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Register of the Translated Vocative Sentences in Qur’anic Texts into English

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Abstract

In general, a vocative sentence is used to attract the attention of the addressee. Occasionally, a new meaning is determined by the context when the vocative sentence veers away from its original meaning to produce different purposes, such as reprimand, exclamation, allurement, recollection, call for help, particularization, and grief. We investigated the rhetorical message of English Qur’anic vocative sentences rendered in terms of language variables in a context of situation. We aim to obtain an adequate answer to the question “What is the extent of the sustenance of the rhetorical message in English translation in terms of (field, tenor, and mode) functions compared with the same terms in the original message?” The data were collected from various chapters of the Qur’an. The rendered data were analysed according to the register’s theory of Halliday and Hassan (1985) to track the differences in the rhetorical message of Arabic and English. The rhetorical message was not preserved entirely, only occasionally. We present a practical study for new translators who are interested in religious translation.

Keywords: vocatives; translation; register; Qur’an.
1. Introduction

The context of situation comprises a range of meanings that function under specific conditions by using words and structures to produce meanings (Halliday, 1978: 23). Morley (1985) points out that the context of situation is a setting that involves linguistic acts occurring in its orbit. Register analysis allows the discovery of how language is manoeuvred to produce meaning. The process of translation affects the Qur`anic vocative sentences when converted into English. Translation occasionally offers another meaning of the original message and consequently affects the rhetorical meaning of the vocative sentences. Therefore, this study attempts to determine how the rhetorical message is retained in the English translation in terms of field, tenor, and mode compared with the original texts. We present a guide for translators who are interested in religious translation and in comparative studies.

2. Vocative in Arabic language

Vocative is a direct speech that is used to catch the attention of the addressee by using particles such as hamza, yâ, ay, aya, haya, a, and wâ (alaw, 1982; Qazwini, 1983). In general, Arab rhetoricians have classified vocative speech into two types, namely, constative (al-ṭabar) and performative (al-inspaceh). Vocative is a branch of the performative (alinspaceh). Various kinds of vocative sentences in the glorious Qur`án have been differentiated by Arab rhetoricians. Some of these sentences show rhetorical purposes, but some do not. Our study concentrates on one rhetorical purpose used in the glorious Qur`án, and such purpose has no specific structure. However, its meaning is inferred from the context of grief (al-tahasur) (Abu Musa, 1987; Zawba, 1997; Füd, 1998).

3. Methodology

Vocative sentences with four rhetorical purposes are collected from the entire Qur`án. These data have been provided with their English translation by Yusuf Ali (2006) and were analysed in terms of register’s theory (context of situation) and according to Halliday and Hassan (1985), which is summarized below.

3.1. Context of situation

According to Halliday and Hassan (1985), the context of situation (register) is argued in terms of three variables, namely, field, tenor, and mode. Field indicates “the subject matter,” which is the social action involved in the situation, and the role of the language in that specific situation. Tenor indicates the participants in the situation and the roles, nature, and the status of the participants. Tenor also refers to the relationship and the kind of relationship among the participants. Mode indicates the function of the language in the situation. What do participants expect the language to do for them in a given situation? How will the organization and structure of the text help participants obtain their objective? (1985: 12). The meaning of the text is realized by three fundamental functions of the context of situation. These functions are represented by ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings. Such functions and variables of register (field, tenor, and mode) are interrelated. Field, tenor, and mode are connected with ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings, respectively (Halliday, 1978: 143). From a translational viewpoint, these variables and functions must be considered in the process of translation to highlight the differences in the context of situation in terms of field, tenor, and mode between any two languages. The context of situation in the vocative sentences might charge overt and covert meanings in the process of translating such sentences into English because our study is Qur`ánic data. Therefore, we chose this theory in this study.

4. Data Analysis

The data of this study comprise six vocative sentences collected from the Qur`án, and translated into English by Yusuf Ali (2006). These data
were analysed in terms of field, tenor, and mode to determine the extent of the retention of the rhetorical message in both Arabic and English.

