

Types of Syntactic Equivalence in Qur'ānic Translations from English, German, and Hebrew

Tipos de equivalencia sintáctica en traducciones coránicas del inglés, alemán y hebreo

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Abstract: Generally, there is little expectation for linguistic equivalence in translations because languages are linguistically and semantically incongruous. Though this premise is basically correct, here it is argued that syntactic equivalence is at times possible and that the translation process can involve a matching at the syntactic level even when some components or structures appear untranslatable. In this article, sets of examples from three Qur'ānic translations (English, German, and Hebrew) are examined. It is shown that the translators in some cases failed to generate an equivalence although syntactic equivalence may have been possible. These inaccuracies may arise from insufficient syntactic knowledge of the SL or the translator may maintain minimal similarity to the source language for no apparent reason. This can lead to misinterpretation of the intended meaning of the source language.

Keywords: Syntactic equivalence, Qur'ānic translations, Meaning, Misinterpretation, Syntactic knowledge

Resumen: Por regla general, existen pocas expectativas de equivalencia lingüística en las traducciones debido a que los idiomas son lingüística y semánticamente incongruentes. Aunque esta premisa es básicamente correcta, en este trabajo se argumenta que la equivalencia sintáctica es, en ocasiones, posible y que el proceso de traducción puede implicar una coincidencia a nivel sintáctico incluso cuando algunos componentes o estructuras parecen intraducibles. En este artículo se examinan conjuntos de ejemplos de tres traducciones coránicas (inglés, alemán y hebreo). Se demuestra que los traductores, en algunos casos, no lograron generar una equivalencia, aunque la equivalencia sintáctica puede haber sido posible. Estas inexactitudes pueden deberse a un conocimiento sintáctico insuficiente del SL o a que el traductor puede mantener una similitud mínima con el idioma

de origen sin motivo aparente. Esto puede dar lugar a una interpretación errónea del significado previsto del idioma original.

Palabras clave: Equivalencia sintáctica, Traducciones coránicas, Significado, Mala interpretación, Conocimiento sintáctico.

INTRODUCTION

When “average” individuals read one of the many Qur'ānic translations without comparing it to the original text they may consider them to be coherent and adequate works that render the message of the Qur'ān in a very eloquent way. However, when the original texts are assessed for equivalence by professional translators, academics or bilingual specialists, the shortcomings of the translations tend to come to the surface.

In the literature, the definition of *equivalence* is flexible, fuzzy and controversial, and involves semantics, grammar, phonology and pragmatics. Typically, there are four main types of equivalence: (a) Pragmatic, where information and content are merely conveyed; (b) Aesthetic, which is applied to poetic texts where an expressive and stylistic equivalent to the author's work is produced; (c) Ethnographic, aiming to reconstruct the cultural background, usually through scholarly commentary; (d) Linguistic, which involves an interlinear word-for-word or even morpheme-for-morpheme translation (Newman, 1980, pp. 62-63)¹. This article focuses on linguistic equivalence,² or more precisely on equivalence at the syntactic level, while discussing the factors and strategies that guide the actual translation process of syntactic units appearing in the Qur'ān.

Although there are classes of words such as verbs, nouns and adjectives, and universal grammatical rules across many languages, the fundamental premise is that there are linguistic differences between the source language (henceforth SL) and the target language (henceforth TL) such that a translator's choices are conditioned by the grammatical rules of the SL. However, are these differences the only ones that can affect the translatability or equivalence of syntactic structures? Here, I argue that even when a full grammatical equivalence can be achieved, translations can still deviate. Some of these departures cannot be explained, whereas others are rooted in the complexity of syntactic structure. Rather than an in-depth

¹ Newman's explanation is based on Casagrande (1954, pp. 225-340).

² As shown below, linguistic equivalence overlaps with semantic equivalence, i.e., the word/structure in both the source language and the target language has the same meaning. If the syntactic structure is encoded differently from the original structure, the semantic equivalence is usually no longer preserved.

investigation of the syntactic structure, the translator may simply draw on basic explanations in grammatical treatises. The aim of this study is not only to shed light on the reasons for inaccuracies in Qur'ānic translations but also to underscore the need to read translations with a critical eye.

This article is divided into four sections:

(a) Theoretical background: Since this study deals with the syntactic aspects of Qur'ānic translations I first discuss several theories on the concept of equivalence developed long ago by linguistic theorists such as Nida (1964) and Catford (1965). The concept of equivalence is a topic of heated debate among scholars. The theories developed by Nida and Catford have been criticized³ and several recent definitions of translation equivalence have been put forward.⁴ Nevertheless, I find that Nida's and Catford's arguments are still relevant, for the analysis of the translation of holy scriptures such as the Qur'ān.

(b) Examples: As a scholar of the syntax of the Qur'ān, I am called upon to render the syntactic structure to the best of my ability. Over the years I have become familiar with all types of translations in various languages and have concluded that there is no such thing as a fully equivalent linguistic/syntactic translation of the Qur'ān. The representative examples discussed here have been collected over the course of my ongoing research on the translation of a variety of syntactic phenomena such as particles, agreement, word order, pronouns, tenses, and aspects. Some have syntactic equivalence in the TL, but others do not.

(c) Analysis: Identifying the four types of syntactic equivalence:

First, the translations of each example were carefully examined, and I indicate whether the syntactic structure was fully or only partially recovered and the possible reasons for the choice of translation. This process enabled me to classify the examples into four types of syntactic equivalence. The analytical methodology was based on a comparison of the source text with the translations in terms of word class and sentence/clause. In her study, Van Leuven-Zwart (1989, pp. 155-156) used the term *transeme* for a comprehensible textual unit. There are two types of transemes: *state-of-affairs transemes* and *satellite transemes*. The first type consists of a predicate (verb or copula) and its argument, whereas the second type lacks a predicate and might be described as an adverbial specification or amplification of the *state*

³ See for example Snell-Hornby (1988, pp. 22), who argues that the notion of equivalence is "imprecise, ill-defined, and representing an illusion of symmetry between languages." This is also quoted by Kashgary (2011, p. 48).

