

## LOSSES IN TRANSLATING ARABIC (QURANIC) MARKED STRUCTURES INTO ENGLISH

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### ABSTRACT

Although foregrounding is an Arabic basic feature that is recurrent in the Quran, English available translations of the Quran have failed to observe the syntactic order of the source text due to the linguistic limits of English. This paper attempts to highlight the semantic loss in translating Quranic marked order into English in both affirmative and negative structures. It also highlights the appropriate linguistic techniques that translators can use to make up for the syntactic difference between the two languages. The study is based on the Arabic theory of grammar at the core of which foregrounding plays a central role in communicating the message. The findings show that it is possible to overcome the word order rigidity by making appropriate linguistic alterations. The study concludes that the translator's unawareness of the ST marked constructions is likely to lead to a semantic loss in the translations, because of the syntactic differences between the ST and TT.

*Keywords:* specification; restriction; emphasis; assumed structure; partial loss; prominence.

### RESUMEN

Aunque la puesta en primer plano es una característica básica del árabe que es recurrente en el Corán, la traducción disponible al inglés del Corán no ha mantenido el orden sintáctico del texto Fuente debido a las limitaciones lingüísticas del inglés. Este artículo busca mostrar la pérdida semántica que se registra al traducir el orden marcado en el Corán al orden del inglés, tanto en la estructura afirmativa como en la negativa. También destaca técnicas lingüísticas apropiadas que los traductores pueden usar para compensar la diferencia sintáctica entre los dos idiomas. El estudio se basa en la teoría gramatical del árabe, en la que la puesta en primer plano juega un rol fundamental al comunicar el mensaje. Los resultados muestran que es posible superar la rigidez en el orden de las palabras con alteraciones lingüísticas apropiadas. El estudio concluye que la falta de conciencia del traductor al trabajar con las construcciones del árabe puede llevar a una pérdida semántica en la traducción debido a las diferencias sintácticas entre el texto fuente y el texto meta.

*Palabras claves:* especificación; restricción; énfasis; estructura presumida; pérdida parcial; prominencia.

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### Introduction

Modern English depends heavily on word order to convey grammatical information. Unlike old English, Modern English syntactic structure is relatively fixed (SVO). According to Larson (1997), this canonical order gives natural prominence to the verb (event) as it occupies the center of the sentence. So, within the SVO sentence frame, the verb in (Mike shot the bear) is naturally prominent because it occupies the central position in the sentence. According to Baker (1992:11), the “relatively fixed order of English appoints restriction for ordering the functional elements of the sentence”. Within these limits, the subject as sentence-initially appoints the verb in the center, and what comes after the verb cannot assume the role of the agent. For example, the syntactic structure in (the donkey kicked the lion) in no way means that the lion kicked the donkey, simply because the meaning of the sentence depends on the position of the words in the sentence.

This relatively fixed order poses a challenge to the translator when translating from Arabic, which enjoys fewer restrictions on word order, as we will see in the discussion section. Larson (1997) suggests a number of emphatic devices to highlight the marked position of a certain element in the sentence such as using cleft structures as in (it was Mike who shot the bear), passive voice as in (the bear was shot by Mike), or rhetorical underlining by adding extra words to accommodate the meaning. Rhetorical underlining is not only confined to paraphrasing in the sense of addition. It also refers to repetition of bits of information or individual words that have marked prominence in the ST.

Quirk et al. (1985:1310) suggest dislocation structures as an emphatic mechanism where, for example, a noun phrase has an initial position to which a reinforcing pronoun in the sentence refers back, as in [Ali, he broke the window] or [Ali broke the window, himself]. These dislocation structures lay emphasis on Ali as the one who did break the window. While the speaker affirms that the action of the verb is done by Ali, negation that the act of breaking has been carried out by someone else is also possible. It all depends on the context and how one can interpret the difference in emphasis. The use of dislocation structures is not much common in formal modern English because they are features of spoken-language syntax.

