

Linguistic Accuracy in Translating the Qur'anic Arabic Homograph al-Hawā (الهُوَى) into English: An Equivalence Theory Approach

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Abstract

Attaining linguistic accuracy in the translation of Qur'anic Arabic homographs, especially the lexeme al-Hawā (الهُوَى), into English has created a daunting challenge for linguists, interpreters, philologists, translators, and Qur'anic scholars. This intricacy is due to the double meaning associated with these lexical items and the complicated exegetic and contextual nuances inherent in Qur'anic discourse in terms of the general and specific meanings of Qur'anic homographic lexemes. This analytical analysis aims to investigate the linguistic accuracy of translating the Qur'anic homograph al-Hawā (الهُوَى). This study is conducted under the framework of the equivalence theory approach. Utilizing a qualitative, analytical methodology, it is based primarily on analytical frameworks and a comprehensive literature review, favoring qualitative over quantitative methods. The findings imply that Abdel Haleem, Pickthall, and Al-Hilali and Khan predominantly utilized a blend of dynamic, free, contextual, and literal translation strategies to capture the nuanced semantic dimensions of the Qur'anic Arabic homograph al-Hawā (الهُوَى). However, instances remain where strict adherence to literal translation leads to a failure to aptly express the connotation and implication of these Qur'anic homographs.

Keywords: equivalence theory approach, linguistic accuracy, Arabic homographic word al-Hawā (الهُوَى), translation, the Holy Qur'an

1. Introduction

The translation of the Holy Qur'an presents considerable linguistic and religious challenges mainly because of its tangled striking styles, superimposed meanings, and holy status in Islam. Among the most pressing challenges in Qur'anic translation is the rendering of homographic terms—words that share a single lexical form but vary depending on the context. One such term is al-Hawā (الهُوَى), which occurs in several Qur'anic verses and comprises a profusion of exegeses, including “goes down” (نَزَلَ nazal), “desires” and “lust” (شهوة shahwa), “empty or gaping void” (alshay' alqayim bayn alsadr walhalqi) والشيء القائم بين الصدر والخلق, and “thrown” (يَذْهَبُ yadhhab) (Al-Damghānī, n.d.; Al-Balkhī & Muqātil, 2002). These semantic shades are not merely linguistic but carry deep moral, religious ramifications and faith-based implications within Qur'anic discourse.

Recent translation studies have increasingly emphasized faithfulness, especially in the context of religious texts, as a key tenet of translation practice. Diniz (2003) claimed that any departure from the source's original diction risks weakening the integrity of the rendered text. In the same vein, Nida and Taber (1982) reported that accuracy and faithfulness are crucial for conveying the implied meaning of the original, especially in religious contextualization and cultural exegesis. Nord (1997) also underscored the persistent arrangements of source-text constancy and faithfulness even with the loss of the effectiveness of communication in the translated language. From this perspective, faithfulness is often aligned with equivalence, that is, the accurate and refined reproduction of meaning between the source and translated languages (Baker, 2004). However, the achievement of equivalence entails problems.

Qur'anic classical Arabic is identified by noteworthy lexical density and multitude of meanings; these characteristics render word-for-word translation not only inappropriate but also likely to lead to confusion or religious reductivity. Root-based morphology and a high degree of relational connotation and contextual importance allow unique words and expressions in the Holy Qur'an to carry myriad, multilayered meanings. This semantic richness is further boosted by the Holy Qur'an's literary and rhetorical style, which often utilizes ellipses, metaphors, and allusion to convey deep religious and experiential concepts with noteworthy economy. In addition, the Holy Qur'an's elucidative openness invites a plethora of readings. Its employment of polysemous language and intentionally challenging vocabulary and vivid expressions has promoted a persistent interpretive tradition in which multiple and sometimes diverging interpretations are maintained without being clearly determined. Religious, linguistic, and historical perspectives and chronological importance mold and form the exegesis of the Holy Qur'an or Qur'anic interpretation, contributing to a vigorous and polyvalence discourse. Subsequently, any rendering that strives for immediate equivalent hazards flattens the text's conceptual deepness, obscures its rhetorical nuances, and favors a singular reading where the original may allow for many.