⁴ See: Saldanha (2011, p. 148-152).

of affairs. For some examples I also divided the Qur'ānic verse into transemes, in which case the boundaries of the *state-of-affairs transemes* are indicated in Roman numerals.

(d) The translations: The examples are taken from three contemporary translations in three different languages: German and English, which belong to the family of Indo-European languages, and Hebrew, which belongs to the Semitic group of languages. These translations were chosen because in my opinion, they are good exemplars of modern 20th century works. The language of these translations is clear and easy to understand as compared to earlier translations characterized by archaic language.

(1) German: Bobzin (2010). In the appendix to the translation, he first gives the background to the Qur'ān and then notes some of the translation strategies he applied. He also states that he tried to preserve the Qur'ānic text as much as possible, but that there were cases where he had to depart from it to adapt the German translation and make it comprehensible. For example, he could not always keep the same word order, even if in Arabic a specific word order was used for purposes of emphasis. Another important grammatical issue raised by Bobzin is the particle *wa-* (or *wāw al-istī'nāf* “*wāw* indicating the start of a new clause”), which precedes the *fawāṣil* “the final words in the verse” (*lit.* “partition”). Bobzin explains that this particle is a well-known feature in Semitic languages that indicates the beginning of a new sentence. He chose, however, not to translate this particle in most cases.

Halima (2014, 124) noted that every translation has a rationale. Translators usually claim that there are only poor translations and that their translation of the Qur'ānic text captures the meaning much better. Several translators have made this explicit.

(2) Hebrew: Adawi (2015). This translation was initiated by the Center of Qur'ānic Studies, the *Bayyināt*, located in Amman. In the preface it is stated that the professional translation team encountered numerous difficulties relating to the lexicon, grammar, and morphology. For example, there are 7 verb-stem patterns in Hebrew, whereas Arabic has 12 (*awzān*). This translation was verified by a team of professionals including experts in the fields of Hebrew, Arabic and Qur'ānic exegesis to ensure that the translation would be as reliable and accurate as possible.

(3) English: Fakhry (1998). In the introduction he writes:

A large number of English translations have appeared in modern times, the best known of which are those of Rodwell, Pickthall, Dawood, Bell and Arberry. These translations vary in point of conformity to the Arabic text and are not entirely free from error or deliberate departure from the original, for purposes of literary fluency

or elegance. In the present translation, we have attempted to give as faithful an English rendering of the Arabic text as possible and to correct the errors or lapses of the above-mentioned translations.

Since *equivalence* is a key concept here, I turn first to some of the definitions proposed in the research literature.

1. CONCEPTS OF EQUIVALENCY

To produce a (good) translation, the translator must be highly proficient in the source language. It is not enough to be able to consult dictionaries: he or she must first understand the content of the message in the SL. The next step is to find the correct words and the stylistic features that best convey the concept expressed in the SL (Nida, 1964, pp. 145, 150). The starting point of every translation theory is that no two languages are identical in the meaning ascribed to symbols (the *significant*) or in the ways in which they are ordered in phrases and sentences (Nida, 1964, p. 156).⁵ The literature tends to define two types of equivalence, termed formal and dynamic. Formal equivalence is centred on the message itself, in both form and content. Here, the translator looks for the appropriate correspondence of words, sentences, and concepts so that the message in the TL will adhere to the message in the SL as closely as possible. Dynamic equivalence, on the other hand, is not concerned with finding “a perfect match” between the SL, but rather with a dynamic relationship where the message of the original text is so well transported into the TL that the *response* of the reader is essentially the same as that of the original receiver (Nida, 1964, p. 159).

To determine the original message, formal-equivalence translations attempt to reproduce equivalent grammatical units, and use the same word classes as in the SL; in other words, to translate a noun with a noun, a verb with a verb, a particle with a particle, etc., to preserve the meaning expressed in the SL. However, in many cases finding an equivalence for certain formal elements in the SL such as word order is fraught with difficulties. In this case the translator can add marginal notes to explain the syntactic structure in the SL and its contribution to the message (Nida, 1964, p. 165).

By contrast, the appropriate dynamic correspondences do not require every structure present in the SL to be duplicated in the TL (Nida, 1964, p. 224). The question is whether this flexibility will distort the intended meaning of the SL. Nida argued that the primary aim of translation is to reproduce the message, which requires many grammatical and lexical adjustments to be

⁵ Compare: Nida and Taber (1969, p. 3); Bassnett (1991, pp. 24-25); Kelly (1979, p. 24); Newmark (1981, p. 17).

successful. But what is the nature of these adjustments? Are they really required to reproduce the meaning of the SL?

Catford (1965, p. 20) defined *translation* as the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL). However, there are examples of translations in which equivalent material is replaced by non-equivalent TL material. Consider, for example, Fakhry's (1998, p. 5) translation of Q 1:6-7 *ihdinā ṣ-ṣirāṭa l-mustaqīma ṣirāṭa llaḍīna an'amta 'alayhim ḡayri l-maḡḍūbi 'alayhim* "Lead us to the right path, the path of those You have favored, not those who have incurred Your wrath." While most of the verse in English follows the syntax of the original text, the phrase *ḡayri l-maḡḍūbi 'alayhim* is replaced by a non-equivalent structure. *al-maḡḍūb* is a definite passive participle form in the masculine singular, followed by the prepositional phrase *'alayhim*. However, there is no trace of this form in Fakhry's translation; rather, he replaces the passive participle with a verbal form.⁶ These examples suggest that the binary division into formal and dynamic need to be revisited. Below I suggest differentiating between four types of syntactic equivalence.