4.1. Grief Rhetorical Purpose

Data (1)

ST: يَا رَبِّي اِنْ قَوْمِي ﺑُدْهُوا هِذَا الْقُرآنَ مَهْجُوْرًا [Al-Furqan, verse 30]

Trs: Ya rabbî inna qawmî ittaḥadû hadâ al-qur`ân mahjûran

TT: O my Lord! Truly my people took this Qur`an for just foolish nonsense (Ali, 2006: 896)

a) Field

This Qur`anic vocative sentence expresses the sadness of the prophet Muhammad (PUH) because his people refuse to listen and believe in the Qur`an. This feeling of sadness is established with the use of the vocative particle `يَا/yâ/O', `قَوْمِي/qawmî /my people', and `مَهْجُوْرًا/mahjûran /for just foolish nonsense'. The feeling of sadness is expressed in the vocative sentence, including the declarative sentence. Explicitly, the same event that occurs in the ST has been slightly altered. The translator expresses the ST `مَهْجُوْرًا/mahjûran /for just foolish nonsense' as foolish and nonsense. Therefore, the field of the English translation slightly diverges from its original meaning of “abandoned” to “foolish and silly thing”. Consequently, the rhetorical meaning of the ST becomes slightly different. The field in the original has been disrupted because of the meaning of “foolish and silly.” Thus, the translation is faulty.

b) Tenor

The prophet Muhammad (PUH) calls the Almighty and expresses extreme grief because of the actions of his people. The people continue to refuse to listen to the Qur`an. Subsequently, the prophet conveys this feeling by using the vocative. In addition, the Qur`anic vocative sentence indirectly alerts and warns the people because the prophet has forwarded his grief, and requested for help from the Almighty. The translator has retained the role of all the participants with a slight difference. The translator’s idea of the meaning of `مَهْجُوْرًا/mahjûran /for just foolish nonsense' was wrong. The meaning of `مَهْجُوْرًا/mahjûran /for just foolish nonsense' was disrupted and was presented as foolish. Thus, the tenor of the TT is somewhat distorted, and the translated outcome of the rhetorical meaning is semi-accurate.

c) Mode

The prophet conveys his grief by using a vocative sentence, which implies the use of a declarative sentence. Numerous lexical items have been used as implements to convey grief. The vocative particle `يَا/yâ/O' is used to call a person who is near or far from the speaker. In this case, the prophet Muhammad calls Allah by means of the vocative particle `يَا/yâ/O' to reflect the extent of his sadness and the direness of his situation. The prophet uses this statement because he knows that Allah is near him. The translator has retained this significance in his translation by converting the vocative particle `يَا/yâ/O' into “O.” The translator has kept the noun phrase (NP) `يَا رَبِّي /yâ rabbî /O, my Lord!’ in the TT followed by a comma to retain the meaning of the ST NP `يَا رَبِّي /yâ rabbî /O, my Lord!’

In addition, the determiner (D) 'قَوْمِي/qawmî /my people’ as mentioned in the previous example, is a particle that functions as a quasi-verb, which is used to emphasize the subsequent action or statement. In this case, the (D) 'قَوْمِي/qawmî /my people’ is used to assert a particular issue, such as the grief of the prophet Muhammad (PUH) and the situation where his people (not other people) refuse to listen to the Qur`an. The translator has preserved the metafunction of the D 'قَوْمِي/qawmî /my people’ in the TT and translated such metafunction into an accurate equivalent (i.e., ‘truly”).

The lexical item 'قَوْمِي/qawmî /my people’ is used to confirm the degree of his grief caused by the behaviour of his people because they are supposed to agree with him and accept his mis-
sion as a messenger of Allah. In addition, the demonstrative pronoun 'وَأَنْيَاءُ /hādā/this' in the ST NP 'هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ / this Qur`ān' is used to refer to a thing. In this context, the pronoun is used as an anaphoric reference to the Qur`ān, and also has other thematic foci. The pronoun is used to glorify the glorious Qur`ān, and that such a book should not be abandoned. The TT has retained the same structure of the ST 'هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ / this Qur`ān.'

