

IN THE NAME OF GOD



Kharazmi University
Department of Foreign Languages

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts in Translation Studies

**A Corpus-Based Study on English Translations of the Divine Names
in the Holy Quran**

Supervisor : Dr. F. Asadi

Advisor : Dr. K. Ahmadgoli

By: Mohammad Farahani

March 2013

We hereby certify that this thesis by Mohammad Farahani entitled "A Corpus-Based Study on English Translations of the Divine Names in the Holy Quran" is accepted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Translation Studies.

Dr. Fazel Asadi Amjad, the Supervisor

.....

Dr. Kamran Ahmadgoli, the Advisor

.....

Dr. Kamran Ahmadgoli, Head of English Department

.. ..

Kharazmi University of Tehran

Department of Foreign Languages

March 2013

To My Parents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, my best thanks to the Almighty God for giving me the ability to accomplish this work.

I warmly thank Dr. Fazel Asadi Amjad, my supervisor, for his insightful comments, constant encouragement and support during all stages of the research.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Kamran Ahmadgoli, for his continued help and cooperation.

I am sincerely indebted to Dr. Manafi Anari who helped me select the corpus for this study and provided me with basic guidelines.

It is a pleasant duty to thank my dear friend Hamid Varmazyari, PhD candidate in Translation Studies, for his constant support in providing me with fruitful comments.

Finally, I wish to express my special gratitude to my parents who have had to put up with me writing away on the computer instead of being at their service.

ABSTRACT

The present research was an attempt to see how Quranic Divine Names (DNs) were translated into English by three professional translators namely, Shakir (1985), Qarai (2003), and Nikayin (2006) who provided their translations in prose, phrase by phrase, and poetry forms respectively. Firstly, the problems which the translators met for attaining lexical adequacy and semantic equivalence were explored. Secondly, the type and extent of strategies adopted by these three translators for overcoming the problems were described. Thirdly, the consistency in the performances of the translators in rendering equivalents for DN's in different contexts was investigated. The findings of the study showed that the lexical compression of the original DN's and their emotive overtones and effects caused the main body of problems for the translators. Furthermore, it was found out that the most frequent strategies adopted by Shakir and Qarai were 'near-synonymy' and 'expansion' respectively. Nikayin, however, used these two strategies almost to an equal extent as his most frequent strategies. Finally, regarding the consistency, Qarai ranked first, Shakir ranked second, and Nikayin took the third position in providing consistent equivalents.

Key words: Divine Name, Equivalence, Adequacy, Translation form, strategy, Consistency

