



RESEARCH ARTICLE

CONSISTENCY IN TRANSLATING THE DIVINE NAME AL-'ALĪM IN THE HOLY QURĀN

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Abstract

Translating the meaning of the Holy Qurān includes translating the meanings of the Divine Names, which are related to the Almighty Allah. This study focused on the consistency of three modern translations in translating the most recurred Divine Name in the Holy Qurān, Al-'Alīm, which recurred one hundred and fifty-three times as traced by researcher. Al-'Alīm, the All-Knower, which refers to El-'elim, 'knowledge. Al-'Alīm is the one whose knowledge encompasses everything. This study is comparative as it compared the ST with the TT. On the other hand, it is descriptive on the base that it investigated the consistency of specific translations. The researcher built a corpus then analysed the data quantitatively and qualitatively. The study proved that one translation only was absolutely consistent, but the other two showed less consistency.

Keywords: Consistency, Divine Name, Version, Al-'Alīm.

Introduction

Since the differences between languages are cultural and linguistic, translating culturally specific issues from Arabic into English is a problematic task. Bahameed (2014) stated that some terms have cultural or religious implications that requires attention on the translator to produce satisfactory translations (p. 167). One of the cultural problematic issues is the religious differences between the two languages. They are different in many cultural factors such as religion, environment, historical background...etc. Whereas Arabic language has Islamic reference background, English has Christian. Divine Names (the Names of Allah) are among these issues. They are descriptive epithetical derivatives which describe the Names of the Almighty Allah. They have translated in different ways in the already available translations of meaning of the Holy Qurān.

Statement of the Problem

Producing different versions of translation for each individual Divine Name by translators is problematic as it confuses the reader because he finds the same ST but different TT. The problem is represented in producing different versions of translation for. This study showed this problematic diversity in three translations.

Significance of the Study

Names of the Almighty God, Allah, as well as all the designations that describe His Divine Attributes are very important in our religion as we pray for Allah using the Most Beautiful Divine Names and worship him by them. Allah the Almighty said in Sūrat Al-A'raf " وَ لِلّٰهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا وَ ذُرُّوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ سَيُجْزَوْنَ " "The Most Excellent Names belong to God: use them to call on Him, and keep away from those who abuse them— they will be requited for what they do". (Abdel Haleem's translation, 7:180). All these names

are most beautiful. Al-'Uthaymīn (1414/1430AH) pointed out that “All of Allaah’s Names are beautiful, meaning that they reach the utmost limits of beauty” (p. 19). Those Names have no deficiencies or imperfections in any way whatsoever unlike the names of the creation. So, they should be clear in meaning and reflect the same meaning in all occasions they have mentioned in Qurān.

Aim of the Study

To examine the consistency in translating the most recurred Divine Name in the Holy Qurān i.e. Al-A‘līm *The All-Knower* into English. Three modern translations were studied that occurred in the age of technology of CAT tools which help translators to produce a consistent translation.

Consistency

Consistency indicates using the same target word or words to render a source word wherever being occurred in the text. Hornby (2005) defined consistency as “the quality of always behaving in the same way or of having the same opinions, standard, etc.” (p. 324). Certainly, the consistent translating using the same target word to correspond to the source word of terms makes the translation precise and accurate. Munday (2016) explained that “in order to maintain cohesion for the TT reader, a single term will normally need to be translated consistently”. (p. 125). The idea that Newmark (1988) also asserted that translators should use the official or the generally accepted translation when translating the terms considering this as one procedure of translation which he called recognized translation (p. 89). This term which was clarified by Chan (2017) “the same term is always used with the same sense, and the same object or action is always described by the same term” (p. 80).

The question that arose is; can the translator be consistent in rendering the Divine Names? The answer lies in the meanings of the Divine Names in different contexts, namely, do they have the same meaning in different contexts? Actually, it is known that Muslim scholars always conduct the meanings of the Divine Names out of context and explain their meanings generally and separately. They give the meaning or even meanings of one Divine Name as having the same meaning in all contexts. Ibn Al-Qayyim (2003) stated that one Divine Name could convey more than one meaning similarly as the one which has one meaning (p. 44). That is to say, even having more than one meaning, all meanings are included in all contexts, which means that each Divine Name has one meaning or more than one meaning in all contexts. Qānū‘ as cited in Al-Ghamdi (2015) confirmed:

Most early Muslim linguists and theologians, following in the steps of Ghazālī, argue that unlike some polysemous terms in the Qurān, Divine Name are monosemous and that each Name has only one meaning in all the Qurānic contexts in which it appears to always describe the same Divine Attribute. (pp. 184-186).

Abdel-Haleem as cited in Al-Ghamdi (2015) advised the translators to “be cautious regarding when it is commendable to be consistent in rendering frequently-mentioned terms, and when it is better to take the contextual meaning into consideration (p. 17).