2. FOUR TYPES OF SYNTACTIC EQUIVALENCE IN QUR'ĀNIC TRANSLATIONS

2.1. Full Grammatical Equivalence

Type I corresponds to what Nida meant by *formal equivalence* where the translator seeks to match each syntactic component and syntactic structure to its appropriate counterpart. Specifically, the translation aims to use the same part of speech (verb, noun, adjective, adverb, conjunction, preposition, pronoun, etc.) and the same syntactic structure (e.g., relative clause), although the translator is clearly aware that specific features characterizing Arabic are manifested by different linguistic devices in other languages, such as definiteness. For example, in Arabic and Hebrew, the definite article is prefixed to the noun, whereas in English and German the definite article is a word preceding a person or thing that is identified or specified, e.g., *al-kitāb*⁷ (Q 2:2)⁸ is rendered as "the book" or "das Buch". Arabic also has an extensive case system, by contrast to English and Hebrew that have largely abandoned the inflectional case system. For example, in *mina s-samā' i* (Q 2:22), the word *samā'* is in the genitive case in Arabic; but in English ("from the heavens") or in Hebrew ("מן השמים" *min ha-shamayim*) the genitive case is not used. A similar problem arises for the use of the

⁶ Gadalla (2010) discussed how the passive participle forms are rendered in Qur'ānic translations. He found that they can appear as adjectives, nouns, verbs (passive and active) and adverbs.

⁷ For the transliteration system of Hebrew and Arabic see Table 1.

⁸ Q is the abbreviation of the word Qur'ān. (Q 2:2); the parentheses refer to the chapter and verse number in the Qur'ān.

pronominal suffix in Arabic, whereas in English, Hebrew, and German it is rendered as a separate pronoun. For example, *aḥrağahumā* (Q 2:36) can be rendered in German as “(und Satan) trieb sie” or in English as “(Satan) expelled them/got them out.” However, despite these differences, the translators can take steps so that all the key features of the syntactic component are reflected in the LT, as shown in example 1:

(1) *wa-llāhu yuḥibbu ṣ-ṣābirīna* (Q 3:146)

And Allah loves the steadfast (Fakhry, 1998, p. 46)

Gott liebt die Geduldigen (Bobzin, 2010, p. 62)

ואלה אוהב את הסבילים *ve-allah ohev et ha-savlanim* (Adawai, 2015, p. 68)

Here, the translators had no difficulty finding an equivalent translation since in Arabic, SV is the marked word order, while in English, German and Hebrew SV is the unmarked word order. Furthermore, each word and its syntactic features have an equivalent translation in English and Hebrew:

I. The subject *Allāh* is rendered by the equivalent noun “God” or “Allah.”

II. The verbal predicate *yuḥibbu* “loves” is in present tense, indicating the habitual present. This verbal aspect is also found in English and Hebrew, where it is similarly expressed by a verb in the present.

III. In Arabic the direct object *aṣ-ṣābirīna* “the steadfast” takes the form of a definite active participle. In English and German, it is rendered as a noun, while in Hebrew the form of active participle is preserved.

Example 2 illustrates a more complicated unit:

(2) *fa-kayfa idā ġama‘ nāhum li-yawmin lā rayba fīhi wa-wuffiyat kullu nafsin mā kasabat wa-hum lā yuḥlamūna* (Q 3:25)

But how will they fare when We gather them together on a day which is undoubted, and each soul shall be paid in full for whatever it has earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly? (Fakhry, 1998, p. 37)

Wie aber, wenn wir sie sammeln zu einem Tage, über den kein Zweifel herrscht, und jeder Seele zurückerstattet wird, was sie erbracht hat, und niemandem Unrecht angetan wird? (Bobzin, 2010, p. 50).

וכיצד, אם נאספם ליום, אין ספק בו, וישולם לכל נפש מלוא גמולה במה שעשתה והם לא יעשקו

ve-keyzad im ne'asfam le-yom ein safek bo ve-yeshulam le-kol nefesh mlo gmula be-ma she'asta ve-hem lo yeashku (Adawi, 2015, p. 56)

Q 3:25 can be divided into six transeemes:

I. *fa-kayfa*: this interrogative particle is accurately rendered in all three languages. However, according to Rāzī (2000, vol. 7, p. 190) there is a deletion, and this utterance should be reconstructed as *fa-kayfa šūratuhum wa-ḥāluhum* "how is their manner and their condition (when)...". Arab grammarians and rhetoricians have defined ellipsis as having linguistic and technical features. *Linguistic* ellipsis refers to leaving out a word or a phrase from a particular construction. The *technical* aspect refers to the partial or complete deletion of a construction, if there is evidence justifying the deletion (i.e., the grammaticality of the sentence and/or its meaning is retrievable from the linguistic or non-linguistic contexts) (El-Shiyab, 1998, p. 41). According to Rāzī, the deletion in Q 3:25 was done for brevity and/or stylistic reasons, because the deleted components are retrievable from the context. Of the three translators of Q 3:25, Fakhry alone refers to the underlying structure of this unit, translating it as "how will they fare." El-Shiyab (1998, p. 48) noted that although ellipsis occurs in all languages, the specific patterns or structures that allow particular words to be omitted are not equivalent or alike. Therefore, an elliptical expression that is obligatory in one language may not be in another. In translations of religious books such as the Holy Qur'ān or the Bible, certain words and structures can be omitted from the text, but it remains meaningful. When this same text is rendered into another language, the translator may not adhere to the same strategy used in the source language text. S/he may add information for clarity or may change text structure to fit the construction patterns of the TL.

Note that for native Arabic speakers who read the Qur'ān in Arabic or its translation, it is not difficult to identify where a deletion has occurred because they are aware of this grammatical/stylistic/rhetorical feature. However, as El-Shiyab (1998, p. 50) pointed out, even if the translator maintains the deletion in the translation, it is not clear how/whether the reader will understand it because this depends on the reader's linguistic competence, knowledge of Arabic in general and the Qur'ānic text. Take, for example, Q 3:25. The Hebrew or German reader will immediately notice that the question particle needs completion. But if the translator does not add any explanation in the footnotes, the reader will be confronted with a unit that is not cohesive.

Deletion is an integral feature of Qur'ānic text which deserves study in its own right. The most crucial instances are cases where retrieving the

deleted components is obligatory (e.g., to avoid ambiguity) in the translation and cases in which they may be left out.

II. *idā ǧama' nāhum li-yawmin*: This temporal clause belongs to the eschatological Qur'ānic descriptions of Judgment Day. The particle *idā* followed by a verb in the perfect can be used as a temporal demonstrative or as a conditional particle. When used as a temporal demonstrative it follows a verb in the perfect indicating the future (Dror, 2013a, p. 47), as manifested in the translations of Q 3:25.