Scholars, such as Pym (2001) and Newmark (1988), advised against functional modifications or omissions that compromise the semantic

and religious integrity of the original. On the contrary, others, including Çöz (2012), Vinay and Darbelnet (1995), and Noss (as cited in Nae, 2004), indicated that excessive liberalism may produce ambiguous or clumsy translation that impedes understandability and approachability for the intended audience and recipients. This strain delineates the broad problem encountered by Qur'ānic translators: how to remain loyal to the text while ensuring accuracy, comprehensibility, and doctrinal integrity. The Qur'ānic Arabic homograph al-Hawā (الهوى) epitomizes this challenge. Its meaning varies substantially on the basis of exegetic context, and its rendering must give grounds for its semantic resilience and religious connotations. Despite its importance, only a few systematic studies have been conducted on how the Qur'ānic Arabic homograph al-Hawā (الهوى) is rendered in English Qur'ānic translations, especially from the perspective of equivalence theory.

This research addresses a considerable gap in Qur'ānic translation studies by exploring how the Qur'ānic Arabic homograph al-Hawā (الهوى) is rendered in three renowned English translations of the Qur'ān: those by Pickthall (1930), Al-Hilali and Khan (1996), and Abdel Haleem (2004). By applying equivalence theory as a theoretical structure (Nida, 1964; Jakobson, 1959/2000), the research investigates how the translators deal with the semantic and religious intricacy of the Qur'ānic Arabic homograph al-Hawā (الهوى), the extent to which their renderings maintain faithfulness to Qur'ānic Arabic, and the cultural or stylistic effects that enlighten their alternatives. The study is led by three key questions: What translational challenges occur in conveying the Qur'ānic Arabic homograph al-Hawā (الهوى) in the chosen translation? To what extent do these versions succeed in maintaining and upholding the intentional meaning without reducing its religious or rhetorical importance? What cultural and stylistic barriers impede faithful translation, and how might these be handled through an equivalence-based approach? By delving into these questions, the study participates in the broad field of Qur'ānic translation studies and offers deep insights into the junction of linguistic accuracy, religious integrity, and intercultural communication in the translation of religious writings (Abdel Haleem, 2004; Al-Hilali & Khan, 1996; Pickthall, 1930).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Homographs

Homographs, words that share the same spelling but differ in meaning and sometimes pronunciation, illustrate the intricacy and complexity of the English language; they cause serious difficulties and create substantial challenges in language theory and practical linguistic usage. Stemming from the Greek roots homo- (“same”) and -graph (“writing”), homographs, such as lead (to guide) and lead (a heavy metal), need context-sensitive cues for appropriate interpretation and accurate understanding, especially in written communication where phonemic or pronunciation differentiations are absent (Crystal, 2003). Based on pronunciation, these lexical items can be categorized further into homographic words (same pronunciation, e.g., bat) and homographic heterophones (different pronunciation, e.g., tear as in rip vs. tear as in crying) (Pinker, 1994). From a psycholinguistic perspective, facing homographs actuates multiple senses in the brain, with context playing a crucial role in addressing ambiguity and selecting the accurate interpretation (Swinney, 1979). This adaptive process has meanings for second-language acquisition, where learners must navigate semantic variation and phonetic difference, often depending on accurate instructions and usage-based exposure (Ellis, 2006).

2.2 Concept of Equivalence Theory Approach

The equivalence theory approach in translation studies functions as a fundamental concept targeted at attaining equivalence in meaning, purpose, or effect between original wording and translated language. This theory posits that translation is not only a mechanical verbatim rendering but also a dynamic process of transferring meaning while sustaining meaningful expression and subtle implication in context. Developed by scholars (e.g., Eugene Nida), the theory draws a distinction between formal equivalence, which highlights fidelity to the linguistic and constructional features of the original wording, and dynamic equivalence, which concentrates on producing the same effect on the potential audience and intended recipients as the original script evokes in its receptors (Nida, 1964). In the same vein, Roman Jakobson proposed the concept of linguistic equivalence, which highlights the interpretability of meaning across language systems (Jakobson, 1959/2000). Werner Koller elaborated on this by determining various equivalence types, including denotative, connotative, and pragmatic equivalence, to address the difficulty of meaning in translation (Koller, 1979). Although the approach has considerably formed translation theory, it has been criticized for its idealism, especially the presumption that complete equivalence is always attainable. In response, functionalist models, such as skopos theory, that accentuate the deliberate purpose of the translation over formal equivalence have emerged. Nevertheless, equivalence theory remains substantial for understanding the translator's role in resolving linguistic and cultural differences, particularly in contexts, such as legal, scientific, and religious renderings, where precision and constancy are required.