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----------|
| DEDICATION..... | i |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS..... | ii |
| ABSTRACT..... | iii |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS..... | iv |
| LIST OF TABLES..... | x |
| LIST OF FIGURES..... | xiii |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS..... | xiv |
| | |
| Chapter One: Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1.1. Introduction..... | 2 |
| 1.2. Statement of the Problem..... | 2 |
| 1.3. Purpose of the Study..... | 3 |
| 1.4. Significance of the Study..... | 4 |
| 1.5. Research Questions and Hypotheses..... | 5 |
| 1.6. Theoretical Framework..... | 6 |
| 1.7. Definition of Key Terms..... | 9 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1.8. Limitations and Delimitations of the Study..... | 9 |
| Chapter Two: Review of the Related Literature..... | 11 |
| 2.1. Overview..... | 12 |
| 2.2. Translation..... | 12 |
| 2.3. Translation and Equivalence..... | 14 |
| 2.3.1. The Concept of Equivalence..... | 14 |
| 2.3.2. Non-equivalence among Languages..... | 17 |
| 2.3.3. Common Problems of Non-equivalence at Word Level..... | 18 |
| 2.3.4. Equivalence and the Holy Quran..... | 21 |
| 2.4. Translational Strategies..... | 22 |
| 2.5. Shifts of Translatio..... | 31 |
| 2.6. Translation of Lexis..... | 33 |
| 2.6.1. Unit of Translation..... | 35 |
| 2.6.2. Meanings are Concepts..... | 37 |
| 2.6.3. Meaning and Language Comparison..... | 38 |
| 2.6.4. Universalism and Relativism..... | 38 |
| 2.6.5. Synonymy..... | 39 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 2.6.6. The Components of Meaning of a Word | 42 |
| 2.6.7. The Generic-Specific Relation between Words..... | 43 |
| 2.6.8. Class Labels and Semantic Sets..... | 44 |
| 2.6.9. Meaning, Senses, and Collocates..... | 46 |
| 2.7. Divine Names in Context..... | 46 |
| 2.8. Descriptive Translation Studies..... | 50 |
| 2.9. Corpus-based Translation Studies..... | 52 |
| Chapter Three: Methodology..... | 54 |
| 3.1. Overview..... | 55 |
| 3.2. Research Design..... | 55 |
| 3.3. Corpus of the Study..... | 56 |
| 3.3.1. The Holy Quran..... | 56 |
| 3.3.2. The Translators and Their Translations..... | 58 |
| 3.3.2.1. Mohammad H. Shakir..... | 58 |
| 3.3.2.2. Sayyid Ali Quli Qarai..... | 59 |
| 3.3.2.3. Fazlollah Nikayin..... | 60 |
| 3.4. Procedures and Method of Analysis..... | 61 |
| CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCISSION..... | 64 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 4.1. Overview..... | 65 |
| 4.2. Restatement of the Research Problem..... | 65 |
| 4.3. Analysis and Discussion..... | 66 |
| 4.3.1. Translation of الْمَلِك | 66 |
| 4.3.2. Translation of الْقُدُوس..... | 67 |
| 4.3.3. Translation of الْمُؤْمِن..... | 68 |
| 4.3.4. Translation of الْمُهَيَّب..... | 69 |
| 4.3.5. Translation of الْعَزِيز..... | 70 |
| 4.3.6. Translation of الْغَفَّار..... | 72 |
| 4.3.7. Translation of الْقَهَّار..... | 73 |
| 4.3.8. Translation of الْوَهَّاب..... | 75 |
| 4.3.9. Translation of الرَّزَّاق..... | 78 |
| 4.3.10. Translation of الْفَتَّاح..... | 78 |
| 4.3.11. Translation of الْعَلِيم..... | 80 |
| 4.3.12. Translation of الْبَصِير..... | 84 |
| 4.3.13. Translation of اللَّطِيف..... | 86 |
| 4.3.14. Translation of الْخَبِير..... | 87 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 4.3.15. Translation of الغفور..... | 89 |
| 4.3.16. Translation of العلى..... | 91 |
| 4.3.17. Translation of الكبير..... | 91 |
| 4.3.18. Translation of الكريم..... | 92 |
| 4.3.19. Translation of الحكيم..... | 93 |
| 4.3.20. Translation of الشهيد..... | 94 |
| 4.3.21. Translation of القوى..... | 95 |
| 4.3.22. Translation of الحى..... | 96 |
| 4.3.23. Translation of القيوم..... | 96 |
| 4.3.24. Translation of البر..... | 97 |
| 4.3.25. Translation of الغنى..... | 98 |
| 4.3.26. Translation of مالك الملك..... | 99 |
| 4.4. Adopted Translation Strategies..... | 102 |
| 4.4.1. Description of Shakir`s Translation Strategies | 102 |
| 4.4.2. Description of Qarai`s Translation Strategies..... | 103 |
| 4.4.3. Description of Nikayin`s Translation Strategies | 105 |
| 4.4.4. Total Strategy Adoption in the Corpus under Study..... | 107 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 4.5. Consistency in the Works of the Translators..... | 109 |
| Chapter Five: Conclusion, Implications and Suggestions for Further Research..... | 111 |
| 5.1. Overview..... | 112 |
| 5.2. Conclusion..... | 112 |
| 5.3. Pedagogical Implications of the Study..... | 116 |
| 5.4. Suggestions for Further Research..... | 117 |
| REFERENCES..... | 118 |

List of Tables

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 1.1. Chesterman`s Production Strategies..... | 7 |
| Table 4.1. Translation of الْمَلِك | 66 |
| Table 4.2. Translation of الْقُدُوس..... | 67 |
| Table 4.3. Translation of الْمُؤْمِن..... | 68 |
| Table 4.4. Translation of الْمُهَيَّب..... | 69 |
| Table 4.5. Translation of الْعَزِيز..... | 70 |
| Table 4.6. Translation of الْغَفَّار..... | 72 |
| Table 4.7. Translation of الْقَهَّار..... | 74 |
| Table 4.8. Translation of الْوَهَّاب..... | 77 |
| Table 4.9. Translation of الرِّزَّاق..... | 78 |
| Table 4.10. Translation of الْفَتَّاح | 79 |
| Table 4.11 . Translation of الْعَلِيم..... | 80 |
| Table 4.12. Translation of الْبَصِير..... | 84 |
| Table 4.13. Translation of الْطَيِّف..... | 86 |
| Table 4.14. Translation of الْخَبِير..... | 88 |
| Table 4.15. Translation of الْغَفُور..... | 89 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 4.16. Translation of العلى..... | 91 |
| Table 4.17. Translation of الكبير..... | 92 |
| Table 4.18. Translation of الكريم..... | 93 |
| Table 4.19. Translation of الحكيم..... | 93 |
| Table 4.20. Translation of الشهيد..... | 94 |
| Table 4.21. Translation of القوى..... | 95 |
| Table 4.22. Translation of الحى..... | 96 |
| Table 4.23. Translation of القيوم..... | 97 |
| Table 4.24. Translation of البر..... | 98 |
| Table 4.25. Translation of الغنى..... | 99 |
| Table 4.26. Translation of مالك الملك..... | 100 |
| Table 4.27. Frequency and Percentage of Translation Strategies Adopted by Shakir in Translation of Quranic DNs | 102 |
| Table 4.28. Frequency and Percentage of Translation Strategies Adopted by Qarai in Translation of Quranic DNs..... | 104 |
| Table 4.29. Frequency and Percentage of Translation Strategies Adopted by Nikayin in Translation of Quranic DNs..... | 105 |