Finally, the lexical item 'مُهجُورًا / mahjūrān / for just foolish nonsense' has a thematic focus in this vocative sentence, and means vacant. The people of prophet Muhammad (PUH) failed to pay attention to the reading of the Qur`ān, and failed to realize what it contains. This thematic meaning is missing in the translation. The translator has failed to retain the core of the ST, namely 'مُهجُورًا /mahjūrān / for just foolish nonsense.' Grammatical and semantic changes were made. The translator changed the NP 'مُهجُورًا /mahjūrān' to the prepositional phrase (PP) 'for just foolish nonsense.' Hence, the translator missed the real meaning of the ST 'مُهجُورًا /mahjūrān.' The translated version means "for just funny" or "silly thing." However, the meaning of the ST 'مُهجُورًا /mahjūrān' is "abandoned." This shift in focus slightly distorts the rhetorical meaning of the ST. Consequently, the translation has partially affected the context of the abovementioned vocative sentence.

4.2. Lamentation Rhetorical Purpose

Data (2)

ST: بَعْضُ وَمَا يُضْرِبُتْ عَنْهَا مِنْ الْحَرْزُنَ فَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ /Yūsūf, verse 84
Trs: Yā ʿasāfā ʿālā Yūsūf
TT: How great is my grief for Joseph! (Ali, 2006: 574)

a) Field
The verse expresses the lamentation of the prophet Jacob over the loss of his dearest son Yūsūf. Such lamentation is signified by the lexical item 'يَا أسْفُقَ / yā ʿasāfā / How great is my grief,' which conveys sorrow over the loss of Yūsūf. In the TT, the translator adopts a different structure to convey the lamentation. An exclamatory sentence is used, thereby resulting in an overtranslation.

b) Tenor
The verse expresses the lamentation of Jacob by using the vocative. A specific event is behind his lamentation. The children of Jacob told their father that Bīnyānān, who is Yūsūf's brother, has stolen the measuring cup of the king, and thus is in the custody of the king. This event was a good opportunity for Jacob to release his sorrow for Yūsūf, because he realized that the same manner is used to get rid of Yūsūf. In this sentence, Jacob called out to something abstract instead of calling out to the Almighty. This was achieved by using the NP 'يَا أسْفُقَ / yā ʿasāfā / How great is my grief:' The translator placed the participants in the same status and role, and no definite change in meaning was made.

c) Mode
A declarative sentence is embedded in this Qur`ānic vocative sentence. The vocative sentence comprises two main phrases, as follows: the NP 'يَا أسْفُقَ / yā ʿasāfā / How great is my grief' and the PP 'عَلَى ʿوَضْفُ / ʿalā Yūṣūf / for Joseph.' The NP 'يَا أسْفُقَ / yā ʿasāfā / How great is my grief' becomes the core of the rhetorical meaning of this Qur`ānic sentence. The sentence comprises the vocative particle 'يَا ʿوَضُفُ / yā ʿasāfā / my grief.' The call is directed to something abstract, namely, 'ʿasāfā. This kind of call is topical because it deviates from the original principle, which involves calling out to a person. The vocative particle is characterized by a prolonged sound to express the extent of Jacob's sorrow over his son. Moreover, the speaker, i.e., Jacob, seems to ask 'يَا أسْفُقَ ʿوَضْفُ / ʿasāfā/grief' to come because the current situation is suitable. The final alif of the lexical item 'ʿasāfā substitutes for the first person possessive
pronoun ‘ي/ my’ and the phrase becomes ‘أسفي /ءاسفة /my grief’ instead of ‘أسفي /ءاسف /my grief.’ The translator retains the context of this vocative sentence, and the rhetorical purpose is also retained.

