



Concealment of postposing phenomenon and its' effect upon the semantic of the text

Ali and Khan' translation of the meanings of the Holy Qura'n (A case study)

Abstract

The structure of the sentence semantically depends on the word order within it. (Al-Jurjani:1992) This study detects the word order within the semi identical pairs of verse in the Holy Qura'n. the limitations of the study are Khan' 1996 and Ali' 1989 through their attempts to render the verses under postposing and preposing phenomenon. The verses under study are thoroughly selected to be mistranslated. And the other verses under the same phenomenon that were rendered correctly were excluded from the research since no need for further discussion. The result of this research is that the translator should pay attention to the word order in Arabic language in general and Qura'nic verses in specific, otherwise his target text wouldn't be a faithful reflect of the source text. Further studies should be achieved in the field of semantic and rhetorical language of the Holy Qura'n.

DOI Number:10.14704/nq.2022.20.8.NQ44439

NeuroQuantology 2022; 20(8): 4079-4087

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Discussion

The phenomenon under discussion pertains to the foregrounding of certain parts of a sentence as opposed to keep backgrounding them in. one should agree with Abdelwali (2007) that "word order is semantically motivated and there are communicative goals to be achieved"

Interpreters of the meanings of the Holy Qur'an give their own viewpoint of why such foregrounding occurs. The present study tackles this issue by giving examples, the interpretations, the translations and whether these translations have captured the difference between a pair of verses, one of which has the foregrounding and the other not. Where the translation doesn't reflect the difference between the original two verses, the researcher tries to give an alternative translation. The approach of cognitive semantics considers semantics to be both meaning constructions as well as knowledge representations." (Al-qadi and Nasir: 2022)

eISSN1303-5150

Linguistics plays a significant role in excelling in differences, similarities, and varieties in both written and spoken forms of language acquisition, change and standardization of languages. Translation, as an aspect of linguistics, has caused this process of researching to go beyond that to the extra lingual factor of commodification and unification, cultural cognition, diversity, as well as academic knowledge. Cary (1959: 43) states that translation plays an important role in discovery and exploration. That means, it uncovers matters/issues from a variety of cultures, from a country to another country, from a language to another language and from age to another age i.e. from civilization to another. This means that translation plays a primary role in the evolution and spread of religions and literature altogether. Gambier (1995: 232-4) adds to that by stressing on the role of translators in attracting different cultures, values, and so innovating aesthetic values.

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These claims do not show translation as a substitution but as the soul of cross-fertilization, available in the hybridity of cultures. Translation has been brought up to be a basic partition of linguistics pointed out by Wilss (1982: 11) who emphasizes that the significance of translation in the acts of human communication has developed it to be one of the most important branches of linguistics. On another note, Munday (2001: 17) proposes that translation in the era of Twentieth-century offers abundant thanks and gratitude to Holmes for his assistance in bridging the gap between theory and practice in the field of translation. That is, the result of his effort turned translation out from classical operations to be in new approaches that describe meaning scientifically and “put together systematic taxonomies of translation phenomena” (Ibid: 29).

Translation research is not of one type but of fundamentally three types. Holmes (2000: 172-185): theoretical translation, descriptive translation, and applied translation. Type one (theoretical) concentrates on the explanation and prophesy of translation phenomena to lay down general principles. Type two (descriptive) concentrates on comparative studies focusing on textual phenomena and translatability. Type three, (applied translation), works to apply theories and principles of translation on the processed text to determine the loyalty and sincerity of the translator in the processed text. The research is to be attempted here can be set to be primarily applied in nature

The limitation of the verses under study are Khan 1996 and Ali 1989 interpretation is the interpretation to be examined to figure out whether the succeeded in reflecting the meaning meant by Allah taking into consideration the figurative language imbedded within the foregrounding and backgrounding (word order) within the Qur'anic verses.

Western scholars assert that “surface and word order are among the most important

features that have to be taken into consideration in respect of postposing and preposing”. (Chafe: 1970: 232) Halliday (1985: 39) says that theme “can be identified as that element which comes in the first position in the clause”. Verses are to be studied within their contexts rather than isolating them from them. In Qura'n there is a phenomenon that show semi identical verses in a way that they are to certain extent similar with term but different with their word order. These verses are located in different positions and laid down within different contexts. However, these semi identical verses are apparently different with only the word orders, but the truth is that they hold different focus and emphasize on a particular element as well as principle.