2.3 Rendering of Qur'ānic Arabic Homographic Words into English

Translating Qur'ānic Arabic homographs into English reveals a distinct collection of linguistic and exegetical challenges arising from the distinctive characteristics of Arabic writing and the orthographic conventions in the Holy Qur'ān. In classical and Qur'ānic Arabic, homographs—words that share the same orthography but differ in pronunciation, syntactic role, and meaning—are pervasive mainly because of the omission of short vowel diacritics and diminutive endings in the original Qur'ānic manuscript known as rasm. Rasm (الرسم) refers to the consonantal skeleton utilized in the earliest script of the Holy Qur'ān; it eliminates vowels and other diacritical marks (Saab, 2007; Abdelkarim et al., 2025). Consequently, a single consonantal root sequence can represent multiple lexical or verbal forms, with interpretation relying substantially on vocalization, lexical structures, and the broad textual context.

The function of rendering Qur'ānic homographs into English is intrinsically complicated. Unlike Arabic orthography, English orthography

does not inherently adapt homographs nor does it display the same level of lexemic flexibility. Consequently, translators must ratify each homograph by thoroughly analyzing implicit communication within the ongoing verse and across the broad textual wording. This task requires precise grammatical and semantic exploration to identify the intentional meaning because English translations are needed to clarify what the original Arabic writing leaves implicit (Elgibali, 2018). For instance, the triliteral root ك ت ب (k-t-b) in Qur'anic Arabic demonstrates the complex semantic extent fixed in the language. Although it may emerge in forms, such as *kataba* ("he wrote"), *kutiba* ("it was prescribed"), or *kitāb* ("book"), each variation holds a distinct, context-sensitive determined meaning. The verb *kataba* (كَتَبَ), commonly rendered as "he wrote," presents myriad interpretations within Qur'anic text. Classical exegetes, such as al-Balkhī (2007), al-Damghānī (n.d.), Al-Jawzī (1983), and al-Balkhī (2002), identified four main connotations: *farāḍa* (فَرَضَ) or "prescribed," *qaḍā* (قَضَى) or "He decreed," *ja'ala* (جَعَلَ) or "made," and *amara* (أَمَرَ) or "commanded." These interpretations expose the layered meanings of *kataba* across different verses, such as divine prescription in Q.2:183 (fasting), decree in Q.6:12, and command in other settings. This semantic adaptability emphasizes the rich, context-sensitive nature of Qur'anic elocution and the interpretive deepness needed to convey it faithfully in translation.

To achieve faithful rendering, translators of the Holy Qur'ān depend largely on classical tafsīr (Qur'anic exegesis) and strict linguistic analysis. Fundamental exegetic studies, such as those by al-Ṭabarī (2001) and Ibn Kathīr (2000), offer vital interpretive frameworks that elucidate ambiguous readings by scrutinizing linguistic, syntactic, and religious contexts (Nasr, 2003; Ayoub, 1984). By incorporating such exegesis, translators can successfully identify the exact meaning of homographs in their original place and choose the most contextually adequate English equivalents (Abdel Haleem, 2004). Maintaining the semantic depth of the original Arabic is equally crucial. When Qur'anic text utilizes purposeful play on words or layered meanings through homographs, translators may employ annotations, footnotes, or parenthetical explanations to convey these connotations to readers (Sells, 2007; Haleem, 1993).

Instances of common Qur'anic homographs exemplify the intricacy involved. The root -l-m (ع ل م), for example, can give *alima* ("he knew"), *ilm* ("knowledge"), or *allama* ("he taught"), each stemming from the same triliteral root but varying in syntactic construction and semantic subtlety (Abdul-Raof, 2001). Likewise, the root kh-l-q (خ ل ق) can result in *khalāqa* ("he created") or *khalq* ("creation"). Accuracy in translating Qur'anic Arabic homographs relies on syntactic placing, verbal variety, and wide excursive context (Mir, 1990). In translation, these homographs do not maintain their similar spellings but are instead distinguished through cautious lexical selection and pragmatic interpretation (Abdul-Raof, 2004; Mir, 1986).