Table 4.30. Frequency and Percentage of Total Strategy Adoption in translation of DNs in the Corpus under Study.....107

Table 4.31. Frequency and Percentage of Consistency and Variety in translation of DNs.....109

List of Figures

| | |
|--|-----|
| Figure 4.1. Percentage of Translation Strategies Adopted by Shakir in Translation of the Quranic DNs..... | 103 |
| Figure 4.2. Percentage of Translation Strategies Adopted by Qarai in Translation of the Quranic DNs..... | 104 |
| Figure 4.3. Percentage of Translation Strategies Adopted by Nikayin in Translation of the Quranic DNs..... | 106 |
| Figure 4.4. Percentage of Total Strategy Adoption in translation of DNs in the Corpus under Study..... | 108 |
| Figure 4.5. Percentage of Consistency and Variety in translation of DNs | 110 |

List of Abbreviations

DN: Divine Name

DTS: Descriptive Translation Studies

SL: Source Language

TL: Target Language

ST: Source Text

TT: Target Text

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Nowadays, there are several English translations of the Holy Quran available in different libraries and book stores. Because of greater academic interest in Islam, there has been a blossoming of English translations in recent years. Muslims view the Quran as God's direct words revealed in Arabic to the Prophet Muhammad. Because the Quran stresses its Arabic nature, Muslim scholars generally believe that any translation cannot be more than an approximate interpretation, intended only as a tool for the study and understanding of the original Arabic text. Since fewer than twenty percent of Muslims speak Arabic, this means that most Muslims study the text only in translation. So it is necessary to pay due attention to the reliability and accuracy of the translations of the Holy Quran. As Divine Names (DNs) are among the most frequently used concepts throughout the Holy Quran, their importance becomes quite evident to every person. In this study, then, the researcher tries to investigate what specific strategies the translators have adopted in translation of these Quranic Arabic DN's into English in order to keep close as much as possible to the original text.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The selection of linguistic items of the target language repository for conveying the meaning of the source text is of great importance in every act of translation and the translator tries his/her best to find the most appropriate equivalents for the source text linguistic items. But the problem arises as there is no complete equivalence between the corresponding linguistic items of the two language systems, Arabic and English in the case of this study. English and Arabic are structurally, conceptually, and culturally quite different. They are also distant languages in terms

of geography. The problem is even aggravated as the Quranic Arabic is a Quranic-specific language. So this would cause noticeable problems for the Quran translators. According to Reiss (2000), considering (or ignoring) the semantic component of a text is a critical factor in preserving the content and meaning of the original text. Failure to recognize polysemous words and homonyms, the lack of congruence between source and target language terms, misinterpretations and arbitrary additions or omissions are the greatest source of danger for the translator, and consequently offer the most inviting openings for the critic (Reiss, 2000, p. 53). The same is true about the DNs as they are part of original Quranic text and cause difficulty for translators during the process of meaning rendering. If full equivalence with the source text is the criterion by which the semantic components of the target text are to be judged, the standard for the lexical components must be *adequacy* (Reiss, 2000, p. 57). It is quite evident that no word for rendering of the lexical items of one language into another can result in lexical adequacy. The focus of this study, therefore, is to consider and describe the strategies adopted by Quran translators trying to reach lexical adequacy and semantic equivalence when encountered to certain linguistic items i.e. Divine Names. The research seeks to describe how the components of the original text have been adequately carried over to the target language. It should be noted that in this study, it is assumed that the translators have done their best to achieve lexical adequacy.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

Translation Studies suggests different approaches to the study of translation. Many of these methods have dealt with the language of translation from a qualitative perspective and hence have been quite subjective in nature. One of the recent approaches is the quantitative study of