Holy Qurān

The Holy Qurān is an inimitable speech revealed by Allah to the Prophet Mohammed (may pray and peace be upon him) by the archangel Gabriel. Al-Mehri, (2017) defined “The Qur’an is the word of the Ever-living God; it has been sent down to guide humanity for all times to come. No book can be like it” (p. 5). It has an enormous importance in the life of Muslims as being a whole book of life. “It contains a complete code which provides for all areas of life, whether spiritual, intellectual, political, social or economic. It is a code which has no boundaries of time, place or nation” (The Presidency of Islamic Researches, Ifta, Call, and Guidance, 1405AH, p. v). The Holy Qurān summarized this in Sūrat Al-Isrā’ “إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلَّتِي هِيَ أَقْوَمٌ” “Verily, this Qur’an guides to that which is most just and right” (Hilali-Khan’s translation, 17:9). Hence, it is

valid for all times and places. In fact, it can be described as the supreme authority in Islam as being the main source.

Divine Names in the Holy Qurān.

The Divine Names have been used a lot in the Holy Qurān as many 'āyāt are concluded by Divine Names. Allah Almighty at the very beginning of the Qurān's revelation i.e. the first āyah ordered his Prophet Muḥammad to recite or read in/by the Name of his Rabb saying in Sūrat Al-'Alaq "اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ" "Read! In the Name of your Lord Who has created (all that exists)." (Hilali-Khan's translation, 96:1). Allah Almighty also ordered his Prophet Muḥammad to remember the Name of Allah, Glorify his Name, call on Him by these names, however, Allah ordered his Prophet not to eat that on which Allah's Name has not been pronounced. They are called in four occasions in the Holy Qurān as "Al-Asmā Al-Ḥusnā" meaning "the Most Excellent Names or the Most Beautiful Names.

Al-A'īlīm The All-Knower

Al-A'īlīm is the Divine Name which mentioned most between all Divine Names. It was derived from the root 'l-m to know which is from 'elim 'knowledge. The Divine Name Al-A'īlīm is the one whose knowledge encompasses everything, its outward and inward knowledge, the subtle and the sublime, its beginning and its end (Ghazālī, 1987, p 86). As-Sa'dī (1421 AH) stated that Al-A'īlīm is who knows the secrets, the revelation, the impossible, and the possible. He also knows what is in the upper and lower worlds, the past, the present, and the future, nothing is hidden from Him (p. 194). This means that Al-A'īlīm indicates to the absolute full knowledge of Him Almighty.

Methodology

This study is comparative as it did compare the ST with the TT to investigate the consistency. According to the aims of this study it is descriptive on the base that it investigated the consistency of specific translations. Kumar (2011) pointed out that "a descriptive study attempts to describe systematically a situation, problem, phenomenon, service or programme, or provides information".

It analysed three translations with the ST. Williams & Chesterman (2002) stated that analysing translated texts includes "comparison of a translation with its original. A translation comparison deals with several translations into the same language or into different languages, of the same original". (p. 6). This study adopted both qualitative and quantitative methods of research i.e. a mixed method design as the included data needed to be collected and analysed quantitatively and qualitatively.

The instrument used to investigate is the corpus built by the researcher which represent the method of this study. Paltridge & Starfield (2007) stated that "methods refer to the actual research instruments and materials used" (p. 119).

Data Collection

The data for this study is collected from a ST i.e. the Qurānic text and TT i.e. three English meaning Qurān translations. In order to collect data, the researcher built a corpus as follows:

1. The researcher traced the recurrences of the Divine Name Al-'Alīm throughout the Holy Qurān using *The Indexed Lexicon of The Holy Qurān Words* by Abdubaqi (1364 AH) in addition to using electronic applications on the cell phone i.e. Free Al-quran⁽¹⁾ and computer programme, Al- Tafsīr Al-Moysar⁽²⁾. By that the recurrence of them became clear.

⁽¹⁾- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.isysway.free.alquran>

⁽²⁾- www.moysar.com

2. As the Divine Name Al-'Alīm could indicate to others in some occasions in the Holy Qurān, many Islamic resources, including old and contemporary Qurānic commentaries (Tafsīrs), have been consulted to find those indicated to Allah. The old one, Ibn Kathīr (1999) and most recent, *Al-Tafsīr Al-Moyassar* (2010) and As-Sa'di (2000), excluding the names which have disagreement of being Divine Names among Muslim scholars.
3. The translations were gathered from the three Electronic soft copies, namely, PDF files to facilitate the collection.
4. In the corpus, there were two groups that established for each Divine Name; one for definite name and the other for indefinite. Each group contained recurred three translations of the Divine Name as in the ST.