Different translators utilize various strategies to address Qur'anic homographs, emulating their clear precedence in translating the religious text. Yusuf Ali's rendering is especially interpretive and artistic, often accompanied with lengthy footnotes that elucidate uncertain terms or expatiate on religious nuances (Ali, 1934). Pickthall's version conforms to proper and literal concepts, seeking to remain faithful to the original Arabic diction and lexicon (Pickthall, 1930). Meanwhile, the Sahih International translation emphasizes accuracy, coeval readability, and comprehensibility, sometimes clarifying complex linguistic traits to ensure accessibility for current readers and modern audience (Saheeh International, 1997).

In scenarios where homographic ambiguity carries religious or literary distinction, translators often use parenthetical footnotes or lengthy endnotes to maintain the Qur'ān's semantic depth and interpretive myriad (Elgibali, 2018). These strategies allow readers to engage deeply with the text's involved language and stratified meanings. Furthermore, the integration of particularized glossaries or addenda can enrich comprehension by clarifying repeated homographs and their interpretive extents, consequently enhancing the reader's recognition and knowledge of the Qur'ān's linguistic and rhetorical creativity and originality.

In summary, rendering Qur'anic Arabic homographs into English needs a precise, multifaceted, systematic approach that merges syntagmatic and paradigmatic analysis, intertextual involvement with classical tafsīr exegesis literature, and semantically precise lexical mapping. The phenomenon of orthographical homography in Arabic—where a single written form can exemplify multiple, context-dependent meanings—has no immediate equivalent in English, which lacks a similar morpho-orthographic structure. Consequently, translators must depend on interpretive rules of thumb and linguistic methodologies to enhance clarity while maintaining the exegetic richness of the original text (Al-Abdullatif, 2018). Through cautious contextualization and the strategic operation of paratextual components, such as glosses, footnotes, and annotations, the layered semantic and religious embedded extents in Qur'anic homographs can be conveyed with a high level of accuracy to the receptor (Abdelkarim & Alhaj, 2024).

2.4 Previous Studies

Homographs in Arabic often differ markedly from their English counterparts—not only in lexical form, but also in rhetorical function and connotative meaning. This linguistic and semantic complexity presents substantial challenges for translators, especially for those working closely with divine texts, such as the Holy Qur'ān. In Qur'anic Arabic, homographs often epitomize myriad interpretive layers anchored in classical Arabic rhetoric, context-sensitive nuances, and religious exegesis (Abdel Haleem, 2005; Qadhi, 2013). Unlike English homographs, which usually depend on prompt grammatical context for clarification, Arabic homographs—especially in the Qur'anic register—may convey more profound religious and transcendental implications (Mustafa, 2014). Consequently, translations often vary considerably, mirroring the translator's language proficiency, literary perspective, textual interpretation, and religious background (Versteegh, 2014). However, scholarly attention to the specific problems of translating Qur'anic Arabic homographs into English remains limited. For example, Abdelkarim et al. (2025) remarked that translators, such as Abdel Haleem, Al-Hilali and Khan, and Pickthall, adopted interpretive strategies at times to effectively convey the intended meanings of the Qur'anic homonymous term *sawā* (سَوَاء),

associating with the communicative objectives of their translations. In other instances, they selected literal rewording to preserve the complicated connotations rooted in the source text. The study revealed that accuracy is a critical criterion for assessing the accuracy and adequacy of the rendered text. The study ultimately claimed that the translation of the Holy Qur'ān—especially with conformity to complex homonyms, such as *sawā'*—should be mainly led by the *skopos* of the translation, rather than by a rigorous adherence to formal equivalence.

Arar (2009) differentiated between *al-mushtarak al-ṣarfī* (morphologically derived word) and *al-mushtarak al-lafzī* (homonymous word), situating the former within morphology, where it addresses variations in vocabulary variations and structures, and the latter within lexicography, which pertains to words that share the same pronunciation or orthography but vary in meaning. The author further probed these sorts of homonymy through morphological processes, including alternative and inflected forms, while considering the influence of linguistic traits, such as *al-i'lāl* (الإعلال) (phonological defectiveness), *al-iḍāl* (الإبدال) (substitution), *al-ḥadhf* (الحذف) (omission), and *al-jamc* (الجمع) (pluralization or combination). Moreover, Arar emphasized how specific prefixes and suffixes pay a subsidy to semantic multiplicity in Qur'anic text, highlighting the depth and complexity inherent in its language. Eltaif (2019) explored homographic words in Arabic and English and underscored their differences and similarities. The researcher indicated that in Arabic, homographs share the same spelling but vary in meaning and pronunciation. Attia (2008) pointed out that Arabic homographic words substantially contribute to ambiguity in the language. Arabic encompasses many homographs—words that share the same written form but vary in pronunciation and meaning. This feature makes homographic words a noteworthy source of bewilderment and complexity in Arabic language processing and knowledge.

