, Arabic has a relatively free word order that varied from SVO (the nominal sentence) to VSO (the verbal sentence) in affirmative sentences. According to traditional Arab grammarians, VSO is the normal syntactic word order in Arabic; while in generative grammar, VSO is the basic word order and SVO is derived after subject movement.

Hoffmann (2004, p. 42) assumes that word order in the Quran "betrays an implicit topical hierarchy, in which important Subjects, Allah being the most prominent, seem to have a higher rate of Subject-Verb order than should be expected in a language where the Verb-Subject order generally dominates." Therefore, the SOV word order is a marked word order since it highlights the subject, while the VSO order refers to the unmarked word order. The nominal sentence (SVO) is composed of the two parts: the subject refers to "Mubtada?" and the second part is the predicate "khabar". The subject can be either a noun or a pronoun, while the predicate can be a noun, a pronoun, a nominal sentence, a verbal sentence or a prepositional sentence. The verbal sentence is composed of three parts. It starts with a verb followed by the subject (agent) followed by the object (theme), which can be followed by other complements (locatives and other adverbials).

Words (not only nouns as in English) in Arabic are assigned overt case markers that allow word order variation. Therefore, the meaning does not depend completely on the position of words in the sentence in Arabic, but rather on case marking and morphemes. The following example illustrates that case marking can identify the subject and the object even though the word order is inverted. Consider this example from Sourat Fater (Originator) (A: 23):

(7)

أَيُّمًا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ  
From among His servants, the learned fear God.

The subject takes the last position in terms of lowering given the importance of the action indexed by the verb rather than the agent that has undertaken lowering deriving therefore a marked VOS order. In the same vein, a verse from Sourat Al-Baqara (A: 255) shows how the bound morpheme in (8) inverts the word order of the sentence given that the subject "سِنَّةٌ" i.e. "slumber" is lowered while the object (ب) is raised.

(8)

لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ  
Neither slumber overtakes Him, nor sleep

This kind of structural shift illustrates clearly the mismatch of the English translation of ST regarding its structure. The negative form is, contrary to TT, a tensed category that indexes a present tense but a permanent situation. Another syntactic principle that stands out as an indicator of grammatical loss and inaccuracy in translation as in Sourat Al-Araf (The elevated places) (A: 20):

- (9) *فَوَسَّوَسَ لَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ*  
*Then Satan whispered to them*

With respect to theta role assignment, the word order in (9) is presumably VOS (in ST) according to which it assigns agency to the action of the Satan; while in TT translation, the structural shift to SVO assigns the agency to the subject. This structural shift creates a partial loss in the meaning of the Quranic ST. In English, the noun phrase is the basic part of the simple sentence which should satisfy the requirement of the Extended Projection Principle advocated in generative grammar and which recommends that every sentence should have a subject. Unlike Semitic sentences where this requirement is optional in terms of the pro-drop parameter where pro (nominal) is an empty non-anaphoric pronominal element, which might receive case, and is recoverable in feature specification by means of inflection of the verb (Chomsky, 1981; Fassi Fehri, 1993; Jalabneh, 2007).

With respect to the syntactic power of the Quran, the flexible Arabic word order requires the translators' caution since it has subtle meanings. In Arabic, the nominative SVO sentence and the verbal VSO sentence can be inverted, either to raise (highlight) or lower (downplay) some elements in the text for a specific stylistic purpose. Consider the two following two verses indicating SVO and VSO respectively: Al A'raf (The Elevations) (A: 2) and An-Naml (The Ant) (A: 68):

- (10) *كُتِبَ أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ فَلَا يَكُنْ فِي صَدْرِكَ حَرَجٌ مِنْهُ لِتُنذِرَ بِهِ وَذِكْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ*  
*A Scripture was revealed to you, so let there be no anxiety in your heart because of it. You are to warn with it-and a reminder for the believers*

- (11) *لَقَدْ وَعَدْنَا نَحْنُ وَآبَاؤَنَا هَذَا مِنْ قَبْلُ*  
*We were promised this before our ancestors and us.*

In (10), Allah addresses the characterizations of non-believers in the previous verses; therefore, the subject is clefted to the TOP position deriving a nominal sentence. In the second verse, however, Allah addresses his promises to the non-believers using a verbal movement to TOP position given the focus on the promise rather than the promised.