4.3. Exclamation Rhetorical Purpose

Data (3)

ST: ُيا وَلِيُّى ﷺٌلٌدَّ وَأَنَا عَمْلُرُ وَهُنَا يَغْلُي شَيْخًا
[Hūd, verse 72]

Trs: يَا وَلِيُّى ﷺٌلٌدَّ وَأَنَا ئِجَزَٰنَ وَأَنَا بَالِيٌّ شَاٰبٌ

TT: Alas for me! Shall I bear a child, seeing I am an old woman and my husband is an old man
(Ali, 2006: 530)

a) Field

The vocative Qur’anic sentence tells about the wonder of Ibrāhīm’s wife when the messengers of Allah told her that she would have a baby (Al-rāzī, 2000: 23). The vocative by exclamation is transferred by using specific linguistic lexical items such as ‘يا وَلِيُّى / يَا وَلِيُّى / يا وَرَسَلَلَ / I am an old man,’ and ‘ما يَضْخِمُ / ما يَضْخِمُ / يَا وَرَسَلَلَ / Shall I bear a child,’ ‘ما يَضْخِمُ / ما يَضْخِمُ / يا وَلِيُّى / I am an old woman,’ and ‘ما يَضْخِمُ / ما يَضْخِمُ / وَهُنَا يَغْلُي شَيْخًا / wа’ a ajuzun / An old woman,’ and ‘ما يَضْخِمُ / ما يَضْخِمُ / وَهُنَا يَغْلُي شَيْخًا / wа’ a ajuzun / An old man.’ The new field in the translation differs from the source field. The field is converted from exclamation to grief. The vocative NP expression is transformed into the exclamatory expression ‘Alas for me!’ to convey the woman’s grief. As such, the translation is inaccurate.

b) Tenor

The vocative in this Qur’anic vocative sentence is uttered by Ibrāhīm’s wife when told that she would have a child. The main participants in the tenor of this Qur’anic vocative sentence are the messengers of Allah, Ibrāhīm’s wife, and her husband, Ibrāhīm. The messengers of Allah (i.e., the angels) brought good news. The angels told the woman that she would have a child, Ishaq, and subsequently, Jacob. This is clear in verse no. 71 of surat Hūd / فَبُشَرْنَاهُ بِإِسْحَاقٍ وَمِنْ ظَرَفْ إِسْحَاقٍ بَعْقِرٍ / faç

bašknahā bi ʾishaq wа min waraʾ ʾishaq yarqub /
But we gave her glad tidings of Isaac, and after him, of Jacob’ (Ali, 2006: 229).

Her wonder of this miraculous event is due to several reasons:
1. She is sterile.
2. She is an old woman.
3. Her husband is also an old man.
4. She will live to see her grandson Jacob.

Her wonder is due to a familiar Arab tradition and not due to the ability of the Almighty Allah. A person disbelieves in Allah if he or she expresses wonder at the ability of Allah. The translator has retained the roles and the statuses of all participants in the English translation.

c) Mode

The exclamation in this Qur’anic vocative sentence is expressed using particular lexical items, as follows: ‘يا وَلِيُّى / يَا وَلِيُّى / يَا وَرَسَلَلَ / Alas for me,’ and ‘ما يَضْخِمُ / يا وَلِيُّى / Shall I bear a child.’ The NP ‘يا وَلِيُّى / يَا وَلِيُّى / يَا وَلِيُّى / يَا وَلِيُّى / يا وَرَسَلَلَ’ comprises the vocative particle ‘يا/يَا/أ/أ /’ which is used to call something far from the speaker, i.e., Ibrāhīm’s wife. The vocative exclamation is conveyed using a vocative sentence containing an interrogative element. The vocative particle ‘يا/يَا/أ/أ /’ is characterized by a prolonged sound to show the degree of her wonder.

