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Reassessing Semantic Loss in Selected Verses of Surah Yā-Sīn: Comparing Yusuf Ali's and Arberry's English Translations

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ABSTRACT

This study re-examined the issue of semantic loss in the English translations of some selected verses from Surah Yā-Sīn by Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Arthur John Arberry. It focused on the lexicon, grammar, pronouns, tense, modalities, and contextual meanings in the verses under consideration which included verses 2, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 55-57, and 66. Qualitative comparative analysis was done in line with Baker's concept of equivalence. This involved analyzing the Arabic verses, their English translations, and the lexicon and exegetical material related to them. The results indicated that in most cases, the differences in the translations were acceptable variations in the process of translation, restructuring of the grammar or explication but not semantic loss. Yusuf Ali's version was more explanatory while Arberry's was comparatively conciseness in translation of source. Semantic loss only occurred due to the limitation in the selection of lexicon that led to contextual meaning reduction.

1. Introduction

Translation provides the ability for meanings conveyed through one language to be understood by those who speak another language. Nevertheless, translation is not the substitution of words in one language that seem to have the same meaning as the words in another language. Rather, translation demands that the translator understand the meaning of the lexicon, grammar, and contextual information used to communicate the message along with the intended purpose. As languages construct meaning differently, complete equivalency between the source text and the target text cannot always be achieved (Baker, 2018). These problems take on particular importance in the translation of religious texts. The religious discourse may include culturally-bound notions, rhetorical figures, culturally-bound symbolism, doctrinal distinctions that cannot always be rendered directly by means of lexical substitution. In the case of religious texts, the translation choices of the translator will not only affect the clarity of the translation but may have an impact on the interpretation of the religious message by the reader. The translation of the Qur'an represents a special challenge because the Qur'anic discourse involves both the semantic density and particular grammatical, rhetorical, phonetic, and textual characteristics (Abdul-Raof, 2001). For the Muslim tradition, the role of the Arabic version of the Qur'an is something that cannot be extended to the translated versions of this scripture. The fact that the

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English version is an interpretation of the meanings of the Qur'an rather than a replacement of the original script is evident in the title of Arberry's book: *The Koran Interpreted*. The English translation always reflects the interpretation of the original text, despite the efforts of the translator to be faithful to the text. This calls for the evaluation of translation decisions based on the context and possibilities of Qur'anic exegesis. The description of equivalence by Baker (2018) can help to analyze these choices. Equivalence can be looked at in terms of lexical units, lexico-grammatical items, grammar, organization of text, and pragmatics. Non-equivalence can occur where a concept present in the source language is not lexicalized in the target language, a lexical unit possesses culture-specific connotations, or where the two languages differ in their organization of meaning via their grammar. However, formal difference does not always mean lack of equivalence of meaning. The translator can alter the grammatical form or sentence structure while keeping the same contextual meaning. Likewise, the addition of extra wording can also be explication rather than over-translation, where the added information is deducible from the source context.

1.1. Problem Statement

Previous studies have considered semantic loss in the English translations of Surah Yā-Sīn done by Yusuf Ali and Arberry. However, some differences in vocabulary and structure are considered to be semantic loss without consideration of Arabic grammar, context, conventions of the Qur'an, and interpretation (Islam, 2018). Not all formal differences between the source text and its translation are a reason for semantic loss since translators can rephrase and explain the same idea without changing its essence. Therefore, the problem of the study is how to differentiate semantic loss from acceptable translation variations and interpretation. This study aims at reanalyzing the selected verses of Surah Yā-Sīn in the translations done by Yusuf Ali and Arberry in order to prove whether the differences reduce the meaning or distort it in the context.

1.2. Research Objectives

- To identify and reassess instances of semantic loss in selected verses of Surah Yā-Sīn translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Arthur John Arberry.
- To compare how the two translators transfer the contextual meanings of the selected verses into English.

1.3. Research Questions

- What instances of semantic loss occur in Yusuf Ali's and Arberry's English translations of the selected verses from Surah Yā-Sīn?
- How do Yusuf Ali and Arberry differ in transferring the contextual meanings of the selected verses into English?