Abedelrazq (2014) investigated the challenges in rendering Qur'anic Arabic homographs into English and discovered that in the majority of cases, translators fail to maintain the multiple meanings of frequent words, leading to a loss of homographic nuances. Khanjani and Azimifard (2021) claimed that the origin of homographic words in the Holy Qur'an is their diverse linguistic purpose, fluctuations in discourse, and morphological paradigms during inflection. Salman (2023) found a solution for clarifying Arabic homographs in machine translation by incorporating diacritic data into Google Translate. The approach includes uploading homographs together with all their possible diacritic variations and equivalent meanings. When a homograph has no diacritics, a cascading menu prompts the user to choose the intended lexeme **based on** its diacritics and meaning. This synergetic selection enables faithful interpretation and translation of ambiguous Arabic words.

Despite precious insights from prior studies, there is a dearth of systematic, context-sensitive analysis of how Qur'anic homographs are rendered across multiple English versions. Existing studies often isolate examples or concentrated closely on lexical accuracy, overlooking the interplay of semantic layers, stylistic function, and potential reader expectations. This study addresses this gap by comparatively exploring key Qur'anic homographs through linguistic and exegetical lenses, guided by translation *skopos* and semantic precision. The next section outlines the methodology employed to conduct this analysis.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design of the Study

This study applied a qualitative technique with a structured design, favoring highly interpretive insights and analytical depth over quantitative analysis. The researchers accumulated and scrutinized data before engaging in a detailed examination. The data comprised some selected Qur'anic verses and their English translations by Abdel Haleem (2004), Al-Hilali and Khan (1996), and Pickthall (1930). During the collection of related evidence, verses comprising the homographic Arabic word *al-Hawā* (الهُوَى) were reviewed to identify the challenges in rendering its meanings into English under the guidance of equivalence theory. The study probed existing challenges in translating the Qur'anic homograph *al-Hawā* (الهُوَى) into English. It gauged the level to which each translation appropriately and faithfully conveys the deliberate meaning of *al-Hawā* (الهُوَى). Then, from a linguistic angle, the study identified the semantic and structural restrictions that impede the functional translation of this homograph within the Qur'anic context.

3.2 Data Analysis Procedure

The process of data analysis was conducted in sequential stages to ensure linguistic accuracy and theoretical constancy. The first step included determining all occurrences of the verb *al-Hawā* (الهُوَى) and its lexemic derivatives in the Holy Qur'ān by adopting the Qur'ān Arabic Corpus. This corpus, with its fine-grained linguistic tagging, enabled the exact extraction of the verb in its different forms. Each case was classified with its resembling verse number, grammatical role, pragmatic context, and contextual meaning, thus producing a systematized dataset appropriate for comparative analysis.

In the second step, the extracted examples were cross-checked with their equivalent translation in three selected English versions of the Qur'ān: Abdel Haleem (2004), Al-Hilali and Khan (1996), and Pickthall (1930). Each English rendering was evaluated in parallel with the Arabic source to determine the specific lexical choices and grammatical constructions exerted by the translators. The analysis was guided by equivalence theory and focused on two key dimensions: semantic accuracy (the level to which the translation maintains the meaning of the source text) and contextual adequacy (the adequacy of the translation within the religious and narrative paradigm of the verse). Types of translation shifts, such as omission, addition, and amplification, were noted and arranged. The occurrences of an equivalent word between the translations were analyzed carefully to determine if they were derived from evaluative determinations, theoretical effects, or linguistic limitations.

In the last step, the data were categorized by theme in accordance with the situational and context-dependent functions of al-Hawā (الهُوَى) in each verse, such as sacred mandate, historical account, or theoretical postulate. This categorization allowed for a subtle analysis and in-depth examination of how each translator discussed homograph ambiguity in various situations. The results were evaluated to highlight constant rendering methods, identify targeted areas of semantic shift or ambiguity, determine the occurrence of meaning loss, and assess the overall adherence to formal and dynamic equivalence principles.