The second element of ‘يا وَلِيُّى / يَا وَلِيُّى / يَا وَرَسَلَلَ’ is of major significance. The NP ‘يا وَلِيُّى / يَا وَرَسَلَلَ’ comprises the radical lexical item ‘وَرَسَلَ / وَرَسَلَ / وَرَسَلَ / wа’ rAirport / wа’ rAirport / wа’ rAirport’ suffixed by the redundant letter “T” to strengthen the meaning. The final alif takes the place of the first person possessive pronoun to produce waylatā. Linguistically, the word ‘وَرَسَلَ / wа’ rAirport / wа’ rAirport’ means “disgrace” (Farra, 2000: 23). The lexical item ‘يا وَلِيُّى / يَا وَرَسَلَلَ’ is also used in Arabic in the context of surprise. The speaker uses this lexical item to strongly express her feelings. The translator has transformed the thematic core of the NP ‘يا وَلِيُّى / يَا وَرَسَلَلَ’ thereby changing the meaning of the phrase
to ‘Alas for me!’ The thematic core is transformed from exclamation to grief. A close look at this NP reveals that the translator has changed the major rhetorical meaning of this Qur`anic vocative sentence, and a different meaning is presented. Thus, the translation is inaccurate.

Moreover, the interrogative particle ‘/a‘ preceding the VP ‘الدى / a ‘الدى / shall I bear a child’ deviates from its main interrogative function to an exclamatory function. In other words, Ibrabhım’s wife conveys her wonder by using an interrogative statement. The interrogative particle ‘/a‘ is transposed to the auxiliary verb (V), ‘shall,’ to indicate that the action will occur in the future. This translation for the interrogative particle ‘/a‘ is accurate because of the following reasons:

1. The VP ‘الدى / a ‘الدى / shall I bear a child’ is in the present tense with future relevance.
2. Pregnancy requires a long duration.

Other means are used to emphasize that the rhetorical meaning of this Qur`anic vocative sentence is an exclamation. The lexical items, namely, ‘/اً / وَأَنَّ / wa anā ‘ajuzun / an old woman’, and ‘/أَجِيبُ / شَبَان / an old man’ also indicate her wonder. Both the man and the woman are old, and giving birth to a child at their age is considered improbable according to the standards for human beings. The following sentence ‘/عينا هَادَ لَا شَيْنَ / ajîb / That would indeed be a wonderful thing!’ (Ali, 2006: 530) also expresses her wonder. In this sentence, Ibrabhım’s wife emphasizes her wonder to the messengers of Allah by means of the emphatic quasi-verbs ‘/إِنْ / ثَنَيْ / عَجِيبُ / ‘/اً / and ‘/فَتَنَ / هَادَ / this is,’ and ‘/أَجِيبُ / عَجِيبُ / ajîb/wonderful.’ These lexical items refer to and emphasize that her pregnancy at this age is surprising. The translator transformed this sentence into ‘That would indeed be a wonderful thing!’ (Ali, 2006: 530). The translator attempts to recreate the same expression of wonder in the TT. Unfortunately, the meaning of this sentence is incongruent to that of the previous vocative sentence. In the previous vocative sentence, the vocative NP ‘/يا وَأَيْ / يا وَأَيْ / yâ waylata‘ is translated as mentioned earlier, i.e., ‘Alas for me!’ Such unfamiliar realization of the context garbles the rhetorical meaning of this Qur`anic vocative sentence. Consequently, the translation has entirely affected the context of this sentence.

Data (4)

ST: [Yūsuf, verse 19]

Trs: Ya buşra hada gulamün

TT: Ah there! Good news! Here is a (fine) young man! (Ali, 2006: 553)

a) Field

This vocative sentence is characterized by an exclamation. A group of travellers found Yūsuf when they sent a man to obtain water for them. The man was surprised when he saw Yūsuf inside the well. He shouted loudly in his surprise at finding a beautiful boy inside the well. He expresses his feeling of wonder by calling out ‘/بَشَرُ / يُ / bûshra / good news.’ The NP ‘/هَادَ / عَلَامَ / hada gulamün / this is a boy.’ The lexical item ‘/عَلَامَ / جِلَامُ / gulamün / a boy’ is the reason why he called out ‘/يُ / بَشَرُ / يُ / yâ buşra / O good news!’ The translator has retained the same field in the TT to a particular degree. However, further information that is not available in the ST is provided in the TT, thereby creating a wide visualization of the field of ‘/يُ / بَشَرُ / يُ / yâ buşra / O good news!’ and the NP ‘/هَادَ / عَلَامَ / hada gulamün / this is a boy.’ Thus, the translated vocative sentence was overtranslated.