1.4. Significance

The significance lies towards the field of Qur'anic translation is in its method of assessing the difference among English translations based on context rather than taking any difference in lexical or grammatical structure as a semantic deficiency. This study differentiates between translation variations that can be acceptable and explicit that does not distort meaning. In addition, this study reexamines the conclusions that have been made in previous studies regarding the translations of Surah Yā-Sīn done by Yusuf Ali and Arberry taking into consideration the Arabic grammar, context, usage in Qur'anic texts, and exegesis.

1.5. Delimitation

This research does not contain the entire Surah but just limited portion is used. This study covers only verses 2, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 55, 56, 57, and 66 of Surah Yā-Sīn as translated into English by Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Arthur John Arberry. These verses were chosen based on the differences that exist between the translations regarding vocabulary selection, grammatical construction, pronoun usage, tense and modality, explicit and meaning which is contextually Islamic. The verses have been evaluated based on their comparison with the original source text and its exegetical explanations. This study neither covers all 83 verses of Surah Yā-Sīn nor compares the two translations as total works.

2. Literature Review

Translation is the activity of making sense of meaning between languages rather than substituting source language words with equivalent formal elements in the target language. The two languages may vary in terms of classification of experience, information structuring, expression of grammar relations, and culturally based meaning-making. For this reason, the translator has to change the structure of the expression, give explanations, and select an appropriate equivalent rather than using the same grammatical form used in the source language text. According to Baker (2018), equivalence can be considered on the level of words, above words, grammar, text, and pragmatics. The levels interact in the sense that selecting a lexical element may affect grammar or pragmatics of the translated text.

Word-level equivalence entails the relationship between the individual lexical items and the ideas they convey. Problems occur where there is lack of equivalence of the target word, multiple meanings for the same source language word, or culturally-specific meanings. Non-word level equivalence includes collocations, set expressions, idiomatic meanings, and relations between lexical items. Grammatical equivalence encompasses person, number, gender, tenses, aspects, voice and syntactical differences, whereas textual equivalence relates to cohesion and organization of information. Pragmatic equivalence entails implied meaning, intentionality and contextual understanding of meaning (Baker, 2018). The multidimensional nature of equivalence is especially important in Arabic-English translation because of the wide differences between the two languages.

Translating religious texts poses further challenges due to the fact that the language used in them is strongly tied to certain theological and interpretive tradition. Words and expressions used in religious texts may seem to have direct equivalents in another language but at the same time carry associations which cannot be completely conveyed through them. Moreover, the translators need to take into account the audience whose cultural, linguistic and historic knowledge does not include information assumed in the source text. As such, a wrong choice of words or grammar can affect the readers' perception of certain moral and/or theological message.

Such challenges become especially obvious in the case of translating the Qur'an. Qur'anic discourse consists of semantic concentration along with some grammatical, rhetorical, phonological and textual features. According to Abdul-Raof (2001), the discourse of the Qur'an should not be separated from structure, rhetoric, texture and exegesis of the text. Some of the issues faced by translators include polysemy, metaphor, ellipsis, repetition, changes in speaker and addressee, emphasis, semantic ambiguity and culturally-specific religious expressions. In addition to the role played by different translators in transferring the meaning from the Qur'an to target languages, the translations of the Qur'an occupy different places in the Islamic tradition as compared to the Arabic Qur'an. Translation is generally considered an interpretation of the meanings of the Qur'an in the language of translation and not a replacement for the Arabic revelation. This implies that every translation is bound to make decisions on various factors such as meaning, form, style, and interpretation. According to Abdel Haleem (2010), there is a need to interpret the expressions of the Qur'an according to linguistic and textual context. Pronouns, verbal structures, ellipsis, and changes of addressees are likely to be misinterpreted where the verses are taken away from the passage in which they occur.

Semantic loss is one of the major terminologies used in evaluating meaning transfer from source text to target text. Semantic loss generally refers to a situation where some part of the source meaning is lost, downgraded, made opaque or substituted in the process of translation. Abdelaal and Rashid (2015) classify semantic loss into partial and complete losses. The former takes place where the translation conveys some parts of the meaning of the source text while the latter arises where the relevant source meaning is either missing or substituted by another meaning. Another equally essential type is interpretive explicitation. Explicitation is where a translator renders information explicitly even when it remains implicit, compressed or context-recoverable in the source text. Yusuf Ali often utilizes explanatory phrases, capitalization, parentheses, and commentary, while Arberry follows a more compact structural pattern. Explicitation can aid understanding of cultural or theological interpretations, but it could also imply a specific translation and narrow the semantic range of the Arabic text. Conversely, a compact text would retain the ambiguous nature of the text but place the burden of interpretation on the target reader. None of the two strategies is better than the other, and it is necessary to assess each in reference to the specific verse and its function (Abdullah, 2021; Baker, 2018). Moreover, the grammatical differences between the two languages may influence the transfer of meaning as well. Person, number, gender, tense, aspect, definiteness, and emphasis are marked differently in Arabic compared to English. Pronoun references may depend on shifts in the speaker, addressee, or narrative point of view, while verbal forms may be interpreted with respect to particles and context. According to Abdelaal and Rashid (2016), grammatical differences may cause semantic loss if there are distinctions in Arabic which are overlooked or mistranslated into English. Yet, grammatical transformation which retains meaning must be considered a translation shift, not a semantic loss.