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The first example:

(i) وترى الفلك مواخر فيه (النحل ١٤)
wa taralfulkamawaakhirafeehi

(ii) وترى الفلك فيه مواخر (فاطر ١٢)
wa taralfulkafeehimawaakhirahira

The difference between the two verses mentioned above is that '*mawakhir*', sailing, precedes the prepositional phrase, *fih* 'within it' in (i), whereas, *fih*, precedes, *mawakhir*, in (ii). Due to the change in the word order in these verses, one expects to see a word order difference in the translation. But, Ali's translation 1989, doesn't show that:

- (i) Thou seest the ships therein that plough the waves. (p.735)
- (ii) And thou seest the ships therein that plough the waves. (p.1301)

El-Yasin (1990: 12) writes that “ancient Arab scholars have noticed that although syntactic consideration restricts word order, a speaker's needs to express and organize his meaning have their say in such order as well”. In other words, “the order of the different sentence constitutes is not simply a function of syntax. Such translations do not reflect the rhetorical difference that Assamera'i: 2004, p.68 mentions in his interpretation of the two verses. He explains that the content of (i) lists



one of the means of transportation since horses, mules and donkeys are mentioned as animal man can ride prior to this verse (for the fuller context of both (i) and (ii). The topic of the discussion is more about mawakhir, sailing, that about the sea which is the referent of the pronoun he, hi, in, fihi, so, mawakhir, is foregrounded and *fihi*, is backgrounded.

The second verse on the other hand is used in the context of different seas and favors Allah has bestowed on his people. The pronoun referring to the sea in, *fihi*, in it, is appropriately used as topic. Hence, it is foregrounded, *mawakhir*, delayed.

To capture the difference mentioned, the following translations are suggested in this study:

- (i) And thou seas the ships sailing on it.
- (ii) And thou seas the ships in it sailing.

The second example

(i) وما جعله الله إلا بشرى لكم ولتطمئن قلوبكم به (آل عمران ١٢٦)

Wa maaja'alahullaahuillaabushraalakum wa litatma'innaquloobukumbih'

(ii) وما جعله الله إلا بشرى ولتطمئن به قلوبكم (الأنفال ١٠)

Wa maaja'alahullaahuillaabushraa wa litatma'innabiheequloobukum

the word order difference between the two mentioned verses is the foregrounding of the phrase, *qulubukum*, your hearts, (i) to proceeds *bihi* 'within it' whereas, *bihi*, precedes, *qulubukum*, in (ii). Ali' translation 1989 of both verses does not reflect the difference in the order of, *qulubukum, bihi*, 'your hearts within it', and *bihiqulubukum* 'within it your hearts'.

- (i) God made it but a message of hope for you and an assurance to your hearts. (p.178)
- (ii) God made it but a message of hope and an assurance to your hearts. (p.471)

According to Assamera'i (2004:71-72), the context of these two verses is about the Battle of Badr. However, the situation is different =.

The context of the (i) verse is concerned with the assurance and giving confidence to those warriors of Badr preparing them for the news about the Battle of Uhod which was full of hinders and deep sorrow and which will come in the following verses. Therefore, it is the time to warriors had confidence to feel tranquil and that is why there is foregrounding of *qulubukum*, the hearts being the center of emotional assurance, has occurred.

On the other hand, Assamera'i (2004:71) mentions that the context of the second verse is more concerned with Allah the All Mighty' support that leads to that victory in Badr through sending His angels to support the Muslim warriors. Therefore, \Allah the Almighty, focuses on the role of his support that leads to the victory by foregrounding the prepositional phrase *bihi* , 'whith' it, where the pronoun clitic-*hi* refers to Allah support. The context makes it more appropriate to use *bihi* as topic since it is a context of Allah's support of his worshippers.

To capture the difference mentioned, the following translations are suggested:
(i) And Allah made it but a message of good news for you and to comfort your hearts with it.

(ii) And Allah made it but a message of good news and to comfort with it your hearts.

The third example

(i) لا يقدرّون على شيء مما كسبوا (البقرة ٢٦٤)
laayaqdiroona 'alaashai'immimmaakasaboo

(ii) لا يقدرّون مما كسبوا على شيء (إبراهيم ١٨)
laayaqdiroonamimmaakasaboo 'alaashai'

Ali's translation goes as follows:

- (i) they will be able to do nothing with aught they have earned. (p.120)
- (ii) No power have they over aught that they have earned. (p.697)

the translation ignores the difference in the word order of the two verses in spite of the difference in emphasis mentioned by some interpreters and exegeses.



Assamera'i (2004:70) mentions that the context of the verse in (i) is one of spending, and spending is not gaining or earning: it is almost the opposite. Therefore, earning *kasabu* is delayed. The context of (ii) according to Assamera'i is one of work; *kasabu* 'they earned' should therefore precede.