The prepositional phrase *li-yawmin* is correctly rendered in German (“zu einem Tage”) and in Hebrew (“ליום” *le-yom*), whereas the English translation (“on a day”) is incorrect. As Rāzī (2000, vol. 7, pp. 190-191) noted, *li-yawmin* rather than *fī yawmin* is used because the underlying structure should be (*ǧama' nāhum*) *li-ḥisābi yawmin* “(we gathered them) for the day of Judgment”, but the *nomen regens* was deleted.

III. *lā rayba fīhi*. This *transeme* functions as a relative clause. However, in Arabic there are two types of relative clause: *ṣila*, the “conjunctive clause” and *ṣifa*, the “qualificative clause”. The latter type is preceded by an indefinite noun without a conjunctive noun (Wright, 1971, third part, p. 317). In English and in German this must be rendered using a relative pronoun (“über den” and “which”). In the Hebrew translation, like the Arabic, the relative pronoun is absent, although it could have been rendered as “ש (אין בו)” *she-(ein bo)*. Additionally, the negation particle *lā* is located at the head of the clause and when it is immediately followed by an indefinite noun whose existence it emphatically negates, it causes the noun to be in the accusative. The negation is also expressed in the translation, where all three components are preserved: *lā* the negation particle; *rayba* the negated noun; *fīhi* the prepositional phrase).

IV. *wa-wuffiyat kullu nafsin mā kasabat*. This clause has four components, all preserved in the three translations:

<i>wa-</i>	<i>wuffiyat</i>	<i>kullu nafsin</i>	<i>mā kasabat</i>
conjunctive particle	verb in passive=verbal predicate	annexation=subject	relative clause=direct object
and	shall be paid	each soul	whatever it has earned
und	zurückerstattet wird	Jeder Seele	was sie erbracht hat

ו ve-	ישולם <i>yeshulam</i>	לכל נפש <i>le-kol nefesh</i>	במה שעשתה <i>be-ma she-'asta</i>
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V. *wa-hum lā yuẓlamūna*: the final *transeme* is a clause where all four components are only rendered correctly in the German and Hebrew translations:

<i>wa-</i>	<i>hum</i>	<i>lā</i>	<i>yuẓlamūna</i>
conjunctive particle	independent pronoun=subject	negative particle	verb in passive=verbal predicate
and	they	shall not	be dealt with unjustly
und	niemanden		unrecht angetan wird
ו ve-	הם <i>hem</i>	לא <i>lo</i>	יעשקו <i>ye'ashku</i>

Example 3 has two central syntactic structures: the superlative (*ḥayra z-zādi*) and the vocative (*yā-ulī l-albābi*); both are retained in the translations:

(3) *fa-inna ḥayra z-zādi t-taqwā wa-ttaqūni yā-ulī l-albābi* (Q 2:197)

I. <i>fa-inna</i>	<i>ḥayra z-zādi</i>	<i>t-taqwā</i>	II. <i>wa-ttaqūni</i>	<i>yā-ulī l-albābi</i>
<i>fa</i> = conjunction <i>inna</i> = emphatic particle	superlative= subject	definite noun= nominal predicate	<i>wa</i> = conjunction followed by a verb in imperative	vocative <i>yā</i> = interjection
-	the best provision	is the fear of Allah	so fear me	O, people of understanding!
-	der beste Reisevorrat	ist Gottesfrucht	mich fürchtet	ihr Einsichtsvollen!

הנה <i>hine</i>	מיטב הצידה <i>meytav ha-zeyda</i>	יראת אללה <i>yir' at allah</i>	(לכן) יראוני <i>(lakhen) yir' uni</i>	בעלי הבינה! <i>ba' aley ha-bina</i>
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2.2. Partial equivalence due to language limitations in the system of the TL

In some cases, the linguistic elements of the SL cannot be replaced appropriately in the TL because it does not have these features. This can lead to partial equivalence, which in the literature is called shifts. Both Catford (1965) and Van Leuven-Zwart (1989) drew up a series of categories for the classification of the differences in shift as a function of the syntactic, semantic, stylistic and pragmatic levels for example. Clearly, shifts in lexemes, sentences, clauses, and phrases can affect the meaning and the pragmatics of these components, as shown in the following examples:

(4) *wa-yamkurūna wa-yamkuru llāhu* (Q 8:30)

They schemed and Allah schemed (Fakhry, 1998, p. 110)

Ja, sie schmieden Ränke, und auch Gott schmiedet Ränke (Bobzin, 2010, p. 153)

וּזְמוּמִים וּזְמוּמִים אֱלֹהִים *ve-zomemim ve-zomemam allah* (Adawi, 2015, p. 155)

The translation of the syntactic unit in Q 8:30 presents two syntactic shifts. In the first, in Arabic and in Hebrew the pronoun can be implicit, but in English and German the pronoun is usually explicit, so that the verb *yamkurūna* is expressed as “they schemed” or “sie schmieden Ränke.” In the second, the clause *wa-yamkuru llāhu* in Arabic has a VS word order. This word order is preserved in the Hebrew translation but not in English and German, where the translator had to use the unmarked word order SV.

(5) *wa-mā ulā'ika bi-l-mu' minīna* (Q 5:43)

Those people are not believers (Fakhry, 1998, p. 71).

Das sind keine Gläubigen (Bobzin, 2010, p. 98)

וְאֵין אֵלֶּה מְאִמִּינִים *ve-ein ele ma' aminim* (Adawi, 2015, p. 103)

The preposition *bi-* in Arabic may have several referents for example, *bā' li-l-qasam* (*bā'* denoting swearing), *bā' li-l-muṣāḥaba* (*bā'* denoting companionship and connection) or *bā' li-l-ta'wīd* (*bā'* denoting the recompense) (Wright, 1971, part three, p. 164). Examples 5 and 6 exemplify the so-called *bā' al-zā'ida* “the appended preposition *bā'*”. Ibn Ya'īs (2001,

vol. 5, pp. 77-78)⁹ states that this particle is appended (*zīdat*) for emphasis without affecting the meaning of the utterance. This particle can be appended to components that are considered in Arabic grammar to be *faḍla* (lit.) “residue”; i.e., all components other than the subject and the predicate. It can also be appended to the predicate, as for example when *mā al-ḥiḡāziyya* is involved; namely, a negation particle which is used with the same signification as *laysa* and also causes the predicate to be in accusative (al-Murādī, 1983, p. 53). According to Ibn Yaʿīš (2001, vol. 5, p. 78), *bāʾ al-zāʾ ida* “the appended preposition *bāʾ*” precedes the subject to emphasize the negation.