Various empirical researches have identified semantic challenges encountered in English Qur'an translations. Abdelaal and Rashid (2015) conducted an investigation into lexical and culture-related semantic loss in Yusuf Ali's translation of *Sūrat al-Wāqī'ah* and indicated that partial and complete losses could be due to non-equivalent lexicon, semantic complexity, culture-specific expressions, and wrong translation decisions. In another investigation, Abdelaal and Rashid (2016) looked at grammar-related semantic losses in the translation of *Sūrat al-A'raf* and showed how grammatical classifications play a role in interpreting the translated text. Thus, empirical evidence is given regarding possible semantic losses due to lexicon and grammar.

Hassanein (2017) explored lexical-semantic opposition in Qur'anic translation and found that English translations do not always reflect multiple nuances resulting from the antonymy and opposition in the Arabic language. Abdelaal (2019) examined the translation of denotative meanings and found that lexical choice might result in loss or change in some elements of the meaning of the Qur'an.

Islam (2018) is the author of the only research work that is most related to the current study in that he carried out an analysis of semantic loss in Yusuf Ali and Arberry's translations of *Surah Yā-Sīn*. He used the classification of equivalence by Baker and applied a qualitative interpretive methodology in the study. Partial loss was found to occur frequently in the Yusuf Ali's

translation, and complete loss was found in the Arberry's translation. The importance of this study lies in the fact that the lexical and grammatical differences between two prominent translations of one surah in English language were determined. Nevertheless, in this study there is no precise definition of the boundary between translation difference and meaningful loss of information in certain contexts. Studying Qur'anic near-synonymy also proved that even though lexemes appeared similar, they communicated slightly different shades of meaning in certain contexts. According to Abdul-Ghafour et al. (2022), the contextual meanings of some selected Qur'anic near-synonyms have been studied and the differences between those semantically related words were noted to not have been translated accurately enough. The authors believed that before translating the words, their contextual meaning first needed to be determined. In addition, Alrefaee et al. (2023) have studied the Qur'anic term *huzn* and its near-synonyms and found that words usually associated with grief conveyed the same meaning in various contexts. The results indicated that translation of the near-synonyms in the Qur'an required special attention towards the semantic differences and collocations. Thus, all those researches have provided further evidence for the idea that Qur'anic vocabulary cannot be studied with the help of dictionaries alone or considered the set of freely interchangeable synonyms. Rather, the meaning of each lexeme should be studied together with the context it occurs in. In a more recent study conducted by Abdelkarim et al. (2025) analyzed the semantic loss in chosen verses of Surah Yā-Sīn through the comparison of the translations done by Al-Hilali and Khan, Abdel Haleem, and Pickthall. They noted that literal translation does not necessarily convey the relational meaning and semantic content of the Qur'anic terms. They also observed that exegetical interpretation and explanation could contribute to lessening semantic loss. While the study reaffirms the significance of semantic analysis in Surah Yā-Sīn, it concentrates only on the translations other than those by Yusuf Ali and Arberry.