To capture the difference mentioned, the following translations are suggested.

- (i) they will be able to get nothing with aught they have earned.
(ii) with what they have earned, they will be able to get nothing.

The forth example

(i) وما أهل به لغير الله (البقرة ١٧٣)
a maaauhillabiheelighairillaahi

(ii) وما أهل لغير الله به (النحل ١١٥)
wa maaauhillalighairillaahibihee

the word order difference between the two mentioned verses lies in the foregrounding of the prepositional phrase *bihi* 'with it' to precede *lighayriAllahi* 'for other than Allah' in (i), contrasting with the reverse order in (ii). The issue here is whether the animal is mentioned before *lighayriAllahi* or the other way around. The difference is not reflected in (Khan: 1996) as follows:

- (i) And that which is slaughtered as a sacrifice for others than Allah. (p.34)
(ii) and any animal which is slaughtered as a sacrifice for other than Allah. (p.364)

the semantic difference between the two verses is explicated in Assamera'i (2004:72-73) is ignored in such translation. Assamera'i mentions that the context of (i) is about the legitimate food for Muslims. The discussion is more about the animal which is the referent of the pronoun hi 'it' in *bihi* 'in it' rather than the deity 'to which to which the sacrifice is made'. It is more proper to keep the current context going on by giving *bihi* the first place *lighairiAllahi* is backgrounded.

While in the case of (ii), the verse is used in the context of the deity that the disbelievers are offering their sacrifice to. The phrase referring to deity is *lighairiAllahi* 'for other than Allah' is more appropriately used as topic. Hence, foregrounded, and *bihi* delayed.

To capture the difference mentioned, the following translations are suggested:

- (i) and what is prayed with it for other than Allah. (i.e. it: the sacrificed animal)
(ii) what is prayed for other than Allah with it. (i.e. it: the sacrificed animal)

The fifth example

(i) وجننا بك شهيدا على هؤلاء (النحل ٨٩)
a ji'naabikashaheedan 'alaahaaa'ulaaa

(ii) وجننا بك على هؤلاء شهيدا (النساء ٤١)
wa ji'naabika 'alaahaaa'ulaaa 'iShaheeda

what can be observed with reference to the verse (i) is the *shahidan* 'witness' precedes *ala haula* 'on these people', while in the verse (ii) *ala haula* precedes *shahidan*. This change in the word order in both verses should have a parallel word order in the target language since the semantic and syntax supposed to be different accordingly. However, Ali' translation doesn't reflect this:

- (i) and we shall bring thee as a witness against these. (p.759)
(ii) and we bring you as a witness against these. (p.222)

According to Al-ghirnaty (1985: 200-204) the order in the verse (i) where *shahidan* precedes *ala haula* is simply to keep the rhetorical balance with the verse which preceded this one which is:

نبتعت من كل أمة شهيدا عليهم من أنفسهم (النحل ٨٩)
where *shahidan* precedes *alayhim*. Where the verse (ii) is used the context of hypocrites who are mentioned in the verse 38/39/40 preceding this verse in the same chapter. The prepositional phrase which includes the pronoun- him 'them' referring to hypocrites is



more appropriately fronted, and *ala haula* is delayed.

To capture the difference mentioned, the following translations are suggested.

(i) and we shall bring thee as a witness against these.

(ii) and we shall bring thee to face theses as a witness.

The sixth example

(i) ولقد أرسلنا من قبلك رسلا (الروم ٤٧)

Wa laqadarsalnaa min qablিকা Rusulan

(ii) ولقد أرسلنا رسلا من قبلك (الرعد ٣٨)

Wa laqadarsalnaa Rusulam min qablিকা

The difference between the two verses (i) and (ii) lies in the foregrounding of the prepositional phrase *min qablিকা* 'prior to you' to precede *rusulan* 'messengers' in (ii) while the order of these two elements in (i) is reversed.

Khan 1998 translation of these two verses doesn't reflect the difference in word order.

(i) and indeed we did send messengers before you (p.548).

(ii) and indeed we sent messengers before you (p.326).

the semantic difference between the two verses in (i) and (ii) according to Al-Ghirnati (1985: 571-574) is that name of the prophet Muhammad obviously precedes names of other messengers and prophets wherever both are mentioned by name or pronoun (the case at hand) and in the same context. This has its own indication that gives prophet Muhammad a higher position among all messengers. This is the case in (i) and other verses where in the Holy Qura'n where prophet Muhammad and other messengers are mentioned.