### Arabic canonical order

Unlike the canonical English word order, Arabic sentences can be either nominal or verbal. A nominal sentence starts with a noun or pronoun. A typical verbal sentence starts with a verb followed by a subject and a complement. The subject of a verbal sentence may be independent (pronoun), noun, or a morpheme suffixed to the verb. Like English, the (predicate) may take the form of different classes of words and phrases (nouns, predicates, adjectives, adjectival phrases, prepositional phrases). The nominal sentences are known as equated “because subjects and predicates equate each other and balance each other in a complete proposition” (Ryding 2005:58). The nominal sentence may or may not have a verb, since Arabic does not use the copula “be” in the present tense. Unlike the verbal sentence, the subject of a nominal sentence must be independent (whether a noun or pronoun). Nominal sentences are introduced by the subject, whether or not the subject is followed by a verb. Thus, both equative (verbless) sentences and non-equative SVO may be considered nominal.

The VSO order points to the unmarked word order in Arabic “because it does not bring to the focus any particular element and thus cannot give any pragmatic information” (Bakir 1997:8). Elements can be highlighted through foregrounding in the VSO basic sentence frame. Subjects or objects, for example, could be moved out of their habitual word order to a pre-verbal position to receive a focus interpretation.

Although English uses cleft structures and other linguistic techniques to emphasize the focus elements in a sentence, Arabic tends to use case markings to indicate foreground elements in a sentence. That is, the short vowels /u/, /a/, and /i/ appear over the ending letters of words in a sentence to identify their grammatical positions (subjects, objects, genitive, etc). The meaning of a sentence depends not only on the case markings, but also on the syntactic order, as we will see in the discussion section. It is worth mentioning here that the subject -verb order is predominant in the Quran and communicates pragmatic functions, which, not only require the translator to have solid grammatical knowledge in both languages, but also advanced knowledge in the rhetoric of the source language. The syntactic aspect of the language in terms of foregrounding and backgrounding is dominant because Arabic enjoys fewer restrictions on word order than English in such a way that would allow one to highlight or downplay some elements in a sentence.

### Theoretical framework

Arabic rhetorical theory is based on Al-Jurjāni's perception of the grammatical meaning of a sentence. Al-jurjāni (1984:392) argues that "grammar is not only a matter of determining the components of a sentence in terms of the *musnad* (predicate) and the *musnad ilihī* (subject), neither is it a matter of illustrating the functions of the parsing signs" These two aspects are of no value to eloquence. To him, the speaker thinks first of meanings, and then the words follow their meanings easily. So, whatever meanings occur first in the speaker's mind will have to occur first in the syntactic order, 'for it is impossible to imagine that words occur before their meanings' (417).

Meanings are obtained here in terms of their grammatical functions, which are determined by the position of the words in a sentence. He argues that one cannot know the position of words in the structure unless he knows their meanings. So, the association in the sentence is between the meanings (grammatical functions) of individual words, not between the words themselves. It follows that no connection is presupposed between words without an underlying meaning. He gives no weight to the individual meaning of words as independent entities.

The theory maintains that rearranging the sentence elements through pre-posing and post-posing is carried out for a reason, which is the focus of this paper. The theory also assumes an underlying structure for an elliptical sentence. To Al-jurjāni, an elliptical sentence (a sentence that is capable of having an underlying deep structure) is "more expressive of the meaning than the apparent structure of the sentence." (418). Thus, pre-posing a certain element in relation to other sentential elements in the structure should have a pragmatic effect, regardless of its grammatical function. The shades of meaning are a function of the composition in which the words get ordered in the form according to the order of their meanings in the mind.

Al-jurjāni places emphasis on the communicative function of the utterance rather than on the grammatical accuracy, which is achieved through the stylistic force of the utterance. This force brings about major changes to the function of the foregrounded elements. The stylistic force can also differentiate an elliptical sentence from other sentences that have the same grammatical structure (same pattern of words). Following in his steps, Baalbaki (2007:11) contends that "grammar is not confined to telling whether or not a given utterance is correct. It fulfills other functions or higher levels of discourse based on their syntactic structures, and the shared knowledge between the speaker and the addressee about the circumstances of the speech."