By executing these steps the corpus of the study was performed. Afterward, the data began to be analysed.

Date Analysis

In order to draw objective conclusions and avoid subjectivity in evaluating the consistency of the three selected translations, criteria of evaluation have been suggested to fit the purpose of this study as follows:

- 1) The Divine Name translation of each translator was separated in two Word documents; one for definite and the other for indefinite name.
- 2) When having two separate Word documents, it became easier to measure the consistency of the translation in the Word document. This measurement could be carried out by sorting the translations in the Word document to get the recurrence of each version of translation separately.
- 3) The researcher considered the versions of translation repeated mostly by translator the consistent translation of him.
- 4) The proportion of consistency of each case of the Divine Name could be expressed as ratio using this equation: *consistent version: recurrence of Name*
- 5) Then the percentage of consistency of the Divine Name in the two cases of definite and indefinite were calculated together based on the equation of proportion mentioned in the previous paragraph using this equation: $\frac{\text{total number of the two consistent versions}}{\text{total number of recurrence of Divine Name}} \times 100$.

To analyse the data Qualitatively these steps were followed:

- 1) The researcher identified the root of all versions in the Word documents.
- 2) Identifying the head words of the different versions which are the main words that all other modifiers are linked to them and they convey the fundamental meaning as Williams (2005) called them key words and pointed out that "they are at the head of the phrase and the other words in the phrase are attached to them" (p. 57).
- 3) Identified the additional modifiers that translator used them to reinforce and emphasize the meaning, which turned many versions out of consistency. Modifier as a term in language is used to give more information or to specify the head word more. A modifier according to O'Grady as cited in Abdul-Raof, (2018) is "an optional element that describes a property of the head" (p. 216). This means that they give more information about the head word as stated by (Williams, 2005, p.77). However, the researcher did not tackle the definite article *the* with these modifiers when analysing because it was tackled when comparing the consistency of the two cases.
- 4) Comparing the consistency of the two cases i.e. definite and indefinite.

The researcher has excluded the differences in using punctuation marks, namely, lowercase and uppercase and using hyphen because they do not affect the semantic features as they have the same meaning with lowercase or uppercase, hyphen or without. Moreover, any deviation in the version structure exclude it from consistency.

The Divine Name Al-'Alīm *The All-Knower* was chosen because it recurred more than all Divine Names in the Holy Qurān, namely, one hundred and fifty-three times; thirty-two in the definite case and one hundred and twenty-one in the indefinite case. The consistency of the three translations was as follows:

Ghālī's translation.

Ghālī succeeded in producing a consistent translation in rendering this Divine Name Al-'Alīm in both definite and Indefinite cases with an absolute percentage 100%. He used *The Ever-Knowing* in the definite case Al-'Alīm and *Ever-Knowing* in the indefinite case 'Alīm. He adopted the root *know* from knowledge and the present participle *knowing* as a head word to convey the meaning with the adverb modifier *ever* to emphasize the meaning related to Allah Almighty. He used the definite article *the* in the definite case.

Abdel Haleem's translation.

Abdel Haleem's translation is actually new as he described in the title. This translation considered as the best by some scholars as Al-Ghamdi, (2015) who stated that "Haleem's translation has been praised as the best accredited translation of the Qurān to be introduced to English readers by an Arab translator" (pp. 40-41). Abdel Haleem consistency in translating Al-'Alīm *The All-Knower* showed.

1. Definite.

Abdel Haleem used three versions to translate Al-'Alīm which were; *All Knowing / knows all / the All Knowing*. All versions used the root *know*, from knowledge, but two head words were used i.e., the present participle *knowing* and the present verb form *knows* to convey the fundamental meaning of the translation. The modifier *all* was used in all versions. The consistent version was *the All-Knowing* due to recurring twenty-seven out of thirty-two. The two other versions were used in the indefinite case i.e. *All Knowing* or verb form i.e., *knows all*. Although *All Knowing* was the same as the consistent version but turned out of consistency as being used without the definite article *the*.

2. Indefinite.

Fifteen versions of translation were produced by Abdel Haleem to translate 'Alīm. i.e., all aware / All-Knowing / all seeing / fully aware / Has full knowledge / has endless knowledge / has knowledge / Knows / knows all / knows exactly / knows fully / knows very well / knows well / truly has full knowledge / well aware. Eleven versions used the root *know* with three head words i.e., the present participle *knowing*, the noun *knowledge* and the present verb form *knows* in eleven versions. Three versions used the adjective *aware* as a root and head word in three versions. One version used *see* with the present participle head word *seeing*. Abdel Haleem added modifiers in fourteen versions and used the auxiliary verb *has* in four versions to build structure i.e., all, fully, Has full, has endless, has, exactly, fully, very well, well and truly has full. The consistent version was *All-Knowing* as it was used mostly i.e., fifty-four out of one hundred and twenty-one which was a very low consistent. To sum up the two percentages of consistency of this Divine Name, Al-'Alīm, it showed a ratio of eighty-one out of one hundred and fifty-three with a percentage of 53%.

