IN THE NAME OF GOD

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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

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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.

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To My Parents

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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 DNs in different contexts was investigated. The findings of the study showed that the lexical compression of the original DNs 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

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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 DNs 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