The verse in (ii), on the other hand, is mainly concerned with the obstacles that prophets faced when they were in confrontation with their nations and how very patient they were.

Moreover, no names of wither nations or other messengers are explicitly stated. The message here lies in the fact that Allah The

Almighty would like to advise his prophet Muhammad to try his utmost to remain patient against the obstacles that he will encounter while facing people at that time.

He is asked to view those prophets as an example of how patient one can be, on the other hand, and the penalties that those who disdained their prophets suffered from, on the other. That is why the example being the ideal comes before the prophet's name to be imitated and lessons be taken from. That is *rusulan* 'messengers' precedes *min qablিকা* 'prior to you'.

To capture the difference mentioned in Al-Ghirnati (1985: 571-574), the following translations are suggested.

(i) we sent messengers before you.

(ii) before you, we sent messengers.

The seventh example

(i) وجعلنا فيها فجاجا سبلا (الأنبياء ٣١)

wa

ja'alnaafeehaafijaajansubulalla'allahumyahtad oon

(ii) لتسلكوا منها سبلا فجاجا (نوح ٢٠)

Litaslukoominhaasubulanfijaajaa

the difference between the two above mentioned verses lies in the foregrounding *subulan* 'ways' to precede *fijajan* 'mountain passes' in (i), while *fijajan* precede *subulan* in (ii). This change in word order should be reflected in any attempt to translate the pair (i) and (ii).

Khan's translation 1996, did not succeed to achieve this.

(i) and we placed therein board highways for them to pass through. (p.432)

(ii) that you may go about therein in broad roads. (p.793)

according to Assamera'i (1998: 62) *fijajan* 'mountain passes' is foregrounded in (i)



because the context includes *rawasiya* 'mountains' in the preceding verse. No such occurrence of mountains in sen in (ii) so *subulan* 'roads' in general, is foregrounded being the more general term.

To capture the difference mentioned, the following translations are suggested:

(i) and We placed therein mountain passes as roads.

(ii) so that you take through it roads as mountain passes.

Conclusion

It has been emphasized on the basis of classic interpretations of the Holy Qura'n that each difference in word order between any pair of verses mentioned in this study reflects a difference in meaning. Consequently, the translation of these verses should exhibit the same of the elements concerned in order to reflect that difference.

However, the translations of the Holy Qura'n by Ali and Khan do not always reflect this difference, which leads to loss of equivalence of the rhetorical import of these translations relative to the SL originals. This failure to capture the difference detracts from the worth of these translations although they represent great effort in the service of the Holy Qura'n. Moreover, the cases where the word order different in the SL text is reflected in the translation have not been mentioned here.

Suggestions and findings

What can be noticed through examining the previous examples is that the translators Ali and Khan' attempts don't reflect the difference in word order in the selected verses. This means that they translated them into English inaccurately. After consulting some interpreters' point of views in such verses such as Assamera'l and Al-ghirnatihim are well known and reliable in the field of exegesis and interpreting the Holy Qura'n semantically. Accordingly, it has become clear to the researcher that not paying enough attention to the phenomenon of word order in the verses of the Qura'n weakens the translations and causes a

mismatch between SL and TL. Based on these findings, the following suggestions are made:

- 1- The translators of the meaning of the Holy Qura'n should be aware of the characteristics of Arabic language in general and the phenomenon of foregrounding and backgrounding in particular. Their reading should be of a critical type.
- 2- The translator of the meaning of the Holy Quran should be aware of the interpreters' commenting on the verses they are dealing with. Consulting these interpreters gives the translator a better understanding of the text and thus enables him to give a better translation.
- 3- The translator of the meaning of the Holy Qura'n is advised to give word-for-word translation to many verses inasmuch as the SL' semantic and TL allow. This strategy should maintain the rhetorical value of the preposing or postposing and element in the SL text and render the translation more faithful.
- 4- The researcher advises other researchers in this topic to do serious research about the verses which have word order issues in general and not only the pairs that involve explicit contrasts like the ones dealt with in this study.
- 5- If any researcher decides to deal with the phenomenon of word order (where much research needs to be done) in the Holy Qura'n, then he needs to read what earlier interpreters such as Al-jurjani, Assamera'l and Al-ghirnatihim said in this regard.
- 6- Since the conclusions which are drawn out of such investigations can be applicable to other religious texts but with a different method, doing similar research with new approaches on other religious works can prove the validity of outcomes obtained from such a research. Since every religious work, especially Divine books belong to different discourses and contexts, the result of any translational studies would be new and different and comparable to each other. Such studies are also applicable to other translations of the Qur'an in other languages, since