Al-Jurjāni states that every change in the word order of the sentence must necessarily entail a different meaning as words are structured according to the occurrence of meaning in the speaker's mind. Hence, he is not taken by the notion that "one single meaning can be expressed in different ways by different people due to the creativity of language." (1992: 133). There is always a reason, he insists, for grouping or joining words in a certain order. He holds that any change in the word order must bring about a change in meaning because the arrangement of meaning is prior to the arrangement of words. He notes that if a particular word order produces a unique interpretation in

a particular context, that unique interpretation should apply to all similar constructions that have similar word order structures. The signification of the structure is at the core of the theory, and little attention is paid to the form of the lexical item and its meaning. He has a complete virtue in grammar and built his theory in the rhetoric of the meanings of grammar, which he calls “meanings of syntax”.

Al-jurjāni’s perception of eloquence/rhetoric has been the corner stone in investigating the nature of expression in the Glorious Qur’an, especially word order, which is just one aspect of the complex relations among the constituents of the structure of the sentence. Rhetoric, which is placed at the center of grammatical analysis, has attracted many contemporary scholars such as Suyuti (1969), Lashin (1978), Fayud (1998), Baalbaki (1988), to mention a few. They relied on Al-jurjāni’s theory of meaning in highlighting the possibility of rhetoric in any departure from the normal rules of grammar.

### **Statement of the problem**

In order to reproduce the message of the original, it is necessary to keep the equivalent meaning and style of the source text. One manifestation of the style is the way the author uses words and sentence structures. The speaker in Arabic may choose to foreground the most important element in a sentence and background the least important in a certain context to draw the attention to the marked element deliberately. This element, for example, could be an object, subject, or prepositional phrase (predicate). This state is not the case in English, due to the relative fixed order which, for example, requires the subject to go before the verb or the object. If translators are unaware of the difference between marked and unmarked syntactic structures of the languages they are working with, they may end up translating an unmarked structure in one language into a marked one in another, thereby losing the sight of its pragmatic equivalence.

At any rate, identical syntactic orders of the TT and ST do not necessarily mean that their meaning is exactly the same. For example, when the noun is foregrounded sentence-initially before the verb in Arabic, it adds a pragmatic meaning to the primary sense of the sentence. In contrast, the subject habitually precedes the verb and object in English, and thus English syntactic order may not be semantically equivalent to Arabic marked structure.

If the translator fails to observe the marked status of the syntactic order of the source text, the translation is likely to lose its pragmatic equivalence in English. Given the English relative fixed order, the translator may well need to apply some mechanisms such as using cleft structures, passive voice, paraphrase and rhetorical underlining to express the intended meaning of the Quranic message. In sacred texts, the shades of meanings are no less important than primary meanings. If the translation lacks a nuance, the full rounded meaning of the text will not have been communicated.

The study aims to show that the deviation from the unmarked order (VSO) in the Quran is not arbitrary. Sentence elements such as subjects, objects, and predicates can occupy prominent positions in certain contexts in order to communicate specific functions such as emphasis, restriction, and specification. The order of the words is reversed in certain constructions to achieve specific style features. If the foregrounded elements are not accounted for in the TT, there will be a semantic loss due either to the linguistic limits of English or translator’s lack of awareness of the purpose of deviation from the canonical rule of Arabic.

In some cases, maintaining the syntactic order of the ST in the TT is not enough to express the additional meaning because of the fixed order of English. That is, the pragmatic effect is not only produced through syntactic order considerations, but also through the application of various linguistic techniques. The study will examine lexical foregrounding in some illustrative examples in Arabic, and then, carefully examine some of the available translations of the Quran to clarify

how shades of meanings are lost in TT due to the difference in the syntactic structures between the TT and ST.

### Semantic effects of foregrounding

Lexical foregrounding is a basic linguistic feature in the Quran. This feature is employed to achieve specific functions. An element can gain prominence in relation to other elements in a sentence by being moved to a marked position for a reason such as specification, emphasis, and restriction. In the literature on foregrounding, these terms are used interchangeably, simply because they are closely related. However, Suyuti (1969:187) differentiates between specification and restriction on the basis of whether or not negation is implied. In specification, he holds that an element in a given sentence is identified by “a feature that only applies to it or through a feature that it shares with other elements, which can be foregrounded by the speaker to draw the attention to it specifically with no intention to imply negation or emphasis at all.” Restriction, on the other hand, he maintains, asserts that a specific feature is only true of the element and negates its applicability to anything else. On the other hand, Lashin (1978:197) contends that “in affirmative structures the distinction between the two depends on the context.” Despite Suyuti’s distinction, the functions shade into one another to the extent that it becomes almost impossible to appoint only a specific function to a marked sentence. It all depends on how one interprets a difference in functions. For example, Lashin does not draw a sharp line between restriction and emphasis. He argues that emphasis is implied in restriction, as we will see in the discussion below. The following are illustrative examples of how the possibility of rhetoric adds more to the sentence meaning as indicated below.