b) Tenor

In the ST, the participants involved are the group of travellers, the one drawing water, and Yūsuf himself. These participants have varying roles in this sentence. The man drawing water from the well has an important role because he was sent by the group of travellers to get water. Furthermore, the man drawing water from the well is the participant who calls out ‘/يا بَشَرُ / ya bûshra /
yà buṣrâ / O good news! when he saw Yûsûf in the depths of the well. The second important participant in this vocative sentence is Yûsûf himself, who is the reason for the statement ‘بُشِّرِى / yà buṣrâ / O good news!’ The third participant is the group of travellers, to whom the call of ‘بُشِّرِى / yà buṣrâ / O good news!’ is directed. The translator chose to include the boy (i.e., Yûsûf) among the participants. Yûsûf is described in the translation with extra information that is not found in the ST, i.e., a fine young man. Therefore, this sentence was overtranslated.

c) Mode

The Qur’anic vocative sentence has a particular rhetorical purpose, which is vocative by exclamation. This purpose is expressed using a vocative sentence with a declarative purpose. This vocative sentence contains two NPs. The first one is ‘بُشِّرِى / yà buṣrâ / O good news!’ The first NP comprises the vocative particle ‘بُشِّرِى / ya buṣrâ / good news.’ The speaker, i.e., the man drawing water from the well, calls out to something abstract. In a sense, the speaker uses the lexical item ‘بُشِّرِى / buṣrâ / good news’ to strongly express his feelings. The TT and the ST of ‘بُشِّرِى / yà buṣrâ / O good news!’ differed. In the TT, the translator attempts to introduce information that is absent in the ST. The translator attempts to convey his conceptualization in this situation and changes the vocative particle ‘بُشِّرِى / ya buṣrâ / O good news!’ into an NP (‘Ah there!’) in the form of an exclamatory expression. The interjection, ‘Ah there!’ is an exclamation. The translator did well in choosing this interjection as an equivalent of the vocative particle ‘بُشِّرِى / ya buṣrâ / O good news.’ The lexical item ‘there’ is an adverb (Adv) that is used to call a person (Longman, 2005: 1719). The translator attempts to confirm the situation of finding a beautiful boy. The lexical item ‘بُشِّرِى / buṣrâ / good news’ was changed from an N to a different class. This lexical term is translated into an adjectival phrase (AP; i.e., ‘good news’). This shift is necessary to retain the meaning of the ST ‘بُشِّرِى / buṣrâ / O good news.’ In general, the sentence was overtranslated.

The second NP comprises the demonstrative pronoun ‘هَذَا / hadâ / this is,’ that functions as D, and ‘غُلَامُ / gulamûn,’ that functions as N. The translator has changed ‘هَذَا / hadâ / this is’ to an Adv (i.e., ‘here’). This shift is necessary to retain the secondary meaning of the ST ‘هَذَا / hadâ,’ which harmonizes with this vocative sentence’s context of situation.

The lexical item ‘غُلَامُ / gulamûn / a young man’ is an N transposed to an AP ‘a (fine) young man!’ The translator has distorted the internal meaning of the ST ‘غُلَامُ / gulamûn / a young man’ because the lexical item ‘غُلَامُ / gulamûn’ in Arabic society refers to a boy between ages 11 and 17 years old. However, the lexical item “a young man” refers to a man older than 17 years old. Thus, the best equivalent to the ST ‘غُلَامُ / gulamûn’ is the lexical item “a boy.” The translation has partially affected the context of this vocative sentence.