As shown in the three translations, there is no indication of the existence of the particle *bi*. In other words, an explicit component in the SL becomes implicit in the TL simply because in German and English there is no equivalent component so that this particle is untranslatable.¹⁰ In Hebrew the same particle with the same pragmatics does exist. Goshen-Gottstein (2006, p. 179)¹¹ mentioned the existence of the so-called *essentiae/pleonasticum* ב, which is introduced after a negation particle, for example “לא היה זה באפשר” (*lo-haya ze ba-efshar*). Thus here, the Hebrew translation should have been “ואין אלה במאמינים” (*ve-ein ele be-maʾminim*). There are two possible reasons why Adawi omitted this particle in the Hebrew translation: he was familiar with the *essentiae/pleonasticum* ב but might have thought that this translation would be rejected by the reader as an archaic or even incorrect, because this particle does not exist in Modern Hebrew. Alternatively, he may not have been acquainted with the *essentiae/pleonasticum* ב, and his competence (see Section 2.4) in the TL was weaker than his competence in the SL. However, Example 6 shows that this assumption does not hold up:

(6) *wa-kafā bi-llāhi šahīdan* (Q 4:79)

Allah is the All-Sufficient witness! (Fakhry, 1998, p. 58)

Und Gott genügt als Zeuge! (Bobzin, 2015, p. 79)

ודי באלה עד *ve-day be-allah ʿed* (Adawi, 2015, p. 85)

Traditional grammarians¹² mention Q 4:79 as an example of *bāʾ al-zāʾ ida* “the appended preposition *bi*”, which precedes the subject, although they agree that the underlying structure should be *wa-kafā llāhu šahīdan* “God is sufficient as a witness.” Once again, this particle does not appear in the

⁹ Compare: Fidā (2000, p. 24)

¹⁰ For the term *untranslatable*, see Kashgary (2011, p. 48).

¹¹ Compare: Gesenius (1846, p. 219)

¹² See, for example: Sībawayhi (1980, vol. 1, p. 92); Ibn Yaʿīš (2001, vol. 5, pp. 78-79). Fidā (2000, p. 453) however mentions that according to Suhaylī (n.y., p. 355) the particle *bi* is not appended but rather governed by the verb *kafā*, which means *taktafī bihi šahīdan* “you are content with God as a witness.”

English and the German translations, whereas it is preserved in the Hebrew translation. It may be the case, however, that the Hebrew particle כ is not equivalent to “the appended preposition *bi*”. This is due to the choice of translating the verb *kafā* by the adverb “די” (*day*), which in this context requires the particle כ (*be*) before its complement.

Examples 7 and 8 show shifts in number. In both examples the noun *ayyām* “days” occurs. However, in Example 7 it is followed by an adjective in the feminine singular, whereas in Example 8 it is followed by the same adjective but in the feminine plural:

(7) *lan tamassanā n-nāru illā ayyāman ma' dūdatan* (Q 2:80)

The fire will only touch us for a few days” (Fakhry, 1998, p. 12)¹³

Das Höllenfeuer wird uns nicht erfassen – mit Ausnahme weniger Tage (Bobzin, 2010, p. 17).

ספורים לא תאחז בנו האש אלא ימים ספורים *lo-te'eḥoz banu ha-esh ela yamim sfurim* (Adawi 2015, p. 23)

(8) *lan tamassanā n-nāru illā ayyāman ma' dūdātin* (Q 3:24)

The fire will only touch us for a few days (Fakhry, 1998, p. 37)

Das Höllenfeuer wird uns nicht berühren es sei denn eine Zahl von Tagen (Bobzin, 2010, p. 17).

ספורים לא תאחז בנו האש אלא ימים ספורים *lo-te'eḥoz banu ha-esh ela yamim sfurim* (Adawi, 2015, p. 55)

There are various types of agreement in classical Arabic,¹⁴ including nouns in the feminine plural that designate the non-human by putting their adjective in feminine singular (Example 7) or the plural (Example 8). The literature discusses several explanations for the existence of these two types of agreement. In the structure *ayyāman ma' dūdātin* (Q 3:24), the adjective in the plural form indicates paucity; namely, the number does not exceed ten (Dror, 2013b, pp. 64-65). According to Ibn Kaṭīr (n.y., vol. 1, p. 355), *ayyāman ma' dūdātin* means that the unbelievers thought that the fire would only touch them for seven days. However, the translation shows no traces of the two different types of agreement, and both types (adjectives in singular and in plural) are expressed similarly. This is because a literal translation of *ayyāman ma' dūdatan* in Hebrew would have generated an ungrammatical structure

¹³ Fakhry's translation of Q 2:80 can be classified under the third type because he completely changes the original syntactic structure, as though the original structure were **innamā tamassanā n-nāru ayyāman ma' dūdatan*. He could have easily rendered it by keeping the original syntactic structure and translating “The fire will only touch us for a few days.”

¹⁴ See a list of agreement types in Reckendorf (1921, pp. 89-90).

(“ימים ספורים” **yamim sfura*); in English the quantifier *few* is fixed and in German the adjective *weniger* is in the plural¹⁵.