Despite the modernity of this translation, using contemporary words and the possibility of using technology to control consistency, Abdel Haleem used different versions and did not produce a consistent translation, taking no advantage of the facilities of the era in which he appeared.

Khattab's translation.

Khattab's translation has issued few years ago so it is one of the latest translations of Qurān. Khattab consistency in translating Al-'Alīm *The All-Knower* showed.

1. Definite.

The translator used *the All-Knowing* to translate the Divine Name *Al-'Alīm* in all versions. Consequently, he showed absolute consistency in translating this Divine Name in the definite case i.e., thirty-two out of thirty-two. The translator used the root *know*, the present participle *knowing* as a head word, the modifier *all* and the definite article *the*.

2. Indefinite.

Although Khattab showed absolute consistency in rendering this Divine Name in the definite case, he produced twelve different versions of translation in the indefinite case, 'Alīm i.e. *All-Aware / All-Knowing / certainly knows best / Fully Aware / fully know / has 'full' knowledge / has perfect knowledge / certainly well known / knows best / surely knows best / the One All-Knowing / truly All-Knowing*. Ten versions used the root *know* with four different head words viz. the present participle *knowing* in three versions, the present form *know* in four versions, the noun *knowledge* in two versions, the past participle *known* in one version. The other two versions used the root *aware* which is the head word also. All versions have modifiers i.e. *All, certainly, best, Fully, 'full', perfect, certainly well, best, surely, One* and *truly*. Two versions used the auxiliary verb *has* to build structure. The consistent version was *All-Knowing* as it was used mostly i.e., sixty-seven out of one hundred and twenty-one which was a low consistency.

The consistency of this Divine Name, Al-'Alīm, in both cases was low i.e., ninety-nine out of one hundred fifty-three with a percentage of 65%. The translation of Khattab was the after Ghālī's in consistency.

By analyzing the consistency of the three translations, it became clear that Ghālī had the most consistent versions, then Khattab and Abdel Haleem who showed the least consistency. The consistent versions of the three translators are as follows:

Table 1: Consistent versions of the three translators.

Translators	Recurrence: Consistency						Percentage
	Definite		Indefinite		Total		
	Rec.	Con.	Rec.	Con.	Rec.	Con.	
Ghālī	32	32	121	121	153	153	100
	The Ever-Knowing		Ever-Knowing				
Abdel Haleem	32	27	121	54	153	81	53
	the All Knowing		All Knowing				
Khattab	32	32	121	67	153	99	65
	the All-Knowing		All-Knowing				

Conclusion

To conclude this research article, the findings can be listed as follows:

1. While Ghālī's translation has proved an absolute consistency in all versions of translation, Khattab's translation has proved that in the definite case only.
2. Abdel Haleem's translation and Khattab's translation in the indefinite case showed low consistency.
3. In the consistent versions, all three translations have used the same root i.e., *know* and head word i.e. *knowing*. However, Abdel Haleem and Khattab adopted the same modifier i.e., *all*, Ghālī used *Ever*.

4. All three translators used one root in the definite case but Abdel Haleem and Khattab used other roots in the indefinite case.
5. All three translators took into consideration the definite and indefinite case and reflected that in their consistent versions.
6. Depending on technology represented in CAT tools for controlling consistency in translating the meanings of the Holy Qurān is still unpractical among translators.

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مقالة بحثية

الاتساق في ترجمة إسم الله العليم في القرآن الكريم

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المُلخَص

أن ترجمة معاني القرآن الكريم تشمل ترجمة معاني الأسماء الحسنى المتعلقة بالله سبحانه، وقد ركزت هذه الدراسة على اتساق ترجمة إسم العليم لكونه الأكثر تكراراً في القرآن الكريم من بين الأسماء الحسنى حيث تكرر مائة وثلاثة وخمسين مرة كما تتبعه الباحث، وذلك في ثلاث ترجمات حديثة، والعليم يدل على العلم المطلق الذي يشمل علمه كل شيء. هذه الدراسة تقارن بين النص المصدر وهو القرآن الكريم والنص المترجم، وهي تصف مدى اتساق الترجمات، حيث قام الباحث بجمع البيانات الأساسية من الترجمات الثلاث وتحليلها كمياً ونوعياً، وقد أثبتت الدراسة أن ترجمة واحدة فقط أظهرت الاتساق الكامل وهي ترجمة غالي بينما الترجمتين الأخرين أظهرتا اتساقاً أقل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاتساق، الأسماء الحسنى، نسخة الترجمة، العليم.

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