

***The Translation of Al-Ihtibak  
(Reciprocal ellipsis) in the Glorious Quran into  
English***

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***Introduction:***

The Glorious Quran undoubtedly represent the whole range of Arabic rhetoric. This is empirically true since almost all possible rhetorical devices are traceable in this divine book. These rhetorical devices and techniques have played an important role in making the Quran completely unique in style, pure in origin and unexcelled in beauty; it is the highest linguistic achievement of Arabic.

“Alihtibak” (الاحتباك) (AH) is one of the rhetorical devices commonly used in the Glorious Quran. It is derived from the Arabic verb (حبك) which means to tighten and improve the dress to make it perfect, (Al-Fairoozabaadi, 1983: vol.3, p.297). It is a kind of ellipsis used by Arab linguists and rhetoricians to stir up the reader’s attention, strengthen the literariness and aesthetic value of their works, achieve brevity and create emotive effect, (Al-Biqaa'ii, 1969: vol.2, p.30).

The Glorious Quran uses this stylistic technique in ayas containing two parts, in each there is an opposition, analogy, similarity or negation vs. affirmation. From each of these parts a word, phrase or a clause is ellipped since it is stated explicitly in the other part. The remainder of each part refers to the ellipped extracts and completes the meaning of the other part.

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redundancy. A major use of ellipsis is the avoidance of repetition, (Quirk et al., 1985: 537).

Practically, ellipsis refers to any construction in which, and for reasons of economy, emphasis or style, some material which is required for the semantic interpretation and which could have been overtly present is absent but immediately recoverable from the scrutiny of the context (Trask, 1993: 89; Crystal, 2003: 159).

One can conclude that ellipsis is a linguistic device used both in Arabic and English for relatively the same stylistic reasons. However, and despite the fact that Quirk et al. (1985) devoted a whole chapter to ellipsis, the researcher does not find a kind of English ellipsis similar to QAH since in the language of the Glorious Quran AH happens only where there is a reciprocal ellipsis in the manner and technique explained in the previous section.

#### ***4. The Translation of the glorious Quran:***

The language of the Quran poses a real challenge to both readers and translators of this divine book for at least two reasons (1) unlike conventional books, the Quran does not contain information, ideas and arguments about specific themes arranged in an academic literary order. That is why stranger to it on his first approach to it, is baffled when s/he does not find the enunciation of its theme or its division into chapter and sections; a matter with which s/he has not been familiar before and does not conform to his conception of a book, (Ali, 1934: 7). (2) The meaning of the Quranic text cannot easily be determined, since the linguistic and textual material of the religious text is marked with many stylistic and extra-linguistic ambiguities and devices, (Ilyas, 1988: 32).

The aim of any English translation of the Quran is to present to English readers (Muslims and non-Muslims) the

meaning of the words of this divine book. It is intended to help them understand its meaning, appreciate its beauty and catch something of the grandeur of the original. To present such translation, the translator should give the fullest meaning which s/he can understand from the Quranic text. The intended meaning whether explicit or implicit should be transferred. The translator finds himself obliged to interpret or explain the text, relying on authentic commentaries or exegetical interpretations of the Quran and explanatory footnotes, (Sale, 1694: VI; Ali, 1968: IV).

The researcher believes that exegetic translation is the best suitable technique to translate the Glorious Quran in general and (QAH) in specific. This technique is defined as a style of translation in which the target text expresses additional details that are not explicitly conveyed in the source text, or in other words one in which the target text is, at the same time, an expansion and explanation of the contents of the source text. This means that a careful study of the source text and reference works such as lexicons, grammars, and commentaries is of a central importance in the process of the translation, (Hervey and Higgins, 1992: 250).

Such a process, where explication is found, is brought about by the translator filling out the source text, for example, including additional explanatory phrases, spelling out implicature or adding connectives to help the logical flow of the text and to increase readability. The result is that the translator simply expands the target text, building into it a semantic redundancy absent in the original, (Blum-Kulka, 1986: 21).

Exegetic translation means that the source texts need to be drawn out in the translation process by incorporating a degree of linguistic redundancy and making implicit information more explicit. Failure to all this will lead the receptor not to share the

cultural and linguistic background of their source text counterparts and so will not be able to make all the inferences acquired for a proper understanding of the text, (Nida & Taber, 1982: 163).