3. Theoretical Framework

The current study is based on Baker's (2018) approach to equivalence as a theoretical foundation for the analysis of the process of transferring meanings of Arabic expressions into English. According to Baker, there are a number of ways of investigating translation equivalence such as word-level, above-word, grammatical, textual, and pragmatic equivalences; nevertheless, only the word-level, grammatical, textual, and pragmatic equivalences will be used in this study as only these types of equivalences are directly related to the selected verses and research questions. The word-level equivalence will be employed in order to investigate whether the lexical choice of Yusuf Ali and Arberry translators convey contextually appropriate meanings of Arabic expressions, especially in cases when one expression has several meanings or carries a number of religious and cultural connotations which cannot be conveyed by one English expression. Grammatical equivalence will be used to analyze differences concerning pronouns, persons, numbers, tenses, aspects, modalities, definiteness, and structures of sentences but taking into account that grammatical reorganization is needed as Arabic and English languages organize meanings in different ways. This concept of textual equivalence allows the translations to be interpreted in connection to their surroundings, shifts in speakers, cohesion, and development of the text, instead of looking at the individual verses as separate sentences. Pragmatic equivalence is employed to analyze implicit and context-bound meaning, especially when information known by readers of the Arabic text has to be more clearly stated in the English language text. Although Baker's classifications help to identify at what linguistic level the difference between the languages lies, they cannot automatically mean that the difference will result in semantic loss. The study will measure the effect of the translations based on three analytic results: variation, explication, and semantic loss. Translation variation is any change in terms of vocabulary or grammar which retains the same meaning in the context of the source-language expression. Interpretive explication means when the translator adds some information to the expression in English and it is supported by the linguistic context, Qur'anic usage, or accepted exegesis. Loss of meaning is only possible when some important element of the Arabic meaning is lost, altered, distorted or substituted in the translation. According to Abdelaal and Rashid (2015), the study classifies the loss of meaning into partial and substantial. Partial loss is when the meaning of the expression in the translation is not complete although it conveys the main meaning, and substantial loss means when the translation is inaccurate and contradictory to the Arabic expression and context. "Substantial semantic loss" rather than "complete loss" is employed in order to allow for the possibility that even an imperfect translation conveys some aspect of the broader meaning. Each expression chosen for analysis, then, will be treated in two ways: firstly, by identifying where the difference occurs within Baker's scale of equivalence, and secondly by determining whether it can be considered acceptable variation, interpretive explication, partial semantic loss, or substantial semantic loss. These determinations will be made on the basis of Arabic grammar, textual context, Qur'anic precedent, and appropriate exegesis. This combination will prove appropriate to the research questions as it enables the study to reassess cases of semantic loss and to consider how Yusuf Ali and Arberry convey contextually derived meanings without presupposing in advance that each difference constitutes a problem or that one translation is always better than the other.

4. Research Methodology

Qualitative comparative research and document analysis were utilized in the study to reevaluate the issue of semantic loss in the chosen verses of Surah Yā-Sīn in the English translations of Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Arthur John Arberry. The qualitative methodology was believed to be suitable for the research, as it involves interpretation of lexical, grammatical, textual and pragmatic meanings of the phenomenon and not quantitative measurements of variables (Bowen, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The primary data included verses 2, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 55, 56, 57 and 66, which were selected because these verses were identified by the previous studies as having possible semantic losses or significant differences in the two translations (Islam, 2018). The translation of Yusuf Ali was used in its 1938 third edition of *The Holy Qur-an: Text, Translation & Commentary*, while the translation of Arberry in its 1955 edition of *The Koran Interpreted*. In addition to that, the Arabic text, its morphological and grammatical aspects, the immediate textual context and explanations provided in *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* were analyzed in order to find out the meanings of the chosen expressions (Dukes & Habash, 2010). The data were organized in a comparative table including verse numbers, Arabic phrases, two English versions, corresponding equivalence types, meaning and analysis. The data were deductively analyzed using Baker's (2018) classification of equivalence at word-level, grammatical, textual and pragmatic levels and then classified into one of the four translation types, namely acceptable variation, explicitation, partial semantic loss and substantial semantic loss. A translation was considered as acceptable variation if it differed from the Arabic version formally but kept the meaning contextually. Explicitation referred to making implicit content explicit in a justified way. Partial semantic loss implied a weakening or omission of an important element of meaning, whereas substantial loss meant serious incompleteness, inconsistency or misleading of the translation. The trustworthiness of the analysis was enhanced through the comparison between the Arabic version of the text, the two translations, the Arabic corpus of the Quran, the exegesis, and the literature review, whereas the same standards of analysis were applied for all selected examples. Since the research examined publicly available texts without human subjects and private information, there was no need for participants' consent or ethical approval.