#### *Foregrounding in affirmative structures*

In nominal sentences, “the subject is pre-posed before the verb to restrict the verb to the subject and signal emphasis depending on the context.” (Fayud 1998:237). On the other hand, the Arabic theory of grammar holds that “every verb must govern a subject (noun or pronoun) that follows it, for every subject must follow its governing verb according to the Arabic theory of grammar” (Baalbaki 1988:163). For example, in the sentence *Aliyyun kasar al-bāb*, Ali broke the door, the verb governs an assumed subject *huwa* that falls after it and refers back to the pre-posed subject (Ali). As such, the underlying assumed structure is *Aliyyun kasara huwa al-bāb*, literally Ali broke he the door. The foregrounding of the subject before the verb restricts the verb to the pre-posed subject and implies negation of the action being carried out by anyone else other than Ali. Negation here stems from the fact that the addressee has doubts that someone else broke the door and that the speaker is making it clear that it is Ali who broke the door. Emphasis derives from the verb having an assumed subject, an implicit subject *Huwa*, (he), which refers to its pre-posed antecedent (Ali). Emphasis is therefore a byproduct of the sentence having a pre-posed subject and an assumed one that refers back to it. The foregrounding of the subject in a nominal sentence involving a verb “signals both restriction and emphasis where the marked prominence by the speaker is placed on the subject rather than verb to clear the addressee’s doubts and restricts the action to the pre-posed subject.” (Lashin, 1978: 225).

Larson (1997:444) urges translators “to look for marked prominence in the source text, and then match it in the receptor language.” There are numerous techniques to deal with marked prominence of the ST in order to fully communicate the message. One possible technique is the use of cleft structure for emphasis. This technique gives preference for a nominal rather than verbal structure as in (it was Ali who broke the door). To maintain the pragmatic equivalence of the ST, this or any other appropriate linguistic technique can make up for the semantic loss resulting from the syntactic difference between the ST and TT. To explain, consider Arberry’s translation of the following construction:

1. *Allāhu yabsuṭu al-Rizqa liman yashāu wa-yaqdir* (13: 26)

“God outspreads and straitens His provision unto whomever He will”. This translation makes no difference between the marked and unmarked word order in Arabic since the typical English sentence starts with the subject anyway. Although the syntactic structure of the ST and the TT is identical here, their meaning is different. The marked prominence of “God” in the Quranic structure restricts the verb (outspreads and straitens) to the subject and signals emphasis. according to the Arabic theory of grammar, the verb must govern a subject and this governed subject must follow its governing verb. The assumed subject of the verb is a disjoined independent pronoun (*huwa*), which should follow its governing verb and refer back to the pre-posed subject (God). The verb restricts the action to the pre-posed subject and governs the assumed subject that refers back to the pre-posed subject, thereby negating that the action is done by anyone else other than God. In order to reflect this pragmatic function, the translator is advised to utilize some mechanisms to compensate for the linguistic limits of English such as “It is only God who outspreads and straitens provision unto whomever He will. This mechanism implies negation of anyone else being able to perform the action. As an alternative, syntactic repetition of the subject can compensate for the relatively fixed order of the target language: God, God outspreads and straitens His provision unto whomever He will, or by paraphrasing or adding bits of information to clarify the prominence of subject like: no one beside God can outspread and straiten Provision etc.

The pragmatic purpose of the original is not reflected in Arberry’s translation of the Quranic marked structure. Arberry’s translation fits well an unmarked structure (VSO). In this case, the verbal structure implies that God is not the only one who outspreads and straitens provision. That is, the statement generally tells that this expansion and rigidity is not essential to Him. Rather, there is someone out there who can perform this action as well. In other words, a verbal sentence (VSO) is just informative and does not convey any additional meaning. It generally tells us that God provides and straitens, but this act is not restricted to Him, which is not the intended meaning of the structure. Unlike a verbal sentence, a nominal sentence (SVO) bears the meaning of restriction. That is, outspreading and straitening is an essential part, not just an occurrence, to God.