This structural shift is also expressed in terms of splitting a compound subject of a VSO structure, consider the following example from Sourat Al-Baqara (The Heifer) (A: 127):

- (12) *وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ*  
*As Abraham raises the foundations of the House, together with Ismail*

‘Abraham’ and ‘Ismail’ both are the doers of the action of foundation, but ‘Ismail’ is lowered in the hierarchy of the sentence to show the importance of ‘Abraham’. This compound subject split in ST, though partially respected in TT, does not yield the same implication. The subject ‘Ismail’ retains its overt morphological case in ST but loses it in TT along with its function as an object of the preposition.

#### 4. Structural asymmetries

##### 4.1. Tenses

Tenses in Arabic or in the Holy Quran cannot be conveyed literally. In some cases, they need to shift to convey the intended meaning to the target audience. Tense is an obvious syntactic problem that translators usually encounter in translating the Holy Quran. Tense refers to the ‘grammatical realisation of location in time’ and how location in time can be expressed in language (Sadiq 2010: 20). In translating the Holy Quran, tense and verb form should be guided by the overall context and by stylistic considerations, as in Sourat Al-aHzaab (A: 10) and Al-israa (A: 88) respectively:

- (13) *إِذْ جَاءُوكُم مِّن فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنكُمْ وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ الْأَبْصَارُ وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظُّنُونَا*  
*When they came upon you, from above you, and from beneath you; and the eyes became dazed, the hearts reached the throats, and you harboured doubts about God.*

In (13), tense in ST is unreal in that it does not take time as a real correspondence but operates according to some interpretive contextual functions. Tense and aspect are often combined in that aspectual differences and time relations are expressed through these two categories. While tense is concerned with locating an event in time, aspect takes account of the temporal distribution of an event as complete or non-complete, momentary or continuous. In the same vein, Nouns that are not inflected for tense correspond to permanent situations in the Quran while verbs are inflected for tense and do correspond to temporal ones. However, in the following English translation, only verbs occur instead, Sourat Younous (A: 62):

- (14) *أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ*  
*Unquestionably, God's friends have nothing to fear, nor shall they grieve.*

Notice that in (14) instead of the word ‘fear’, the word ‘grief’ is used to refer to this temporary feature of the verb ‘to grieve’ rather than ‘to fear’ which also might be permanent in terms of time as exemplified also in the following verse from Sourat Tawba (repentance) (A: 40):

- (15) *إِذْ هُمَا فِي الْغَارِ إِذْ يَقُولُ لِصَاحِبِهِ لَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَنَا*  
*when they were in the cave. He said to his friend, "Do not worry, God is with us."*

##### 4.2. Structural case

The translation of the Quranic text might result in asymmetric structural patterns. For instance, Chomsky (1981) and Fassi Fehri (1993) assume structural nominative case assignment to be licensed if it is governed by Tense, accusative case is licensed by the verb and genitive case is

licensed by a preposition. However, if we consider the following Quranic verses from Sourat Annabaa (the event) (A: 21) and Asha-SharH (the soothing) (A: 6), a marked asymmetric case assignment is highlighted in the English translated text.

(16)

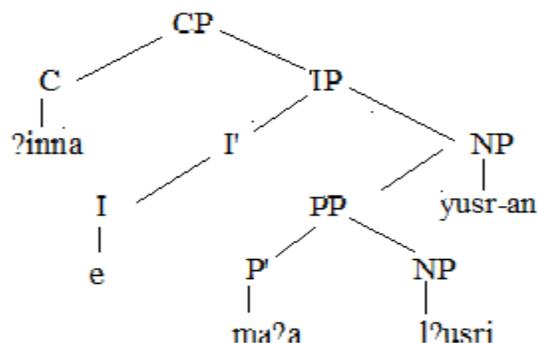
إِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ كَانَتْ مِرْصَادًا  
*Hell is lying in ambush.*

(17)

إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا  
*With hardship comes ease.*

In (16), the subject surfaces with accusative case assigned by the complementizer ‘?inna’. However, the case assigned to the subject in the English version is nominative. (17) is in fact problematic because the case-marked Noun Phrase (NP) is not linearly adjacent to the complementizer. Assuming that NP is extraposed from a Spec of the prepositional phrase [Spec P'] to some higher position in the sentence, the question is how high it raises in the hierarchy of the sentence, especially for the purposes of case assignment. In line with Fassi Fehri (Ibid), we might assume that the subject would be located in an adjoined position to I (Inflection), as in the following diagram:

(18)



At this level, two main questions are at issue: first, what happens in Quranic SVO sentences? Second, why do subjects in the Quran do not behave like SVO subjects in English, which receive only nominative case, and are not accessible to external governors like the complementizer? A reasonable answer would be to think that the matrix verb first discharges its case on the AGR(ement) heading the sentence, and that the subject inherits this case from AGR via Spec-Head transmission. If this is true, then the fact that such structures are possible in ST but not TT is explained by the parametric asymmetry of their word orders.