5. Data Analysis and Discussion

Analysis of the comparative study reveals that the distinctions between the translation of Yusuf Ali and Arberry do not necessarily imply the semantic loss. Some of the differences were due to stylistic choice, restructure of grammar, or the amount of information conveyed to the English reader. Yusuf Ali favored an explanatory style of writing, while Arberry attempted to maintain the conciseness of the Arabic language. Consequently, the following samples of translation were analyzed and classified as acceptable translation variations, interpretative explicitations, partial or significant semantic losses.

Table 1: Comparison of Verse 2 in the two English Translations

The Original Verse in Arabic	Abdullah Yusuf Ali's Translation	Arthur John Arberry's Translation
وَالْقُرْآنَ الْحَكِيمَ	2. By the Qur'an, full of wisdom—	2. By the Wise Koran,

The expression “*wa-al-Qur'āni al-ḥakīm*” can be found in Verse 2, and in this expression, the adjective “*al-ḥakīm*” is used to modify the noun “*al-Qur'ān*.” In his translation, Arberry kept this structure of the adjective modifying the noun in the form “the Wise Koran” while Yusuf Ali rendered this expression in the form “the Qur'an, full of wisdom.” Thus, both translators conveyed the connection between the Qur'an and wisdom, and thus the use of the adjective “wise” in Arberry's translation was not a semantic omission. Both translations used the preposition “by” to translate the oath particle *wa* that occurred at the beginning of the verse. It is an appropriate approach to convey the oath of the Qur'an into English. Both translators did not use the Arabic particle formally; however, both conveyed its meaning. The only difference between “Qur'an” and “Koran,” which is the spelling by Arberry, is historical and orthographical rather than semantical. As such, both are considered acceptable variations of translation, whereas Yusuf Ali's “full of wisdom” is also considered explicitation. Arberry's previous classification as partial semantic loss was not justified based on Arabic grammar and context.

Table 2: Comparison of Verses 55–57 in the Two English Translations

The Original Verse in Arabic	Abdullah Yusuf Ali's Translation	Arthur John Arberry's Translation
إِنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ الْيَوْمَ فِي شُغْلٍ فَاكِهُونَ ٥٥	55. Verily the Companions of the Garden shall that Day have joy in all that they do;	55. See, the inhabitants of Paradise today are busy in their rejoicing,
هُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُمْ فِي ظِلَالٍ عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ مُتَكِنُونَ ٥٦	56. They and their associates will be in groves of (cool) shade, reclining on Thrones (of dignity);	56. They and their spouses, reclining upon couches in the shade;

The Original Verse in Arabic	Abdullah Yusuf Ali's Translation	Arthur John Arberry's Translation
لَهُمْ فِيهَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَلَهُمْ مَا يَدْعُونَ ٥٧	57. (Every) fruit (enjoyment) will be there for them; they shall have whatever they call for;	57. Therein they have fruits, and they have all that they call for.

The Arabic term *ashab al-jannah* means the people of Paradise in verse 55. It was translated by Yusuf Ali as “Companions of the Garden,” while Arberry used the term “inhabitants of Paradise.” The translation by Arberry makes the religious significance of the term very clear to modern-day English speakers. The capitalized term “Garden” used by Yusuf Ali is already a well-known religious translation of *al-jannah*. This term does not mean only an ordinary piece of land that is cultivated but derives its significance from the context of the Quranic passage and capitalization. Therefore, Yusuf Ali’s translation cannot be considered as complete semantic shift. *Fī shughulin fākihūn* was the term used for the happy occupation or joy of the people of Paradise. The translation done by Yusuf Ali is “have joy in all that they do,” whereas the one done by Arberry states that they “are busy in their rejoicing.” Arberry has remained more faithful to the structure of the Arabic term, and on the other hand, Yusuf Ali has expressed the meaning of the term more liberally. The extra phrase added by Yusuf Ali of “all that they do” has gone beyond the Arabic text, but still stayed within the context of happy occupation. This process was thus considered interpretive explication and not semantic loss.

