

Componential analysis and its usage in the translation of Quran (Case study: Surahs An-nur, Al-furqan and Ash-Shuara)¹

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Abstract

The componential analysis as one of the theories of semantic studies deals with the analysis of the meaning of a word or other linguistic units into discrete semantic components; it is important in identifying the semantic differences between words and explains the underlying meanings of words. The present study introduces this analysis method as a new approach in the field of semantics to find the Persian equivalent of some Arabic words based on their componential analysis. The research is organized by a critical-descriptive method. The Surahs An-nur, Al-furqan and Ash-Shuara were selected to be studied; the Persian translation of Quran by Ayati, Elahi Ghomshei, Rezaie, Fuladvand and Moezi were chosen to study the methods the translators applied for finding Persian equivalent of marked words and the way they analyse the semantic components of those words. The results indicate that the inadequate attention to the meaning components of words leads to literal translation. Although none of the translators have been successful in providing the exact equivalent of the studied words, the Persian translation of the mentioned surahs by Rezaie, Elahi

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Ghamshahi, Ayati, Moezi and Fouladvand would be considered on a scale of the most to the least attention to the meanings components of Quran vocabulary.

1- Introduction

The word, as the main semantic unit, plays a fundamental role in the transfer of meaning. One of the main issues in semantics is the componential analysis which can be used as a method in semantics and translation studies. This process is defined as analyzing the concept of a word in terms of its semantic constituents, so called "componential analysis" or lexical decomposition (Lyons, 2012: 153). Therefore, the translators should take "componential analysis" into consideration in the translation process of Quran to provide the most accurate and precise translation. The present study tries to evaluate the level of lexical balance in the Persian translations of surahs An-nur, Al-furqan and Ash-Shuara by Ayati, Elahi Ghamshahi, Rezaie, Fouladvand and Moezzi; the semantic units of selected words are analysed in order to answer the following questions:

- 1: What kind of role does the componential analysis play to reach the translation balance and understand the Quranic vocabulary?
- 2: To what extent is the analysis of the vocabulary of the target language possible in the translation of the Quran?
- 3: What is the function of the above mentioned translators in translating the meaning components of the vocabulary of the target language?

2- Research method

The study has adopted critical-descriptive survey research method and benefited from library resources which present some related concepts; In this regard, the semantic units of vocabulary of Quran and its relation to the translation process are studied to evaluate the translators' performance.

3- Literature review

Many studies have been carried out recently on the topic of componential analysis; the studies include, but not limited to the following: " *The analysis and evaluation of the verbs of Sura Al-*

Baqara, applying Componential analysis approach" by Ali Hajikhani et al (2017), " *Review of Quran translations from Elahi Qomshei, Foladvand and Khorramshahi based on the analysis of individual words, Case study: Raib, Zebh and Khashyat*", by Reza Amani (2014), and " *The Pragmatics of the "Translation balance of lexicon" principle in Quran translation process*", by Hamid Reza Mirhaji et al (2011). Despite the above-mentioned studies, there has been no independent research on the study of semantic units of the vocabulary in the surahs Al-Baqara, Al-naml, An-Nas and Ash-Shuara. Therefore, the difference between the present research and the related ones is that, this study tries to evaluate the quality of the translation of Quran vocabulary and the degree of translators' adherence to componential analysis; it does so by studying the lexical categories (nouns and verbs) of the mentioned surahs. It actually makes a connection between a semantic theory and translation studies used as a tool for evaluating the equivalent vocabulary in translation of some Quranic words.

4- Meaning components and marked vocabulary

The meaning/semantic component is a potentially contrastive part of *the meaning of* a lexical unit. The semantic structure of words consists of different semantic units within lexical units and each lexical unit is a unique combination of these semantic units. This important issue has made some linguists deny the existence of absolute synonymy; for example, Palmer points out if the meaning components of a word represent a general concept, that word will be semantically considered as an "unmarked word"; in other words, the meaning is considered "general" (an expression is general in the sense that it does not specify certain details; i.e. generality is a matter of unspecification), but if a word contains more specific components, it can be classified under the term "marked". In this case, it contains "marked" feature. Therefore, marked elements and structures have more specific semantic elements than their unmarked counterparts. In fact, they carry certain parts of meaning that are of particular interest to the producer of a particular piece of speech "(Golfam, 2010: p. 2)

4: Conclusion

1: The "componential analysis" method can help the translator to discover the subtlety in a wonderful text such as Quran, which leads to

accurate translation of semantic layers of the words including emotional meanings, emphasis, qualities, etc.

2: The translator should try to select the accurate and close equivalent of the words and terms from the target language, but sometime such equivalent words do not exist in target language, so, in this case the linguistic knowledge can help him/her to add descriptive and interpretative elements to the words, provided that this does not lead to an interpretive meanings.

3: The analysis of five Persian translations of the selected vocabulary of Suras An-nur, Al-furqan and Ash-Shuara, revealed that in most cases translators did not pay sufficient attention to the precise translation of the word elements. Although none of the translators have been successful in providing the exact equivalent of the studied words, the Persian translation of the mentioned surahs by Rezaie, Elahi Ghamshahi, Ayati, Moezi and Fouladvand would be considered on a scale of the most to the least attention to the meanings components of the Quran vocabulary.

Key words: Quran, Translation, Componential analysis