If the object is foregrounded before the subject: *al-Rizqa Allāhu yabsutu liman yashāu wa-yaqdir*, the interpretation of the structure will be different, as the focus this time is on the object rather than the subject. The structure communicates specification in line with Suyuti’s definition of specification where an element is foregrounded by the speaker to draw the attention to it specifically with no intention to imply negation or emphasis. However, giving prominence specifically to a particular element in an affirmative structure can also be intended to exclude all other sentence elements according to Lashin’s perception of such pragmatic devices whose distinction in affirmative sentences depends on the context. These two pragmatic devices can be expressed by an English cleft structure. “it is provision that Allah outspreads and straitens to whomever He will.”

In some elliptical structures where objects are foregrounded in a sentence, verbs can be assumed in the underlying structure of the sentence in line with the Arabic theory of grammar. “the object of a sentence is normally governed by a verb that should precede the object” (Versteegh 1994:271). If the object in the apparent structure came before the verb, the verb would not govern that specific object in the sentence. In this case, an ellipted verb is to be assumed and should precede its direct object and govern it in order to account for its accusative case.

Consider al-Qadri’s translation of the Quranic construction:

**2. *bal-allāha fa’bud wa-kun min al-Shakirin;***

“So, worship God and be among the thankful” (39:65).

This translation does not maintain the syntactic order of the Quranic original, and thus the semantic effect of having the object foregrounded before the verb is lost in the translation. The English translation in this case reflects the unmarked Arabic order where the verb precedes the object to mean that worship is not only performed to God, which is not the intended meaning of the

source text. When the verb (worship) precedes the object, the verb is not only restricted to the object, in which case worship is not only for the sake of God. Obviously, the object of the source structure (God) is in the accusative case and there is no governing verb preceding it. Fayud (1998) notes that verbs are normally assumed before their objects in elliptical sentences to signal emphasis. If they are assumed after their objects for grammatical considerations, they are likely to signal specification.

The assumption that there is an underlying structure stems from the fact that the direct object (*Allāha*) cannot operate as *amubtada* (subject) because it is in the accusative case. This condition requires the object to have an assumed governing verb that precedes it, because the governed object must occur after the verb in order to reconstruct the underlying model of the sentence. However, some scholars assume that the ellipted form may occur after the fronted object for a purely grammatical reason. That is, “the coordinating conjunction particle (*fa*), which is prefixed to the verb, requires an immediate, preceding verb.” Baydāwī (2012:573). The imperative verb (*fa’bud*) cannot operate as an assumed governing verb for the foregrounded direct object (*Allah*), because of the conjunction particle, which necessarily entails a conjoined verb that precedes it”. Therefore, the assumed ellipted structure should be: ***Bal allāh u’bud fa’bud***, but God worship and worship. The repetition of the verb implies both emphasis that it is God that you must worship and negation that worship is true of anyone beside Him.

This pragmatic function also derives from the broader context- the preceding verse, namely verse (63) in the same chapter “is it someone other than God you ask me to worship, you, ignorant people”. The context suggests that the polytheists of Mecca wanted the Prophet to worship their gods of Kaaba (a shrine almost in the center of the Great Mosque in Mecca) in exchange for their worshipping Mohammad’s God, but prophet Mohammad rejected their offer.

Al-Qadri’s translation has failed to observe the marked prominence of the object. This is obvious as the object in English is usually related to a specific position after the verbs. However, the translator can still foreground the object by moving it into a separate clause by using any of the mechanisms suggested by Larson, especially cleft structure, to reflect the pragmatic meaning conveyed by the marked structure of the original, as in (indeed, it is Allah that you must worship). As an alternative mechanism, repetition of the verb is a possible rhetorical device to emphasize its signification.

In order to decipher the intended message and account for the pragmatic purpose, translators are advised to resort to the exegetical books which are a vital tool in clarifying the meanings of the Quranic constructions.