To verify the validity of the hypotheses of the study the English translations of (6) Quranic texts (embodying QAH) chosen carefully to achieve the aims of this study, have been explained and assessed in terms of the technique of exegetic translation.

the translators are chosen to represent:

1. English Christian Translator: Arberry, A. D. (1964). *The Koran Interpreted*.
2. Non-Arab Muslim Translator: Ali, A.Y. (1968). *The Holy Quran Text Translation and Commentary*.
3. Arab Muslim Translator: Al-Hilali, M. T. and Khan, M. M. (1996). *Translation of the Meanings of the Noble Quran*.

They are given the following short names respectively. Arb., Ali, Hi. and Khan.

The following few words represent a brief introduction for the three translators to shed light on their aims of translation.

In his introduction, Arberry (1964:X) states that he attempts to improve on the performance of his predecessors who appear to him to have almost totally ignored a very characteristic feature of the Quran than "inimitable symphony". For this reason he has striven to devise rhythmic pattern and sequence grouping in correspondence with that the Arabic version presents, paragraphing the grouped sequences as they seem to form the original units of revelation.

After justifying the need for a fresh translation of the Quran to enhance understanding its meaning, appreciating its beauty and catching something of the grandeur of the original, Ali (1968: V) affirms that he has departed from literal





was to destroy him; calling to disbelieve in Allah and consequently enter The Fire.

In the first part of the aya (النجاة) through believing in Allah is stated but its reward (دخول الجنة) is ellipted yet understood as an antonym to the word (النار) given in the second part. From the second part, (الهلاك) due to disbelieving in Allah, as opposite to (النجاة) is also ellipted but recovered concept of oppositeness and the context of the aya, (Al-Biqaa'ii, 1969: vol.17, p.76) Thus, the deep semantic structure of the aya could be:

(ويا قوم ما لي أدعوكم إلى النجاة بالإيمان بالله ودخول الجنة وتدعونني إلى الهلاك بالكفر بالله ودخول النار).

### ***Discussion:***

The translators state in their introduction that they are going to provide an explanation of the Glorious Quran, their renderings of these two ayas show clearly that they departed from exegetic translation and stuck to the literal one.

The translators successfully reflected the general meaning of the ayas, but they failed to retrieve the ellipted words and expression hidden by the rhetorical device of AH. From an exegetical perspective, these ellipted words and expressions facilitate the readability of the target texts and improve on their understanding.

Below are suggested exegetical translations for texts 1 and 2 that may recover the hidden details and meaning by AH:

- He it is who has made for you the night dark to rest therein, and the day visible that you may pursue your occupation, verily in this are sings for those who listen to His message.





The aya gives only two examples of the organs: hands, as well as legs will speak to Allah, all bearing witness to what they used to earn. The deep semantic structure of the aya is:

(اليوم نختم على أفواههم وتكلمنا أيديهم فتشهد وتشهد أرجلهم فتتكلم بما كانوا يكسبون)

From the first part of the aya, the verb (تشهد) is ellipted, yet obtained from the relation of parallel similarity. The same thing happens with the verb (تتكلم) which is supposed to appear in the first part but ellipted for brevity, (Al-biqaa'ii, 1969: vol.16, p.657).

### ***Discussion:***

In the renderings of these two ayas, again none of the translators uses exegetical interpretation to express the additional details which could be very helpful for the readers (especially non-muslims) in grasping the fullest meaning of the ayas. The translators failed to fill out the ellipted words shown in the interpretation, because they gave literal translation. Their failure can be attributed to the unawareness of the Quranic rhetorical device of AH.

Below are suggested exegetical translations for texts 3 and 4 that may recover the hidden meaning by AH:

- Say O my servants who have transgressed against their souls, despair not of Allah's mercy and forgiveness for Allah surely shows mercy and forgives all sins. Verily He is the Most Merciful and Oft-Forgiving.
- Today We set a seal on their Mouths and order their hands and legs to speak to us and bear witness to all that they used to earn.

### ***5.3. Negative vs. Affirmative QAH:***





Who denies and turns away. And Al-Mattaqūn (the pious) will be far removed from it (Hell). He who spends his wealth for increase in self-purification.

**Interpretation:**

This Quranic text describes two types of people: the most wretched (Ashqa) who disbelieves in Allah (denies and turns away). The second type is the Most-God fearing (Atqa) who believes in Allah (spends his wealth for increase in self-purification).