There was a more substantial lexical difference in Verse 56. *Hum wa-azwājuhūm* was an Arabic phrase that referred to the inhabitants of Paradise and their spouses or companions. Arberry’s translation of *azwājuhūm* was “their spouses,” maintaining the direct meaning of this word in its context. Yusuf Ali translated *azwājuhūm* to “their associates.” Even if associate is understood as a companion or someone who is associated with him, it made the meaning of *azwāj* less precise as a spouse or a companion. Hence, the translation of Yusuf Ali was considered partial semantic loss on the word and pragmatic levels. The other expressions in verse 56 showed acceptable variations and explicitions. The terms “couches” and “Thrones” by Arberry and Yusuf Ali respectively were examples of variations of the word “*al-arāik*,” which means couches that were either elevated or decorated where the people of Paradise could recline on. The expression “of dignity” in parentheses by Yusuf Ali is not explicitly written in the Arabic version but was considered an interpretation of the honor that pertains to the place. Likewise, “cool” was also written in parentheses as an explication of the comfort of the shade.

In verse 57, both translators expressed the presence of fruits and anything else that was desired by the people of Paradise. *Fākihah* was translated by Arberry as “fruits” while by Yusuf Ali as “(Every) fruit (enjoyment).” The bracketed words “every” and “enjoyment” expanded the meaning of enjoyment that can be gained from the fruits. While Arberry used “all that they call for,” Yusuf Ali used “whatever they call for” to express the meaning of *mā yadda’ūn*. These variations were thus considered acceptable.

Table 3: Comparison of Pronoun Reference in Verses 12, 14, 16, and 18

The Original Verse in Arabic	Abdullah Yusuf Ali's Translation	Arthur John Arberry's Translation
إِنَّا نَحْنُ نُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ وَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَدَّمُوا وَآثَارَهُمْ وَكُلِّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي إِمَامٍ مُّبِينٍ ١٢	12. Verily We shall give life to the dead, and We record that which they send before and that which they leave behind, and of all things have We taken account in a clear Book (of evidence).	12. Surely it is We who bring the dead to life and write down what they have forwarded and what they have left behind; everything We have numbered in a clear register.
إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ اثْنَيْنِ فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَعَزَّزْنَا بِثَالِثٍ فَقَالُوا إِنَّا إِلَيْكُم مُّرْسَلُونَ ١٤	14. When We (first) sent to them two apostles, they rejected them: but We strengthened them with a third: they said, “Truly, we have been sent on a mission to you.”	14. When We sent unto them two men, but they cried them lies, so We sent a third as reinforcement. They said, “We are assuredly Envoys unto you.”
قَالُوا رَبُّنَا يَعْلَمُ إِنَّا إِلَيْكُم لَمُرْسَلُونَ ١٦	16. They said: “Our Lord doth know that we have been sent on a mission to you.”	16. They said, “Our Lord knows we are Envoys unto you; and it is only for us to deliver the Manifest Message.”

The Original Verse in Arabic**Abdullah Yusuf Ali's Translation****Arthur John Arberry's Translation**

قَالُوا إِنَّا تَطَيَّرْنَا بِكُمْ لَئِن لَّمْ تَنْتَهُوا لَنَرْجُمَنَّكُمْ
وَلَيَمَسَّنَّكُم مِّنَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ١٨

18. The (people) said: "For us, we augur an evil omen from you: if ye desist not, we will certainly stone you. And a grievous punishment indeed will be inflicted on you by us."

18. They said, "We augur ill of you. If you give not over, we will stone you and there shall visit you from us a painful chastisement."

The pronouns used in the verses above could not be given a specific referent since the speakers varied in the text. Innā naḥnu, nulyī, naktubu, and alaynāhu in verse 12 were in the form of divine speech referring to Allah. Both Yusuf Ali and Arberry translated the aforementioned words by using the capitalized pronoun "We." The future "shall give life" in Yusuf Ali and the present "bring the dead to life" in Arberry were the two ways of translating the Arabic imperfect verb nulyī in the eschatological setting. In an eschatological sense, both the translations conveyed divine resurrection and were considered grammatically correct alternatives. In verse 12, the literal meaning of the phrase āthārahum was that of the traces, effects or consequences of people. Both the translators used the word as "what they leave/have left behind." Such an interpretation conveyed the meaning of the word in general terms but did not make it clear that the phrase also meant the traces of people's actions. Thus, the translations of the phrase could be considered as contextual equivalents. Arberry's rendering of imāmin mubīn as "clear register" focused on the meaning of an inclusive record, while Yusuf Ali translated the expression as "clear Book (of evidence)."