#### *Foregrounding in negative structures*

The negating particles *la* and *ma* (not) are of the most common negating particles in Arabic. The pragmatic function of the negating particle depends on its position in relation to other elements in a sentence. Fayud (1998:152) contends that “the occurrence of the particle before the foregrounded subject negates that the action is done by the subject, and affirms that the action is done by someone else.” To explain, in the sentence *Ma Aliyyun kasar al-bāb*, literally, not Ali broke the door, Ali did not break the door, the negating particle before the subject denies that Ali did the breaking and ascribes it to someone else. On the other hand, if the particle occurs before the verb and after the foregrounded subject as in *Aliyyun mā kasar al-Bāb*, literally, Ali not broke the window, the speaker denies that the action is carried out by the subject. There is no intention for restricting the verb to the subject or attributing it to someone else. In this case, the underlying structure requires the verb to have a subject that occurs after it and, at the same time, refers back to its pre-posed subject (Ali). It is also “possible that the action never took place due to the occurrence of the particle before the verb.” (153).

Unlike in affirmative structures where the functions depend on the context, the semantic effect of the negative structure depends entirely on its word order. This means, as Al-jurjāni pointed out, that the constructions that have similar word order must produce similar interpretations. Due to the Arabic flexible order, the negating particle may precede nonverbal predicates in the nominal structures to communicate a different pragmatic effect. If the translator is lacking knowledge of the pragmatic effect of placing the negating particle before the prepositional phrase, then a semantic loss is a likelihood, as in:

**3. *lā fihāgoulun wa lāhum ‘anhā yunzafūn*** (37:47), literally, (no in it headiness and no of it get drunk they). In speaking of the rivers of paradise, the Quran refers to rivers of delicious, pure wine that cause no throbbing or headiness. This meaning is achieved by foregrounding the prepositional phrase in this negative structure before the subject.

Muhammad Asad’s translation “No headiness will be in it and they will not get drunk thereon” has not maintained the syntactic order of the original. The negating particle *lā* (not) here precedes the foregrounded predicate (in it) to emphasize that this heavenly wine is unlike the earthly wine; it does not cause one to hangover or get intoxicated. In other words, the negating particle precedes the marked predicate in relation to its backgrounded subject to emphasize that the heavenly wine, unlike the earthly wine, causes no throbbing or intoxication.

Asad’s translation observes the unmarked syntactic order where the negating particle occurs before the foregrounded subject *la goulā fiha*, literally (no headiness in it). In this case, the subject affirms that the heavenly wine specifically causes no throbbing or headiness, without intending to deny it for the earthly wine.

Fayūd (1998:153) contends that when “the prepositional phrase occurs in its unmarked position after the subject and the negating particle precedes the subject, this structure serves to negate the attribute in relation to the item in question.” Applying this to this Quranic structure, the pragmatic function of moving the prepositional phrase into an unmarked position is to negate headiness in relation to the heavenly wine specifically. Thus, to reflect the pragmatic effect of the marked position of the predicate, the translator can employ a mechanism technique or a lexical emphasizing particles such as certainly, indeed, only, as examples. “Indeed, no headiness will be in it” would compensate for the grammatical loss in the translation.

Asad has failed to maintain the syntactic order of the original, though the English word order allows for the prepositional phrase to be pre-posed in relation to the subject and other sentential elements. One may assume that he is neither aware of the syntactic difference between the TT and ST nor the communicative value of the marked structures in the Arabic language.

In a similar vein, Arberry translates this Quranic statement

**4. “*dālīka al-kitābu lā raiba fihi*”**, literally, that book no doubt in it (2:2) as “That is the book; wherein is no doubt” Arberry’s translation failed to maintain the sentence order of the source text where the subject (*raiba*) precedes the predicate *fihi* (in it). The prepositional phrase here is unmarked “because it occurs after the subject to negate doubt in relation to the Quran specifically.” (Lāshin 1978:231). If the prepositional phrase is moved to a marked position before the subject (*raib*), that is the book; *lā-fihi raibun*, literally (no in it doubt), in it there is no doubt in English, this inversion would negate doubt from the Quran, but would at the same time affirm its existence in other heavenly scriptures. Thus, Arberry’s translation has reflected the marked order of the structure, which is not the intended meaning of the original. In other words, this statement does not intend to negate doubt from the Quran and ascribe it to other scriptures.