- languages are different in form and structure, and consequently researchers could come up with concrete results.
- 7- Since the Noble Qur'an book has got no punctuation marks, italic boldface type, etc. the structure and style of this book may cause troubles and shortcomings for the translators in understanding some issues. In order to avoid that issue, the translators and researchers should acquire mastery to the style and structure of the Noble Qur'an then to be able to overcome such shortcoming. The translators can resort to the intonation and stress patterns of the verses, so they have to be able to read the Arabic Qur'an completely and be familiar with the Qur'anic Arabic intonation, tone and stress patterns.
 - 8- Further studies on textual (internal) context and non-textual (external) context of the Qur'an is on the primary importance for the translator of the meanings of the Qur'an. El-Awa (2006) that a very significant issue in interpreting the word of Allah in exegetical books is the matter of context. Context of the Qur'anic verses helps the interpreters and translators understand the meanings and interpret them properly. According to El-Awa (pp. 41-42), there are two types of Qur'anic contexts; (internal) context and non-textual (external) context.
 - 9- Since translating the Noble Qur'an and other texts reveal their own complexities and significance, producing accurate and faithful translation is of the primary importance. According to Abdul-Raof (2001), the main goal of the Qur'an translations is to "broadcast the message of the Qur'an" (p. 182). In order to achieve this goal, Abdul-Raof suggests the communicative translation strategy, which places emphasis on the reader and target text elements.
 - 10- Differentiation between the different types of conjunctions in the Noble Qur'an and clarifying their meanings within their contexts.
 - 11- Abdul-Raof (2001) furthered that "Qur'an translators need to have a sound awareness of translation theories which is of paramount importance to their exegetical awareness. Before they embark on their delicate task, they need to define the nature of their end product, i.e., whether the translation is going to be a source text oriented or target audience oriented" (p. 182). In the case of translating the Qur'an, producing informative rendering with the same pleasure of the source-text is optimal, as they can influence and touch the heart of the receptor language audience in the same manner it affects the source-text audience (p. 182). This is what Nida (1964) named as dynamic equivalence.
 - 12- However, the faithful principle in translating the Qur'an is of significance, and creating a balance between free and faithful translation to the source text is very important. As "there are sharp cross-linguistic, rhetorical, and socio-cultural variations between Qur'anic Arabic and English, such a balance is very difficult to maintain; therefore, our Qur'an translation can only provide an approximate natural linguistic and rhetorical equivalence to the Qur'anic discourse with regard to form, content and response" (p. 183). As aptly mentioned by Abdul-Raof and concluded by the researcher, to maximize the possibility of producing an informative translation of the Qur'an and raise the English language audience response, applying additional adjustment technique by providing explanatory footnotes are vital for the receptor language readers to ponder upon different linguistic, rhetorical and socio-cultural backgrounds of Qur'anic discourse" (p.183).
 - 13- It is concluded that translators' religious background could have helped them have a more target-text oriented translations. The Muslim translators, who have been in touch with the Qur'anic and Islamic discourse and the context of situation (the incidents and reasons of verses), are more



likely to produce communicative translations as ideal kind of translation of the Qur'an also mentioned by Abdul-Raof (2001). To have a better knowledge about Qur'anic verses context of situation, translators need to consult the exegeses of the Qur'an. Nazmi (2010) pointed out that "the Qur'an was revealed gradually over a period of twenty-three years of prophet Muhammad's life. due to this fact, every verse of the Qur'an is related to a specific historical incident called *asbabannuzul*, (the contexts of situations) by itself does not restrict the meaning of the verse, but knowledge of the particulars of revelation throws more light on the underlying subject matter" (p. 39).

- 14- As the Qur'an contains contextual meanings and concepts for explaining which the translators have to refer to the exegesis and extended information, they need to use footnote. Landers (2001) believed that footnote use is routine approach used by some translators namely academician. To transfer the maximize amount of information, they use footnotes. According to Abdul-Raof (2001), use of footnotes in the Qur'an translation is a helpful and plausible translation option. "footnotes can be used as translation enforcement which have a significant added value to the communicative process of translation" (p.141). Abdul-Raof added that: "in cases the readers are not linguistically culturally acquainted with the Qur'anic discourse, use of footnotes is helpful for them to have more information about the unsaid item and to discover the deep meaning as explained by the translator in the footnote.
- 15- Abdul-Raof (2001) furthered that "Qur'an translators need to have a sound awareness of translation theories which is of paramount importance to their exegetical awareness. Before they embark on their delicate task, they need to define the nature of their end product, i.e., whether the translation is going to be a source text oriented or target audience

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