Verse 14 contains a first "We" which is God in the first case, but "we" in the second case, when the messengers say something in the verse. Both translators showed the difference between these cases appropriately. In this verse, Yusuf Ali provided the noun "apostles" right after the Arabic dual form ithnayn, meaning "two." On the other hand, Arberry provided "two men," and then explained that "these two were Envoys." This is a good example of the way in which the Arabic phrase omitted the repetition of the noun due to the fact that it could be understood from the context. It was hence considered as a translation variation rather than semantic loss.

As far as verse 16 is concerned, the speakers were the messengers, and the first person plural used in innā ilaykum la-mursalūn was meant for them. The two translations have done justice to this verse. The extra part in the translation by Arberry, "and it is only for us to deliver the Manifest Message," has been taken from the next verse in the original Arabic. It did not change the meaning of the verse at all.

In verse 18, the speakers were the townspeople who had rejected the messengers. This made the first-person plural forms refer to these people, and not to Allah. Thus, the translations by Yusuf Ali, "we augur an evil omen," and by Arberry, "We augur ill of you," were correct in this regard. The use of "we" by Arberry was not a mistake, nor did it refer to divinity in any way. The translation mistake of referring the pronoun to Allah arose because of the separation of the pronoun form from the context. Here, textual equivalence was critical to establish the referent of the pronoun.

Table 4: Comparison of Verbal Expression in the Verses 10 and 66

The Original Verse in Arabic	Abdullah Yusuf Ali's Translation	Arthur John Arberry's Translation
وَسَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَلَذَّرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ١٠	10. The same is it to them whether thou admonish them or thou do not admonish them: they will not believe.	10. Alike it is to them whether thou hast warned them or thou hast not warned them, they do not believe.
وَلَوْ نَشَاءُ لَطَمَسْنَا عَلَىٰ أَعْيُنِهِمْ فَاسْتَبَقُوا الصِّرَاطَ فَأَلَّا يَبْصِرُونَ ٦٦	66. If it had been Our Will, We could surely have blotted out their eyes; then should they have run about groping for the Path, but how could they have seen?	66. Did We will, We would have obliterated their eyes, then they would race to the path, but how would they see?

In verse 10, the negative imperfect form of the verb was found to be lā yu'minūn. Yusuf Ali translated the verse as "they will not believe," while Arberry translated the same verse as "they do not believe." In Arabic, the imperfect form could either indicate a state of continuous action in the past or a future implication based on the context. In this case, Arberry showed how the people did not believe at the time, while Yusuf Ali implied how they would never believe in the future.

The word "will" in Yusuf Ali's interpretation of verse 10 was used as a future auxiliary verb in English. This was not a translation of an Arabic noun referring to volition, as "will," in this case, was a component of a larger verbal construction. The expression

lā yu'minūn meant "they do not believe" or "they will not believe," depending on the context, where lā was the negative prefix and yu'minūn was the verb.

Verse 66 included the expression wa-law nashā'u, which was translated by Yusuf Ali as "If it had been Our Will," while Arberry interpreted it as "Did We will." These two interpretations differed in grammar but conveyed the same meaning, namely "If We willed." The difference between the translations is that Yusuf Ali uses a noun "Will," which is capitalized and refers to God.

However, the presence of the English term "will" in the renderings of verses 10 and 66 did not provide a basis for homonymy in the Arabic source language text. This is because the two Arabic phrases were semantically and morphologically distinct; while yu'minūn meant belief, nashā'u meant wishing or willing. There was similarity between the two phrases only in English because will in verse 10 served as a future auxiliary while will in verse 66 indicated volition. Considering these instances as homonymy in Arabic would mean confusion of the target language form with the source language meaning.

6. Discussion

The first research question was to identify the cases of semantic loss in Yusuf Ali's and Arberry's translation of the chosen verses from Surah Yā-Sīn. It turned out that most of the observed differences were not cases of semantic loss but rather examples of normal translation variance or interpretation-based explication. The case of partial semantic loss is the use by Yusuf Ali of "associates" for azwājuhūm in verse 56 because the translation preserves the notion of companionship, but the more precise context-specific meaning of spouses or pair companions is lost. There was no example of substantial semantic loss in any of the two versions analyzed. Some of these findings do not fully coincide with the conclusions made by Islam (2018), who found many cases of partial semantic loss in Yusuf Ali's translation and some cases of complete loss in Arberry's translation. This study revealed that changes in word class, syntactic construction, or lexical choice alone cannot serve as proof of semantic loss.