The contradiction between the two types is shown by the particle of negation (لا) and the particle of exception (لاِ) (which implies negation). The text means that the Most-God fearing will enter the paradise and be removed far from the fire because he believes in Allah and gives his wealth to purify himself. On the contrary, the most-wretched will enter the blazing fire because he disbelieves in Allah and refuses to spend his wealth for increase in self-purification (Al-Biqaa'ii, 1969: vol22, p.95). Thus, the deep semantic structure of the Quranic text is:

(فَأَنْذَرْتُمْ نَاراً تَلْزَمِي لَا يَصْلَاهَا إِلَّا الْأَشْقَى الَّذِي كَذَبَ وَتَوَلَّى وَلَمْ يَأْتِ مَالَهُ يَتَزَكَّى  
وَسِيَجْنِبُهَا الْأَتَقَى الَّذِي صَدَقَ وَلَمْ يَكْذِبْ وَلَمْ يَتَوَلَّ وَأَتَى مَالَهُ يَتَزَكَّى)

The QAH is realized when the negative clause ( ولم يؤت ماله ) is ellipted for it is understood from the description of the Most-God fearing (Atqa) who avoids the bad deeds of the most-wretched. The good deeds of Most-God fearing ( صدق ولم يكذب ) are also ellipted, but retrieved as being the opposite characteristics of the most-wretched who denies and turns away.

***Discussion:***

Again, in the translation of this Quranic text, the translators break their promise of providing the target readers with an explanation of the Qlorious Quran (as much as AH is concerned). Their literal translations give us the impression that they were not aware of the rhetorical aspects and aims of QAH.

They failed to bring to the surface structure of the target text the ellipted meanings and details that can put the English readers closer to the intended meaning of the Quranic text. An exegetic translation, like the following, expresses more accurately the intended meaning of text (5) and (6) respectively:

- So all the angels prostrated themselves humbly, except Iblis (Satan); he was haughty, refused to bow, and became of the unbelievers.
- Therefore, I have warned you of a blazing fire (Hell). None shall enter it except the most-wretched who denies, turns away and refuses to spend his wealth for increase in self-purification. And the Most-Allah fearing will be far removed form it (Hell) because he believes in Allah, does not deny, and spends his wealth for increase in self-purification.

- **6. Conclusion:**

The main conclusions arrived at in this study are as follows:

1. Text-subject translators failed to understand the message of the ayas involving AH and consequently provided ineffective renderings for them; this is due to their unawareness of the concept and the linguistic aspects of the Quranic rhetorical device of AH.
2. The difficulty of translating AH arises from two perspectives: the first is the linguistic and the second is

the religious which suggests more constraints on translation.

3. Since the main concern of translating the meanings of the Glorious Quran is to convey the exact message in the form of interpretative meaning, the most effective translation to render ayas containing AH is the exegetic translation.
4. Filling out the elliptical expressions and words has been noticed to be more reliable than other techniques such as literal translation.
5. The Islamic studies have proved their importance to understand the Quranic texts and then to ensure acceptable rendering for the interpretative meaning of the Quran.

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ترجمة الإحتباك في القرآن الكريم إلى اللغة الإنكليزية  
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المستخلص

إنَّ القرآن الكريم الكتاب المعجز ببلاغته والغني بمعانيه مليء بالأساليب المتنوعة من البلاغة والبيان ومنها الإحتباك، وهو نوع من أنواع الحذف وسر من أسرار جمال اللغة العربية .

إن المشكلة التي يتناولها البحث هي كيفية استخلاص الرسالة والمعنى من آيات الإحتباك، وكيفية نقلها إلى اللغة الإنكليزية، وكيف أن تجاهل هذه المسألة

، أو عدم التنبه لها يؤدي إلى ترجمة غير وافية؛ لذا تفترض الدراسة أن الحل يكمن في إتباع الترجمة التفسيرية، ولتحقيق أهداف الدراسة وإثبات صحة الفرضيات تمت دراسة الاحتباك وأنواعه في القرآن الكريم، ثم أُختيرت ستة نصوص قرآنية تتضمن أنواع الاحتباك في ثلاث ترجمات إنكليزية منشورة للقرآن الكريم بالاعتماد على أسلوب الترجمة التفسيرية، وقد أثبتت نتائج البحث صحة الفرضيات وحققت الأهداف المرجوة من البحث