2.3. *Partial equivalence without a good explanation*¹⁶

Identifying shifts in translations may be easy, but what is the rationale for them? What are the reasons dictating the translator's choice? In some cases, the translator discusses strategies in an introduction, but these comments will never provide comprehensive insights into the translation process. For instance, the structures are almost identical in Examples 9 and 10, with one exception: the position of the prepositional phrase *min aqṣā l-madīnati* “from the farthest part of the city.” In Example 9 the prepositional phrase follows the noun *rağulun* “a man”, whereas in example 10 it precedes this noun:

(9) *wa-ğā' a rağulun min aqṣā l-madīnati yas' ā* (Q 28:20)

And a man came from the farthest part of the city (Fakhry, 1998, p. 242)

Ein Mann kam hergelaufen vom Äußersten der Stadt (Bobzin, 2010, p. 337)

וּבָא אִישׁ מִקְצֵה הָעִיר נֹחֵץ *u-ba ish mi-ktze ha-ir neḥpaz* (Adawi, 2015, p. 322)

(10) *wa-ğā' a min aqṣā l-madīnati rağulun yas' ā* (Q 36:20)

Then a man came from the farthest point of the city running (Fakhry, 1998, p. 36)

Da kam, vom Äußersten Ende der Stadt, ein Mann gelaufen (Bobzin, 2010, p. 386)

וּבָא אִישׁ מִקְצֵה הָעִיר נֹחֵץ *u-ba ish mi-ktze ha-ir neḥpaz* (Adawi, 2015, p. 365)

Despite the contextual and syntactic differences between the two verses, the translation in Hebrew and English is identical.¹⁷ Bobzin however identifies the difference and expresses it in his translation. Qur'ān translators

¹⁵ The case of *wāw al-isti nāf* should be mentioned in this context (see Dror, 2015, pp. 22-42). This particle is often used to begin a new sentence. Though this particle does not have an English or German equivalent, this does not mean that it is untranslatable since in some cases it is translated as a function of the translator's view of its cohesive function in the SL verses. See also Stewart (2000, p. 34), who refers to the translatability of this particle.

¹⁶ This type could also be classified as SL syntactic structures inappropriately superimposed on TL. See Newmark (1981, p. 123).

¹⁷ The only difference in the English translation is that the verb *yas' ā* in Q 36:20 is missing, for no good explanation.

are expected to know that word order can change the syntactic structure, and hence the meaning of the utterance. Bayḍāwī (1996, vol. 4, pp. 287-288) for example stated that in Q 28:20 the verb *yas'ā* "running" can function as an adjective of the noun *rağulun* "a man," or can serve as a circumstantial clause where it depends on the function of the prepositional phrase *min aqṣā l-madīnati* "from the farthest part of the city," as the following analysis shows:

<i>wa-ğā'a</i>	<i>rağulun</i>	<i>min aqṣā l-madīnati</i>	<i>yas'ā</i>
1. Verbal predicate	subject	adjective	Circumstantial clause
2. Verbal predicate	subject	Adverb of place connected to the verbal predicate	Adjective (of "a man")

In Q 36:20 the prepositional phrase is preposed for rhetorical reasons; namely, to emphasize that the messengers' invitation reached the most remote parts of the city, and attracted a man who is identified as Ḥabīb the woodworker (Rāzī, 2000, vol. 26, p. 48). According to this explanation, Q 36:20 should be rendered word for word in English as "Then came from the farthest point of the city a man, running" and in Hebrew "ובא מקצה העיר איש" "כשהוא נהפז" (*u-ba mi-ktze ha-'ir ish k-she-hu nehpaz*). This modification shows that both Fakhry and Adawi should not have experienced any difficulty translating Q 36:20, so word order should not have been ignored. It could be argued that to communicate the message of the source text, the translator changed its structure and word order patterns, but in so doing failed to communicate the real message. Thus Examples 9 and 10 illustrate what Beekman (1965, p. 88)¹⁸ meant when noting that when there is correspondence of form but not of function, the meaning is wrong or at best obscure.

In Example 11 the shifts in the verb-aspect system are the focus, where the relative clause includes perfect forms. However, they are usually rendered in the present:

(11) *fa-ammā llađīna āmanū wa-'amilū ṣ-ṣāliḥāti fa-yuwaffihim uğūrahum* (Q 4:173)

But as for those who believe and do good deeds, He will give them their rewards in full (Fakhry, 1998, p. 66).

¹⁸ Beekman is mentioned by Kelly (1979, p. 24).

Doch denen, welche glauben und gute Werke tun, wird er ihren Lohn in vollem Maße geben (Bobzin, 2010, p. 90).

ve-elu ואלו שהאמינו ועשו את המעשים הטובים, ישלם להם אללה מלוא גמולם
she-he' eminu ve-'asu et ha-ma'asim ha-tovim yeshalem lahem
allah mlo gmulam (Adawi, 2015, p. 96).

Alsaif (2017, p. 127) indicated that translating tense and aspect from Arabic into English can be a challenge because of the major differences between the two languages. Tense and aspect in Arabic are difficult because there is almost no reference to this issue in Arabic grammar treatises, and there are few Western studies on tense and aspect in Arabic. However, it would be erroneous to claim that there are many shifts in translating the verbs that occur in the Qur'ān. Translators are familiar with the use of aspects such as the *prophetic perfect*, the *historical narrative*, and the *habitual present*, and they usually render them accurately (see Examples 1 and 2). Fakhry and Bobzin render the verbs *āmanū* and *'amilū* in Q 3:173 in the present. In English, one of the functions of the present tense is to express a durative action. However, the two verbs in Q 3:173 do not indicate a continuous action, but rather describe actions that occurred in the past and will last until a specific time in the future, which is Judgment Day. On this day the people's actions will be examined retrospectively, and God will give those who believed and did good deeds their rewards in the Hereafter. Thus, Adawi renders the meaning accurately by using the past tense. Furthermore, if Q 4:137 meant to indicate habituality and durativity, a verb in the imperfect would have been used, as for example in Q 6:92.

2.4. *Partial equivalence as a result of basic syntactic competence*

Clearly the three translators mentioned in this article have excellent grammatical and linguistic backgrounds in the languages from which they translate. However, as Nida (1964, p. 241) noted, translators often show their greatest weaknesses in syntactic structures. They may understand the meaning of the words and phrases quite well but are often woefully lacking in a fundamental appreciation of the meaning of a specific syntactic structure. Specifically, although their translation of particles and verbs adheres for the most part with grammatical treatises, many translators misinterpret these particles and verbs or use them inaccurately. Erroneous use of these particles definitely exerts an influence on meaning.