Research question two addressed the comparison of the transfer of the contextual meanings of the chosen verses into English in the translations by Yusuf Ali and Arberry. This analysis indicated that Yusuf Ali tended to use more explanatory strategies, such as expanded phrasing, capitalization and parenthesis, whereas Arberry was more consistent in preserving the conciseness and grammar of the Arabic text. Explanatory methods used by Yusuf Ali could help understand some implicit meanings in English, but renderings of Arberry were source-based and kept the formal connection of the Arabic structure. However, none of the strategies was always more correct. For instance, such renderings as "full of wisdom" and "Wise" were valid translations of al-ḥakīm, whereas "the Garden" and "Paradise" were good contextual translations of al-jannah. The analysis of changes in the meaning of "we" also proved the importance of the text context in the translation process (Abdel Haleem, 2010). Similarly, the word "will" used in verses 10 and 66 had different functions in English and was not homonymous in the source language Arabic. These results aligned with Hassanein's (2017) view that the lexical-semantic relations of the Qur'an should first be found in Arabic before evaluating its English translation. It was clear that in the case of semantic loss in the translations of the Qur'an, a more exact approach to its identification was needed than that provided by a mere comparison of forms. They confirmed the standpoint of Abdelaal and Rashid (2015, 2016) that lexis and grammar could cause meaning loss, but they also revealed that not all translation shifts led to the loss of meaning. Moreover, they were also in line with Abdelkarim et al. (2025), who maintained that exegetical interpretation could facilitate the translation of contextual and connotative meaning, even though in the present case it was proven that the explication approach was not always preferable to the concise one. The difference between translation variants was considered a semantic loss only when contextual, grammatical, lexical and exegetical evidence proved that one of the components of the Arabic meaning was lost, distorted or weakened.

7. Findings

Most of the differences between Yusuf Ali's and Arberry's translation of the chosen verses of Surah Yā-Sīn were considered to be valid variations in translations or interpretive explication and not instances of semantic loss. Yusuf Ali preferred an expansive style of translation with explanation through expanded phrases, capitalization, and parentheses, while Arberry chose to translate the verses in the way that retained conciseness and grammar structure of the Arabic verses. The translation of al-ḥakīm as "full of wisdom" or "Wise," al-jannah as "the Garden" or "Paradise," shifting referent of "we," and different usages of "will" in English can be justified in terms of contextual information. The case of partial semantic loss was evident in Yusuf Ali's translation of azwājuhūm as "their associates," as the term lost its contextual value and specificity of wives or partners. None of the chosen verses proved to be an example of considerable semantic loss in any translation. Thus, the findings revealed that the differences in word class, grammatical form, and English wording could not be classified as semantic loss on their own; it requires supporting arguments from Arabic grammar, context, Quraanic tradition, and exegesis.

8. Recommendations

Future research on the phenomenon of semantic loss in Qur'anic translation will have to employ appropriate criteria in analyzing the issue. There should be a clear distinction between semantic loss and inevitable restructuring of the grammar,

acceptable changes in lexis, and explicative interpretation of the Qur'an rather than considering all differences to be errors of translation. The process of translation should be analyzed according to the criteria of Arabic grammar, context of a particular verse or a passage, special Qur'anic lexicon, and known works of tafsir. Researchers can also make use of the criteria suggested in the paper to analyze other verses, whole surahs, and translations of the Qur'an into English to verify whether the similar cases are to be found outside the chosen sample. If possible, the findings of researchers can be verified by specialists in Qur'anic Arabic, English linguistics, translation studies, and tafsir.

9. Conclusion

The research proved that semantic loss in the chosen verses of Surah Yā-Sīn is less extensive than had been assumed before and that most of the disparities between the two translations of these verses are justified. In regard to the first research question, there was only one case of partial semantic loss found, while there were none of the cases of substantial semantic loss. In respect of the second research question, it was found out that Yusuf Ali's translation conveys the contextual meaning of the verses through his explanatory style while Arberry tends to preserve their briefness and formal nature. Neither of these approaches always guarantees more semantic precision of translation. The approach thus should be evaluated in each particular case based on the analysis of lexical meaning, grammatical structure, textual context, pragmatic meaning, Qur'anic usage and exegesis. While the results cannot claim superiority of one translation to another and cannot be generalized to all the verses of Surah Yā-Sīn, they provide a more precise criterion of differentiation between semantic loss and other forms of translation variation.

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