Comparative analysis of exegetical expansions in 5 contemporary Persian and English translations[1]

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1- Introduction

Quran is the most significant Islamic text and the Word of Allah which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad in Arabic language and has been preserved till now by his followers. The Arabic language of Quran is very impressive, eloquent and inimitable; which according to many Islamic scholars could not be totally translated. Therefore, translating the form as well as internal meaning of Quran is an extremely challenging task. There are different translations of Quran, among which some are faithful to the original words of Allah while some are somehow manipulative. It appears that presenting the deep meaning of the Quran without adding some exegetical expressions is not feasible. It is worth mentioning that proper use of exegesis in translation help the fluency and clarity of the text. However, the devoted translators try to keep the holy structure of Quran and in case they have to add extra information to make some implicit information explicit, they add it separate from the words of Allah. Therefore, the need to compare and analyze the exegetical expansions as well as their adjustment to the valid exegesis can be felt. Consequently, analyzing the exegetical expansion the translators have applied, and finding its weak and strong points can pave the way for other translators of Quran.

The aim of this paper is to analyze and compare different English and Persian translation of Quran to see if the structural or lexical

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expansions were according to the exegesis or they were just translators' personal interpretation.

1-1-   Translation of Quran

As Mo'tamedi (1993) mentioned, translation of Quran has had some opponents who believed that translation of Quran was illegitimate. Among them, as Mo'tamedi pointed out, was Sheikh Ahmad Fahmi Mohammad. Some also believed that Quran should be interpreted, not translated, among whom he referred to Shafe'i. Abdul Raof (2001) also referred to untranslatability of Quran and suggested that its translation without interpretation is impossible.

1-2-   Different translations of Quran

Jawaheri (2005) divided different translations of Quran into 7 categories which were word for word, literal, faithful, semantic, free, poetic, and exegetical. He also defined 3 kinds of exegetical translation. The first definition related to those exegesis in which translator has tried to clarify and interpret some points in a language other than Arabic. In the second definition, translator tried to add some information in parenthesis to the translated text of Quran according to the known exegesis. In this research, such translations have been analyzed. The last definition was associated to those translations in which the translators add extra information to the translated text of Quran without separating it from the words of Allah.

1-3-   Use of Interpretation in Quran translation

Different interpretations of Quran revealed that even Arab Muslims did not arrive at a consensus about the meaning of Quran. Considering the relation between translation and interpretation (exegesis), Jawaheri (2012) mentioned that some scholars made a difference between interpretation and translation of Quran while some others believed that translation of Quran was a kind of interpretation and some supposed that its translation without interpretation was impossible.

    Accordingly, one of the best strategies of translating Quran has been the use of interpretation in translation. Khoramshahi (2001) divided

exegetical translation of Quran into additions, deletions, and manipulations. He believed that exegetical translation was necessary and unavoidable since *languages differ from each other in various respects,* including sentence structure, vocabularies, idioms and collocations, cultural aspect reflected in the languge, and rhetoric. Abdul-raof (2001) referred to 17 cases, which proved that the use of exegesis and footnote was vital in translation of Quran. These cases were historical fact, geographical fact, ecological issue, metaphor, cultural expressions, legal discourse, abrogating structure, intertextuality, religious concepts, scientific facts, cryptic letters, ambiguity, euphemism, parables, lexical meaning, elliptical structure meaning, and evocative names.

1-4-   Explicitation and addition in translation
 The concept of explicitation was first introduced by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) who defined it as a technique in translation to make the implicit information explicit. Klaudy (2004) divided explicitation into four categories of obligatory, optional, pragmatic, and translation-inherent. Obligatory explicitation was associated with differences in the syntactic and semantic structure of languages. Optional explicitation related to the differences in text building strategies. Pragmatic explicitation was associated with the differences between cultures and Translation-inherent explicitation could be attributed to the nature of the translation process itself.

    Nida and Taber (2003) also classified expansion into two categories of syntactic (grammatical or formal) and semantic (lexical).

    According to Jawaheri (2012) the expansion which cannot be separated from the text is a kind of free or communicative translation but if it can be separated, it is more faithful to the original version. He suggested that sometimes the meaning of text could not be understood without realizing its tone, style and register, culture, and time. He believed that since readers of Quran translation were mostly non-specialists, the translation should be according to the idea and interpretation of the scholars and this interpretations should be separate from the original text of Quran, whether in the parenthesis or in the footnotes.

2- **Methodology**

This descriptive-qualitative research was aimed at analyzing and comparing the source and target text of Quran in Arabic as well as English and Persian. The framework of the study was based on the definition of expansions proposed by Jawaheri (2012) as well as Nida and Taber (2003)'s definition of lexical and structural expansion. Moreover, the data were divided into obligatory and optional as suggested by Klaudy (2004). In addition, Abdul-Raof classifications of expansion were also applied in the analysis.

2-1- Data collection

To analyze the data, Mosabbahat Suras in 5 contemporary translations (Makarem Shirazi, Fooladvand, Khoramshahi in Persian and Yusuf Ali and Piktal in English) were selected. Then the expansions in parenthesis were extracted. Afterwards, they were compared with Al-Mizan, the exegesis of the Quran, by Tabataba'i to see if these structural or lexical expansions were according to the exegesis and their aim was to make explicit the inner layer of the Quran and adjust the target text structure to the source text or they were just translators' personal interpretation. To this aim, at first a number of expansions each translator applied were specified. Afterwards, the structural and lexical expansions, whether optional or obligatory, were inserted in separate tables to see which translator applied the most and the least structural and lexical as well as optional and obligatory expansions.

3- Results and Discussion

The result revealed that in all translations, most applied expansions were obligatory. In Persian translations, Fooladvand applied optional expansions more than others. Makrem Shirazy applied the least number of expansions and whenever he added something, it was necessary for the clarification of the text. Moreover, Khoramshahi applied obligatory expansions more than optional ones.

In English translations of Quran, Yusuf Ali applied obligatory expansions more than optional ones and only few examples of

unnecessary expansion were seen in his translation. It seemed that his knowledge of interpretation helped him add the least number of optional expansion in his translation. He was faithful to the original text of Quran and did not have any redundancy. Picktal was a Western Islamic scholar who applied expansion in his translation less than others, since he was a convert from Christianity and his Islamic background was weaker than others. Another point to be considered is that his audiences were English and (maybe) Christian, so they did not need to know Quran in details.

4- Conclusion

After analyzing the data, it was revealed that all the translators added some words to the original words of Quran which were just for clarifying the meaning and adjusting the structure. They tried their best to reduce a number of unnecessary words. It appeared that Fooladvand applied expansion strategy more than others did, while Picktal attempted to reduce a number of expansions in his translation. All translators refused to add any redundancy or manipulation, so the expansions were mostly for clarifying the cultural, historical, geographical, religious and ambiguous expressions.

Keywords: Mosabbahat suras, personal interpretation, Al-mizan exegesis, structural and lexical expansions, optional and obligatory expansions