In Example 12 my primary concern has to do with the structure type of *kāna llāhu 'alīman ḥalīman*, and in particular the use of the verb *kāna* "was." According to traditional Arab and Western grammarians, *kāna* in clauses of the *kāna llāhu 'alīman raḥīman* type express an action in the present or at no specific time, that started in the past and continues to this day. Some

grammarians¹⁹ even argue that it is *zā'ida* “redundant” (*lit.* an “appendix”) and is used *li-ta'kīd* “for emphasis.” For example, the sentence *kāna zaydun munṭaliqan* “Zayd is going” (*lit.* “was going”) is semantically equivalent to *zaydun munṭaliqun*: the verb *kāna* appended to the sentence has no effect on its meaning (Dror, 2017, pp. 37-39). This might explain why *kāna* in the above clause type is always rendered in present tense, indicating an action that is not limited in time and does not relate to any specific time: it started in the past and continues in the present, as extends into the future. However, a more in-depth examination of the exegetical literature shows that in some cases *kāna* indeed has a perfective meaning, which does not necessarily contradict God's infinity because *kāna* has two references: to a past action (mentioned in the verse or implied by Qur'ānic exegetes) and to the circumstance that enabled this action to take place.

(12) *wa-lā taqtulū anfusakum inna llāha kāna bikum raḥīman* (Q 4:29)

Do not kill yourselves. Allah is indeed Merciful to you! (Fakhry, 1998, p. 54)

Und tötet euch nicht selbst! Siehe, Gott ist euch gegenüber voll Erbarmen (Bobzin, 2010, p. 74)

אל תקטלו את נפשותיכם, הנה אללה עליכם רחום

al-tiktelu et nafshotekhem hine allah 'alekhem raḥum (Adawi, 2015, p. 79).

With respect to Q 4:29, Zamaḥṣarī (1995, vo. 1, pp. 492-493) says that God was merciful/has shown mercy to you when He did not impose those laws (verses 1-29) that would be difficult to obey. Bayḍāwī (1996, vol. 2, p. 177) suggested that the verse means that God was merciful to you, the believers, when he commanded the Children of Israel to kill each other, whereas He forbids the Muslims from doing so. However, in contrast to Zamaḥṣarī, Ṭabarī (1992, vol. 4, p. 38) replaces the verb *kāna* with *lam yazal* “still” (God still shows his mercy towards the people), indicating that this clause does not have a perfective but rather a durative meaning (Dror, 2017, p. 46). Thus Q 4:29 should be translated as “Do not kill yourselves, Allah was Merciful to you!” and a brief explanation in the footnotes should be added.²⁰

In Examples 13 and 14 the clause is identical save for one difference: in Example 14 the particle *an* follows the temporal conjunction *lammā* “when”:

¹⁹ For a detailed discussion on explanations of *kāna* in the traditional Arab grammarians and Western grammarians see Dror (2017).

²⁰ For more issues concerning the translation of *kāna* see Al-Khawalda (2004).

(13) *wa-lammā ġā'at rusulunā lūṭan sī'a bihim wa-dāqa bihim dar'an wa-qāla hādā yawmun 'aṣībun* (Q 11:77)

And when Our messengers came to Lot, he was grieved by them and felt unable to protect them. He said: This is a dreadful day (Fakhry, 1998, p. 138).

Als unsere Boten zu Lot kamen, wurde er ihretwegen ganz bekümmert, geriet durch sie in Bedrängnis und sprach: Das ist ein Tag, der schwer zu ertragen ist! (Bobzin, 2010, p. 196).

וכאשר באו שליחיו אל לוט הורע לו בהם, וקצרה בהם נפשו ואמר: זה יום קשה!
ve-ka'asher ba'u shlikhenu el lot hura' lo bahem ve-kazra bahem nafsho ve-amar ze yom kasha (Adawi, 2015, p. 194)

(14) *wa-lammā an ġā'at rusulunā lūṭan sī'a bihim wa-dāqa bihim dar'an* (Q 29:33)

And when Our emissaries came to Lot, he was troubled and distressed on their account (Fakhry, 1998, p. 250).

Als unsere Gesandten zu Lot gekommen waren, bekümmerte er sich ihrentwegen und geriet durch sie in Bedrängnis (Bobzin, 2010, p. 196).

וכאשר באו שליחיו אל לוט הורע לו בהם, וקצרה בהם נפשו
ve-ka'asher ba'u shlikhenu el lot hura' lo bahem ve-kazra bahem nafsho ve-amar ze yom kashe (Adawi, 2015, p. 194)

Examination shows that the Hebrew and English translations do not translate the particle *an*. In the German translation, however, both verbs *ġā'at* and *sī'a* in Q 11:77 are rendered in the *präteritum* "Als unsere Boten zu Lot kamen, wurde er ihretwegen ganz bekümmert", whereas in Q 29:33 the verb *ġā'at* is rendered in the *Plusquamperfect* ("gekommen waren") and the second verb *sī'a* is rendered in the *präteritum* ("bekümmerte er sich").

According to Arab grammarians the particle *an* in Q 29:33 is the so-called *an al-zā'ida*: "the appended *an*" that functions as an emphatic particle."²¹ As mentioned when discussing *bā' al-zā'ida* not all *zawā'id* particles exist in languages such as English, German and Hebrew, so they tend not to be translated, as shown in the English and the Hebrew translations of Q 29:33. However, here, there is a difference between Q 11:77 and Q 29:33, which should be expressed in the translation. In his explanation of Q 29:33 Zamaḥṣarī (1947, vol. 1, p. 502)²² noted that the particle *an* emphasizes

²¹ See, for example, Ibn Ya'īš (2001, vol. 5, pp. 67-68). Cf. Fidā (2000, p. 622-623); Brockelmann (1966, vol. 2, p. 601); Lipinski (1997, p. 530).

²² This explanation is also mentioned by Fidā (2000, pp. 624, 628-629).

that the verbs *ǧāʾat* and *sīʾa* are connected in the sense that the two actions are roughly simultaneous; namely, at the moment the messengers came to him (i.e., at the moment he saw them), he was troubled. Thus, Q 29:33 in Hebrew *עַם בּוֹא הַשְּׁלִיחִים אֶל לוֹט הוֹרַע לָהֶם בְּגִלְלָם* *im bo ah-shliḥim el lot huraʿ lo biglalam*.²³

3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Since we are dealing with the holy scriptures, a book that guides approximately 1.8 billion of Muslims who speak or read Arabic, and one that has attracted the attention and interest of millions of non-Muslims, questions regarding the type of translation are important. How far should the translator go in translating the SL into the TL? Should translators abandon equivalence at the microstructural level to communicate the basic concepts of the text? What makes translators prefer one type of translation over another?