#### 4.3.Passives

Passive structures behave syntactically according to the word order and categorical features of the verb. Khalil, A (1989) has found out that out of a total number of 18,181 verbs used in the

Quran only 957 have the passive verb forms (5,3%) including agentive or agentless passives. Consider these verses from Sourat Aḏ-ḏaariaat (the spreaders) (A: 9-10):

(19)

يُؤْفَكُ عَنْهُ مَنْ أُفِكَ

*Averted from it is he who is averted. (agentless/subjectless)*

(20)

قُتِلَ الْخَرَّاطُونَ

*Perish the imposters. (Agentless)*

According to Generative theory, Semitic structures constitute a parametric variation that operates against the major principles of Generative Grammar. A parameter is a variant principle that is set to a neutral or unmarked value in the core of Generative Grammar, and then upon exposure to input of a specific language, the parameter is set to the value permitted in that language. However, a principle is an invariant principle that is universally invariant cross-linguistically and allows little variation.

With regard to the Quranic passive structures in (19) and (20), the incorporation of the subject and accusative case absorption principles advocated in Principles and Parameters theory (Chomsky, 1986) seem to be respected in the examples above. However, the deletion of the subject in TT "Perish the imposters" does not obey the structural requirement of a grammatical subject. In the example below, the word "الْمُؤْمِنُونَ" the 'believers' is part of the compound subject 'the prophet and the believers' and it has been extraposed to satisfy the end-weight principle. Consider Sourat Al-baqara (The Heifer) (A: 285):

(21)

امَنَّ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ

*The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, as did the believers.*

*They all have believed in God, and His angels.*

The marked output of TT is that the structural asymmetry results in a semantic loss. A categorical shift occurs in that 'His angels' will function not as a subject as in ST but as part of the compound object of the preposition 'in'.

#### 4.4. Selectional restrictions

Selectional restrictions refer to the semantic restrictions and grammatical sub-categorization limitations that a word imposes on the environment in which it occurs. The selectional restrictions in ST are not binding, the sub-categorization frame of the verb is not satisfied, and therefore both a syntactic asymmetry and a semantic loss in TT occur. Consider Sourat Al kahf (The Cave) (A: 11):

(22)

فَصَرَبْنَا عَلَىٰ آذَانِهِمْ فِي الْكَهْفِ سِنِينَ عَدَدًا

*Then we sealed their ears in the cave for a number of years.*

"Sealing ears" is used as a strong description of impeding the act of hearing of the people in the cave. In (22), the Noun phrase "سِنِينَ عَدَدًا" (a number of years) is postposed and seems to function as the object of sealing too; however, the selections restrictions of the verb in English version

does not allow such use. Consider also the following example from Sourat Arrahmane (the compassionate): (A: 1-2-3-4) where the subject is a unique ayah (verse) and does not select any verb:

(23)

الرَّحْمَنُ	The Compassionate. → → 1 aya
عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ	Has taught the Quran. → → (no overt subject)
خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ	He created man. → → taught and created (unreal past)
عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ	And taught him clear expression.

(23) is a special case of Quranic Arabic structural patterns. "الرَّحْمَنُ" 'the compassionate' is used as a simple sentence and there an independent ayah of the Quran. This marked use indicates that the requirement of a subject and a predicate to constitute a simple sentence is not satisfied. The second and third ayahs are null subject sentences. The non-overt realization of the subject underlines the marked selectional restrictions of the sentence in Quranic Arabic.

#### 4.5. The Coordinate Conjunction

The coordinate conjunction is used in English to coordinate words, phrases and clauses. In ST however, the particle "و" serves the interpretive functions of verses, be it promise, warning, capitalisation, discourse functions, or else structural functions among 21 different linguistic functions. This particle can also be analysed in terms of its deletion as displayed in Al kahf (the cave) (A: 22):

(24) سَيَقُولُونَ ثَلَاثَةً رَّابِعُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ خَمْسَةً سَادِسُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ رَجْمًا بِالْغَيْبِ وَيَقُولُونَ سَبْعَةً وَثَامِنُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ  
*They will say, "Three, and their fourth being their dog." and they will say, "Five, and their sixth being their dog," guessing at the unknown. And they will say, "Seven, and their eighth being their dog."*

The main issue to underline in the translation of the verse above is the syntactic loss demonstrated by the loss of meaning; while the coordinate conjunction is not displayed the third clause in the ST, indicating that the following statement is the correct interpretation. However, the grammatical function of the coordinating conjunction in TT fails to transmit the same message in the Quran.