4. Results and Discussion

This section provides an in-depth analysis of the selected Qur'anic Arabic verses that exemplify the intricacies and subtleties in rendering the homographic Arabic word al-Hawā (الهُوَى) into English. Given its multilayered meaning and connotative layers, al-Hawā (الهُوَى) poses considerable challenges to translators striving to signify and communicate its subtle shades of meaning faithfully. The original Arabic verses were analyzed together with their English translations from Abdel Haleem (2004), Al-Hilali and Khan (1996), and Pickthall (1930). These translations serve as benchmark data for side-by-side analysis that reveals and highlights discrepancies and variations in vocabulary selections and contextual interpretations. The analysis shows how linguistic, cultural, and religious aspects influence the translators' procedures, how al-Hawā (الهُوَى) is translated, and how the intended meaning is made accessible to English-speaking audience (Abdel Haleem, 2004; Al-Hilali & Khan, 1996; Pickthall, 1930).

4.1 Example 1

Source Surah: النجم Chapter (53) Sūrat l-Najm (The Star), verse 1

ST: (وَالنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوَىٰ) (النجم: 1)

(a). Target Text

1. **Abdel Haleem** (2004): "By the star when it sets" (p. 347)
2. **Al-Hilali and Khan** (1996): "By the star when it goes down (or vanishes)" (p. 717)
3. **Pickthall** (1930): "By the Star when it setteth" (p. 541)

4.1.1. Analysis

General Meaning of the Ayah

In this verse, Allah Almighty swears by the star "when it falls" (يهوى). It refers to the star's fall or leaning from its position in the heavens. This descent is not to be grasped accurately as if the star were to fall to the earth, but rather as an orderly and strategic move within the star's orbit, showing the sovereign majesty of Allah and the Creator's wise rule over all. Stars, **which appear motionless relative to human perception** (immobile to human perception), are heavenly bodies that operate in accordance with a scrupulously ordered system, incarnating the divine harmony and preeminent governance that reflect the supremacy of the Creator. Hence, Allah's oath by the star is a powerful oath that entails depth and substance. This sacred oath attracts attention to Allah's supreme power in creation and order, preparing the listener to receive a giant actuality: the truthfulness of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the sacred origins of his message, which the Surah addresses subsequently. It asserts that the universal order we witness is not random but evidence of Allah's almightiness and that the Divine revelation is perfectly laced into this wise and conscious mechanism of divine guidance" (Ibn Kathir, 2003, vol. 6, p. 306).

4.1.2 Linguistic Accuracy in Translating the Qur'anic Arabic Homograph al-Hawā (الهُوَى) into English: Chapter 35, Sūrat l-Najm (The Star), verse 1

The Qur'anic Arabic homograph al-Hawā (الهُوَى) has evoked assorted interpretations from religious scholars, showing its semantic intricacy and contextual fluidness. Al-Balkhī (2007) **identified** four main interpretations, and Al-Damghānī (n.d.) and Ibn al-Jawzī (1983) each cited five distinctive interpretations. Among the most generally accepted interpretations are "to descend" (nazala), "desire or lust" (shahwa), "the space between the chest and throat" (al-shay' al-qā'im bayn al-ṣadr wa-al-ḥalq), and "to vanish" or "be cast away" (yadhab). These interpretations emphasize the vocabulary richness of Qur'anic Arabic, where a single term may carry multiple, stratified connotations molded by religious, linguistic, and rhetorical event circumstances (Al-Damghānī, (n.d.); Al-Balkhī & Muqātil, 2002). In his exegesis, Ibn 'Āshūr (1984) clarified that the term "al-huwa" (الهُوَى) denotes falling, and in the context of Sūrat al-Najm (Qur'ān 53:1), it refers to the setting of the star, a utilization that figuratively expresses its disappearance. **Alternatively**, it may refer to meteor descent, which to the observer emerges to traverse the surface of the sky. In this interpretation, the term is utilized in both its literal and figurative senses.