4.4. Call for help Rhetorical Purpose

Data (5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST: Ya Mâliku li yaqdûli rabbuka</th>
<th>Trs: O Mâlik! would that thy Lord make an end to us! (Ali, 2006: 1279)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

a) Field

The above Qur’anic vocative sentence is a "call for help" at a specific place and time. This shouting is uttered by non-believers who stay in Hell on the Day of Judgment. This appeal for aid is expressed using particular phrases which consist of NP ‘رَبِّي لِيِقَضُ عَلَيْنَا رَبَّكَ / Trs: O Lord, would that my Lord make an end of us! (Al-zukhruf, verse 77)’ and VP ‘لِيِقَضُ / yaqdi / make an end,’ and NP ‘رَبِّي / rabbuka.’
Behind this “call for help,” the shouting of unbelievers rises higher to indicate their bad situation in Hell. This “call for help” is conveyed by calling out ‘يا ملك’ from the One who is responsible for Hell, and who is considered a fake helper from whom the aid is asked because the real saver is the Almighty Allah.

In the TT, the translator fails to grasp the events in the ST. The translator attempts to recreate the same situation, but he fails to convey the same event in the TT. He tries to change the imperative form ‘يا لام’ in the ST to wish form ‘would that.’ The message of the TT is different from that of the ST. The wish form ‘would that’ is used to express one’s desire to fulfil something that might or might not occur (Taiy, 2004: 136). Thus, the translation is inaccurate because the rhetorical meaning is transformed from a call for help to a wish.

b) Tenor

The participants of the Qur’anic vocative sentence in both ST and TT are the same. The role of the participants is represented as non-believers, who are recognized by the third person masculine plural pronoun ‘أ/they’ in the VP and ‘وندأ/they will cry.’

The second participant is ‘مالك/ماليك,’ the keeper of Hell, from whom the help is asked by the non-believers. The main participant is the Almighty Allah, from whom the help is asked. The speakers in this vocative sentence are represented as non-believers, who request ‘مالك/ماليك’ to save them from Hell by exterminating them, i.e., killing them, because of the severe torment in Hell. Such torment is mentioned in the glorious Qur’an, ‘ألا يَجِدُونَ عِنْدَ هُمْ مِّلَّاتُونَ’ [Al-mu‘ajjar, 36:80] /مَا يَعْلَمُونَ/’ and the imperfect V ‘يمض/yaqdi / make an end,’ which is conveyed through jussive mood. The translator has presented a clear shift involving the ST imperative ‘يا لام’ Such imperative is transformed to the wish form ‘would that’ to express the desire of the non-believers to be put to death by the Almighty Allah. A wish is used to express a desire that might or might not be granted. This wish goes against the real situation of the non-believers in Hell, because they are not in a position to wish for anything. These non-believers are suffering severely from continuous physical torment in Hell. As a result, the translator has given a new meaning from that in the ST. The rhetorical meaning has been distorted because the translator failed to infer the correct meaning of the ST. Thus, the context of this
vocative sentence has been affected entirely by translation from Arabic into English.

Data (6)

ST: [Al-dukhan, verse 12]

Trs: rabbana Ḣikšif ʿannā al-ʿadaba ʿinnā muʿminūna

TT: Our Lord! Remove the Penalty from us, for we do really believe! (Ali, 2006: 496)

a) Field

The Qur’anic vocative sentence considers the manner of torture endured by the Quraysh pagans who do not believe in Almighty Allah and his messenger Prophet Muhammad (PUH). The sentence also conveys the feelings of believers who want relief from their torture as non-believers of Quraysh. The believers ask the Almighty Allah to relieve their torture because they believe in Him and His messenger. The call for help is conveyed through the omitted device of the vocative particle ‘/ya’/O’ prefixing the NP ‘/rabbana /our Lord.’ The lexical item ‘/ Ḥikšif/ remove’ is an imperative V that implies the call for help. The lexical item ‘/al-ʿadaba /the penalty’ is the actual attached event. The lexical item ‘/muʿminūna /do really believe’ is considered the reason for which these believers are calling for help. The rhetorical purpose of this vocative sentence might result in an important event. The purpose of this vocative implies the “call for help” because of the following:

1. The vocative conveys a particular situation of torture, which befell the people of Quraysh in the form of drought (Ibn ʿašūr, 2000: 318).