According to Nida and Newmark, the nature of the translation is determined by the target audience. Nida (1964, p. 156) argues that differences in translations can generally be accounted for by three basic factors: (1) the nature of the message, (2) the author's purpose, (3) the type of audience. In keeping with point (3), Newmark (1981, p. 10) pointed out that the translator should produce a different type of translation (formal vs. dynamic) of the same text for each type of audience.

The question is whether translators can really know their audiences. For example, the Hebrew translations by Adawi (2015) and Rubin (2015) are read by students, researchers, and “ordinary” people. Furthermore, if translators aim their translation at readerships who know little or nothing about Islam and Arabic, should the translation be freer, and at times not replicate the syntactic features of the Qurʾān? My own view is that when translators distance themselves from the syntactic structure of the SL they may fail in their quest for equivalence or communicative effectiveness.

This article suggested that full grammatical equivalence does exist in Qurʾānic translations. Syntactic equivalence occurs when the SL and the TL are related to the same syntactic features; for example, a passive verb in the SL will be rendered as a passive verb in the TL. I also classified cases in this category in which there are several correct alternatives for translating a syntactic structure; often these are also mentioned by grammarians and Qurʾānic commentators, such as *innakum la-taʿtūna r-riġāla šahwatan min dūni n-nisāʾi* (Q 7:81). Zamaḥṣarī (1947, vol. 2, p. 125) explains the accusative of the verbal noun *šahwatan* as *maf ʿil lahu* (adverb of cause and reason) by paraphrasing the verse as “Verily you come to the men instead of women

²³ This suggested translation can be applied in Q 28:19 and Q 12:96, where *lammā an* occurs.

because of your lust for men." The verbal noun functions as a circumstantial accusative, with the meaning "Verily you come to men instead of women, when you desire them." Fakhry (1998, p. 99) chose to render this as an adverb "You approach men instead of women lustfully."

However certain shifts in the translations were classified as follows:

(a) Partial equivalence, i.e., partial syntactic equivalence when the TL does not have the same syntactic features as the SL. This can be seen in the example of the so-called *bā' al-zā'ida* "the appended *bā'*". When it is left in the English or German translation it can be regarded as an equivalent translation, though the pragmatic/rhetorical effect of this emphatic preposition is not expressed in the TL.

(b) Partial equivalence, for which no explanation can be provided. Consider the new example Q 24:2. Halima (2014, pp. 125-126)²⁴ refers to this Qur'ānic verse in a section where he discusses the translation of the Qur'ān from a linguistic perspective:

az-zāniyatu wa-z-zānī fa-ġlidū kulla wāḥidin minhumā mi'ata ġaldatin.
The first part was translated by Dawood (1956) as "The adulterer and the adulteress shall each be given a hundred lashes." Although the above example lacks metaphor, the translators seem to have made serious mistakes because of their inability not only to find the right equivalent of the word *ġlidū* but also to understand the significance of the word order in the Qur'ān as a whole. Halima refers to the fact that Dawood (1956) puts the male before the female ("the adulterer and the adulteress"). In fact, it is the only place in the Qur'ān where the female is mentioned before the male.

I also argue that the word order SV in Q 24:2 is used as a discourse marker to indicate the transition to a new rule; however, the pragmatics of this word order is lost in translation.

In terms of syntax, Q 24:2 should be viewed considering structures similar to those found in Q 4:15, Q. 5:38, Q. 24:2, Q. 24:6 and Q. 24:33, where the subject is preposed.²⁵

Thus clearly, in the case of Q 24:2 keeping the word order of the SL is the correct choice. Dawood's translation cited by Halima - "The adulterer and

²⁴ Word order in Qur'ānic translation is also mentioned by Abdul-Raof (2001, pp. 22-24, 43-44).

²⁵ It should be mentioned that Ibn Hišām explains that Q 24:4 should be reconstructed as *mimmā yutlā 'alaykumu ḥukmu z-zānī wa-z-zāniyati* "from the things you were told is the law of the fornicator and the fornicatress." It is followed by a new clause stating the law and formulated as a command, i.e., the verb in the imperative preceded by the particle *fa*. As a rule, the particle of *fa* cannot be introduced before a verbal predicate, so the verb *ġlidū* cannot function as the predicate of a preposed noun. See Ibn Hišām (1991, vol. 2, p. 163).

the adulteress shall each be given a hundred lashes” - is incorrect, because it distorts the concept motivating this verse. In this case Nida (1964, p. 54) is wrong to state²⁶ that changes in the text, the words, or the metaphors are of no concern and are allowed as long as the target language text functions in the same manner as the source text.

(c) Non-equivalent syntactic translation occurs where there are shifts that are caused by a lack of syntactic competence on the part of the translator, and distort the intended meaning of the SL. For example, in many cases, issues of tense and aspect and the function of particles require an in-depth investigation.

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²⁶ Compare: Gentzler (1993, p. 54).

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TABLE 1

Brill's Arabic Transliteration System		Encyclopedia Judaica's Transliteration System	
Arabic	Roman letter	Hebrew	Roman letter
ا	a	א	in the initial position ' in the middle position
ب	b	ב	v
ג	t	ג	b
ד	t	ד	g
ה	g	ה	d
ו	h	ו	h
ז	h	ז	v
ח	d	ח	z
ט	d	ט	h
י	r	י	t
כ	z	כ	y
ל	s	ל	k
מ	š	מ	kh
נ	š	נ	l
ס	đ	ס	m
ע	t	ע	n
פ	z	פ	s
צ	'	צ	'
ק	g	ק	p
ר	f	ר	f
ש	q	ש	z
ת	k	ת	k
	l		r
	m		sh
	n		t
	h		

و	w, ū
ي	y, ī
ء	,
	*Initial <i>hamza</i> is not transliterated