In a nominal sentence that involves a verb, the function of the negating particle differs according to its position before or after the subject. To explain, consider these two structures which have been modified from the original text in (1)

***Ma Allāhu yabsuṭu al-Rizqa liman yashāu***  
***Allahu ma yabsuṭu al-Rizqa liman yashā***



The position of the negating particle in relation to the subject and verb brings different meanings to the structures. The first sentence denies that the action is performed by God, but it affirms that the action is performed by someone else. In the second sentence where the negating particle occurs after the subject and before the verb, it not only denies that God performs the action of the verb, but also implies the possibility that there is no action at all. Fayud (1998:153.) notes that “the action of the verb is denied of the subject and that the possibility of the action taking place is also denied as a function of the negating particle occurring before the verb”.

To elucidate this point further, consider the following statement:

5. *wa ma Allāhu yuridu dulman lil-ālamīn* (3:108), literally (and not God wants injustice to the worlds (all creatures). Almost all English translations of this statement have not maintained the syntactic structure of the ST as they used the negating particle after the subject. The most notable translations are: (a) And God means no injustice to any of His creatures; (b) And God wills not any wrong to the worlds, (c) And God does not wish injustice to any of His creatures. These translations imply no pragmatic equivalence to the one that the original suggests. In the ST, the negating particle occurs before the subject to deny that God wants injustice to any of His creatures and to affirm that His creatures, specifically men do wrong to themselves. Put differently, it is not God that wills them to wrong; it is people that wrong themselves. This shade of meaning is not reflected in these translations. Not even a single emphatic mechanism is used in the translations to compensate for the loss of meaning resulting from the difference in the syntactic structures between the two languages. Although the shades of meaning generally seem slight, in sacred texts they make a crucial difference in meaning.

The TT mirrors the syntactic structure in which the negating particle *ma* occurs before the verb *Wa Allāhu mā yuridu dulman lil-ālamīn*, literally, and God not will wrong to the worlds. In this case, the action is denied of the subject and the occurrence of the action is also denied. Unlike the original text, this modified version of the text ascribes no wrongness to people, which is not the intended meaning of the original Quranic text. It also denies that God wills any wrong to anyone and simultaneously negates the possible occurrence of wrongness.

### Conclusion

This paper has explored word order related problems in translating from the Quran into English. It has drawn the attention to the pragmatic functions of turning a certain element to a marked position in relation to other elements in both affirmative and negative structures. The study shows that sticking to the English fixed order in rendering Arabic marked structures, affirmative or negative, is likely to cause a semantic loss because of the syntactic difference between the TT and ST. To overcome this problem, the study has proposed numerous linguistic techniques that are available to translators to use to reflect the pragmatic equivalence in the original text such as dislocations, cleft structures, passive structures, and rhetorical underlining.

On the whole, the Quranic marked constructions have been ignored in the translations. The overall meaning has not been transferred thoroughly to the TT, as the pragmatic effects of turning sentence elements to marked positions are overlooked. The translator must always be alert to the possibility of rhetoric in the Quranic construction in order to account for a full-rounded meaning. They should keep in mind that their translation is not for Arabic speakers, who may sometimes understand the pragmatic function of the foregrounded element in a sentence. Therefore, preserving the basic content and ignoring additional meanings in translating sacred texts will deny the interested readers the full understanding of the message.

In order to provide a more accurate English rendition of the Quranic constructions, translators should be equipped with knowledge in the sentence analysis of Arabic so that they can grasp the semantic effects of foregrounding different sentence elements. Such analysis will make clear the

difference in meaning between the apparent structure of the Quranic constructions and their deep structures, which imply ellipted parts that do not appear in the surface structure of these constructions.

Ignoring the possibility of rhetoric in the marked constructions of the Quran is likely to cause a semantic loss of the shades of meaning, which are equally important in sacred texts. In fact, it is familiarity with all meanings that foregrounded elements produce in various contexts that makes the translator more capable of detecting and rendering the message as closely as possible. As a rule of thumb, Quranic translators must be alert to the various issues pertinent to the Arabic grammar and rhetoric instead of ignoring them.

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