4. The call for help is used in a critical and difficult situation, whereas the invocation is used in both difficult and non-difficult situations. Consequently, each vocative sentence with the “call for help” purpose implies an invocation, not the reverse.

5. The lexical item ‘/inna /we are’ indicates that the believers did not promise to be believers because they already believe in Allah. Moreover, these believers did not say that they would believe in Allah if He lifts the torture (Ibn ʿašūr, 2000: 318). In the scope of the translation, the field’s general status has been retained by the translator.

b) Tenor

The roles and the statuses of the participants are clear in this Qur’anic vocative sentence. The participants involved in this sentence are as follows: the believers are the main participants who are asking for help and the Almighty Allah, from whom the help is required. The torture is the result of the request of the prophet Muhammad to Allah. The prophet asked Allah to torture the people of Quraysh, because they refuse to believe in Allah and in himself. This torture is represented by a drought, as stated in the traditional verse (Hadith) ṣalihīm bisabīn kasabī ʿūṣūla / O my Lord help me against them by a severe dearth similar to years of Yūsūf’s dearth.’ The translation was slightly inaccurate because of the confusion in the role of the participants, i.e., the role of the believers. Whether or not the speakers of this sentence are the real believers is not indicated nor clarified.

c) Mode

The vocative sentence is accompanied by an imperative sentence. The vocative sentence comprises a range of phrases that have an important function in presenting the rhetorical meaning of “call for help.” The NP ‘/ rabbana /our Lord’ is the vocative noun phrase with an im
licit vocative particle ‘لي/ya/O’. Two important aspects are observed when the vocative particle ‘لي/ya/O’ is omitted. We have mentioned in (Data 1 - mode) that dropping the vocative particle according to the believers is an indicator of Allah’s closeness to the people during their ordeals. Such closeness enables them to quickly ask for Allah’s help. This omission is also seen in the translation of the NP ‘ربّنا / rabbanā / into (our Lord),’ which is followed by the exclamation mark. This translation conveys the same state and effect of the vocative by an exclamatory expression. The V ‘ка́фиф/ remove’ is an imperative V with an implicit subject (You). The primary meaning of the V ‘ка́фиф/ remove’ is an imperative V that implies action performed by the addressee. The imperative V occasionally deviates from its primary meaning to other new meanings, such as a request, command, and warning. In this case, the secondary and new meaning of the V ‘ка́фиф/ remove’ is “call for help.” Such new meaning is also rendered into the imperative V ‘remove.’

The lexical item ‘العذاب / al-’adaba / the penalty’ is an NP that means “torment.” This lexical item means cruel physical and mental suffering. The term conveys a horrible vision of a difficult situation. The translation was an unsuitable equivalent that fails to comply with the context of physical suffering of the Quraysh people, in general, and the believers in particular. The term is translated into “the penalty,” which conveys punishment for breaking a law, a rule, or a legal agreement. Thus, the translator failed to envision the real situation in which this lexical word was used in this vocative sentence. Consequently, the rhetorical meaning of “call for help” in the vocative sentence was slightly distorted when translated to English.

5. Conclusion

In this study, the context of the Qur’anic vocative sentences and their translation were analysed by using Halliday and Hassan’s (1985) register’s theory, and according to the register variables, namely, field, tenor, and mode. In the process of translation to English, changes are made in the context of the Qur’anic vocative sentences. The translation has entirely affected the context of particular vocative sentences. The meaning of some sentences has been partially affected, whereas those of others have been retained in the English translation. Thus, the rhetorical message was lost or transformed in the process of translation. Other rhetorical messages in the target language have been preserved. Register theory enables the identification of the rhetorical message of the Qur’anic vocative sentences in both ST and TT. The variables of Halliday’s theory have provided complementary devices in our analysis of the nature and extent of the retention of rhetorical messages in the English-translated Qur’anic vocative sentences. Moreover, various observations, such as inaccurate translation, overtranslation, and communicative translation, were made.

6. Bibliographic references

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