#### 4.6. Ellipsis

Ellipsis refers to the omission of some parts of a sentence that can be understood either from the surrounding text or from the situation itself. In the translation of the Holy Quran, due to the way English uses ellipsis, it is sometimes necessary to add the elided words (which usually appear in brackets) to complete a sentence in the translation. The Quranic language highlights

a variety of examples of ellipsis. Consider For example Sourat Az-zukhruf (Decorations) (A: 89):

- (25) *وَسئَلِ الْقَرْيَةَ الَّتِي كُنَّا فِيهَا وَالْعَيْرَ الَّتِي أَقْبَلْنَا فِيهَا وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ*  
*Ask the town where we were, and the caravan in which we came. We are being truthful."*

In (25), there is a marked deletion or ellipsis of the word (people). The complete sentence can be formed as " *وَسئَلِ أَهْلَ الْقَرْيَةِ* " (ask the people in the town). The drop of the direct object indicates that two items are disregarded in ST. First, the componential analysis that takes into consideration some obligatory semantic features of the direct object is not satisfied. Second, the selectional restrictions of the transitive verb 'ask' require a direct object selected according to the first requirement. Another marked example of elision is in Sourat Youssef (A: 55):

- (26) *قَالَ اجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلِيمٌ*  
*He said, "Put me responsible for of the storehouses of the land; I am honest and knowledgeable."*

In (26), the object complement (responsible) is dropped in ST but is recovered in the rest of the clause as a predicate nominal phrase. Another structural asymmetric evidence of ellipsis of the subject and the verb as well in ST as opposed to TT comes from Sourat Houd (A: 84):

- (27) *وَإِلَى مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا*  
*And to Median we sent their brother Shuaib.*

However ellipsis may result in a syntactic asymmetry in terms of elision of the copula " *هُوَ* " 'him' as in the following examples from Sourat Al ġankabout (The Spider) (A: 26) and Al Baqara (The Heifer) ( A: 209):

- (28) *فَأَمَّنَ لَهُ لُوطٌ وَقَالَ إِنِّي مُهَاجِرٌ إِلَى رَبِّي إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ*  
*Then Lot believed in him, and said, "I am emigrating to my Lord. He is the Noble, the Wise."*

- (29) *فَإِنْ زَلَلْتُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْكُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ فَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ*  
*But if you slip after the proofs have come to you, know that God is Powerful and Wise.*

The copula in Quranic Arabic has a different syntactic behaviour from its English counterpart. The copula " *هُوَ* " inflects for tense and indicates comparison as in (29). However, its elision in ST, contrary to the English version where an auxiliary occurs instead, means that it is an implicit tensed form, which indicates a permanent present situation.

#### 4.7.Definiteness : Grammatical functions

As a semantic feature of noun phrases distinguishing referents that are identifiable in a given context from those that are not, definiteness also indicates in this paper a specific syntactic and

categorical shift. Indefiniteness in (30) refers to the message of commitment to the right path without any reference to the agent (Allah), while definiteness refers to a potential non-committing wish from normal believers to be on the right path as in (31). Sourat Az-zukhruf (Decorations) (A: 43) as opposite to Sourat Al-faatiHa (A: 2) respectively:

(30)

فَأَسْتَمْسِكْ بِالَّذِي أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ عَلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

*So adhere to what is revealed to you. You are upon a straight path.*

(31)

أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

*Guide us to the straight path.*

The syntactic asymmetry in terms of definiteness refers to the grammatical functions restructured by definiteness. These grammatical functions may be illustrated with regard to comparison of the following examples from Al Baqara (The Heifer) (A: 126) and Ibrahim (A: 35) respectively:

(32)

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلَدًا آمِنًا وَارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ

When Abraham said, "O My Lord, (would you) make this a peaceful land, and provide its people with fruits

(33)

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا الْبَلَدَ آمِنًا وَاجْنُبْنِي وَبَنِيَّ أَنْ نَعْبُدَ الْأَصْنَامَ

Recall that Abraham said, "O my Lord, make this land peaceful, and keep me and my sons from worshipping idols.

The grammatical functions of the demonstrative "هَذَا" 'this' changes from direct object followed by an object complement NP in (32) to a mere demonstrative followed by an NP composed of a head noun and an adjective in (33).

#### 4.8. Cross Formation : Causativity and transitivity

Cross-formation is a morphological rule in which both word-schemas in the correspondence exhibit a constant phonological element. Cross-formations are in no way unusual or uncommon. Consider the pairs of words in the following verses: Mohammad (A: 20):

(34)

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَتْ سُورَةٌ فَإِذَا أُنزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ مُحْكَمَةٌ وَذُكِرَ فِيهَا الْقِتَالُ

*Those who believe say, "If only a chapter is sent down." Yet when a decisive chapter is sent down, and fighting is mentioned in it,*

The use of transitive verbs as opposed to changing situations verbs would end up with different grammatical functions in terms of transitivity and causativity. Evidence for this difference is as follows: the use of "نَزَّلَتْ" 'send down' instead of the derived form "أَنْزَلْتُ" is related to the use of the causative form of "nazzala" 'send down' with reference to the gradual revelation and specific context. However, contrary to TT where a unique equivalence 'send down' is provided in(35) and (36), "anzala" is used only when the Quran is sent down as one unit for believers, as exemplified in Sourat Al-Israa (The night journey) (A: 106):

(35)

وَقُرْءَانًا فَرَقْنَاهُ لِتَقْرَأَهُ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلَى مُكْتَبٍ وَنَزَّلْنَاهُ تَنْزِيلًا

A Quran that we unfolded gradually, that you may recite to the people over time. And We revealed it in stages.

Al Qadr (Decree) (A: 1):

(36)

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ

We sent it down on the Night of Decree.

### 5. How to minimize the structural asymmetry?

Given the parametric variations demonstrated in Quranic Arabic, the Quran seems to be a marked case in terms of grammatical functions and syntactic structures. In this paper, many syntactic issues have been considered not only to underline the asymmetries of the available English translations of the Quran but also to uncover the parametric issues that constitute the core of the Quranic translation. According to Hume (2011), this state of markedness widely manifested in the Quran is ascribable to the its very nature as it carries the characteristics of the Quranic structure as complex, unpredictable, language specific and perceptually strong.

The marked language use stands out because it takes place as exceptional language patterns. In general, marked use of language is more complex than the unmarked one. As a syntactic variable, markedness can be present at any level of language ranging from the word and its changing grammatical function in the sentence, to the clause as a dependant or independent part of the meaning of the sentence, and finally the level of sentence structure. The whole of the Quran is marked and culminated in its inimitability, known as "Icjaaz al-Quran" [i.e. the miraculous nature of the Quran].

We suggest in this paper that the translator needs to decide on the effectiveness of the translation work of an unmarked text like the Quran after going through a syntactic analysis of the parametric variations that induce the Quranic text markedness. This proposal will take the linguistic background as a fundamental requirement for a translation of the ST. given that linguistics is the core of translation; the translator-linguist complementarity is a reality that should be handled for the sake of an authentic translation of the morpho-syntactic, semantic and communicative aspects of the Quranic text.

## 6. Conclusion

The translation of the words of Allah faces many morphological, syntactic and semantic challenges. This state of affairs is linked to the marked nature of the language of the wholly Quran i.e. Classical Arabic. This Quranic language has been shown to demonstrate specific linguistic features that either have no equivalence in the target language or is displayed differently. The syntactic asymmetries in the English translation of the Quranic text have been shown to be parametric and therefore need to be reduced with regard to its causes. Thus, the need for the syntactic analysis as a foregrounding step before any translation endeavour is a necessary requirement to fulfil the ultimate aim of the Quranic translation: the authentic transfer of the meanings and exegesis of the ST. The analysis adopted in this paper is syntactic but essentially grammatical-semantic related. The syntactic asymmetries like tense shift, selectional restrictions and passives among others explain the parametric variation that that should be considered in a way to serve as a background for the translation of the Quranic Arabic text into English or any other language to help providing an authentic transfer of the meanings and interpretations of the sacred Quranic text.

### About the author:

**Dkhissi Yahya** is a professor of the English Language and Linguistics at the University Chouaib Doukkali, El Jadida, Morocco. He is also a teacher of Business English at ESITH Casablanca. He is a member of the ALCS lab and the head of the applied language studies research group. The main research fields he is interested in are syntax, translation, language teaching. ORCID ID/ <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7694-5148>

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