The phrase "when it sets" (idhā hawā) operates as a rhetorical precaution intended to disperse any misconception that the oath by the star represents a recognition of its divinity. It is especially important because certain Arab tribes, such as the Khuza'ah, are known to worship the star Sirius (al-Shi'rā). By indicating the star's setting—a moment aligned with decline and absence—the verse shrewdly nullifies any implication of divine status. In pre-Islamic Arab thought, the rising of a star was viewed as a sign of nobility and ascendancy, and its setting symbolized decline and diminution (Ibn 'Āshūr, 1984, vol. 13, p. 145).

As illustrated in Example One, the expression "goes down" has been systematically utilized in English translations of Qur'anic texts to translate the Arabic verb nazala (نزل), which typically means "to descend" or "to go down." This rendering emerges across several authoritative English translations of the Holy Qur'an and is contextually and semantically adequate. Abdel Haleem (2004), Al-Hilali and

Khan (1996), and Pickthall (1930) employed this phrase to capture the literal and conceptual dimensions of *nazala*, especially in contexts concerning religious revelations or physical descent. For example, when referring to the descent of divine revelation from heaven, the phrase “goes down” clearly communicates the guiding and spiritual subtleties fixed in the original Arabic. The uniformity of this translation selection among prominent translators reflects a joint interpretive methodology embedded in classical *tafsīr* and linguistic accuracy. Thus, the use of “goes down” is not only linguistically faithful but also sacredly sonorous, preserving the severity and sobriety traditionally aligned with acts of divine communication. This translation choice is eloquent and valid within the wide context of Qur’anic exegesis and translation (Abdel Haleem, 2004; Al-Hilali & Khan, 1996; Pickthall, 1930).

In conclusion, **regarding** the Qur’anic Arabic homograph *al-Hawā* (الهوة), the term “نزل” was translated by Abdel Haleem (2004) as “goes down,” by Al-Hilali and Khan (1996) as “when it sets,” and by Pickthall (1930) as “when it setteth,” each conveying the notion of descent or downward movement. These translations accurately capture the intended meaning and offer a consistent and precise rendering across different interpretative traditions.

4.2 Example 2

Source Surah: النازعات Chapter 79, Sūrat l-Nāzi‘āt (Those Who Pull Out), verse 40

ST: (وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ) (النازعات: 40)

(a) Target Text

1. **Abdel Haleem** (2004): “restrained himself from base desires” (p. 408)
2. **Al-Hilali and Khan** (1996): “his Lord, and restrained himself from impure evil desires, and lusts” (p.).
3. **Pickthall** (1930): “his Lord and restrained his soul from lust” (p.)

4.2.1 Analysis

General Meaning of the Ayah

The noble verse “And [He] forbids the soul to desire” (Qur’an, 79:40) highlights the inherent nature of the human soul, which is by nature disposed to follow its desires—those hopes and desires that do not always associate with an individual’s supreme interests or the pleasure of Allah Almighty. These desires exemplify the soul’s draw toward material and psychological longing, which, if left unrestrained, may cause an individual to deviate from honesty. Allah (the Glorified and Exalted) prohibits the soul from surrendering to such futile tendencies, guiding it instead toward what is fair, pertinent, and relevant. This divine command establishes a pivotal balance between the forces of desire and reason (between basic instincts and conscience), thereby preventing the soul from surrendering to vagaries that cause misguidance and corrupt behavior.

This forbidding reflects soulful divine wisdom, prompting individuals to practice self-control and refrain from yielding to primal impulses that might cause downfall in this world and beyond. The differences in the renderings capture the ethical soul’s tension in various ways. Abdel Haleem’s choice of “restrained himself from base desires” underscores the inner struggle of the soul, whereas Al-Hilali and Khan, along with Pickthall, integrated specific references to “his Lord,” highlighting the God-given power that demands this self-control.

4.2.2 Linguistic Accuracy in Translating the Qur’anic Arabic Homograph *al-Hawā* (الهوة) into English: Chapter 79, Sūrat l-Nāzi‘āt (Those Who Pull Out), verse 40

In Surah An-Nāzi‘āt (79:40), the Qur’anic Arabic homograph *al-Hawā* (الهوة) refers to the rampant mental urge that leads to moral and spiritual destruction. Linguistically, the root (ه و ي) conveys the idea of falling or sinking, as explained by expressions like *hawā ash-ed shay’* (“something has fallen”), thereby endowing the term with a subtle rhetorical nuance that shapes surrendering to desire as a kind of ethical and spiritual destruction (Lane, 1863). The verse does not treat self-control as a solitary virtue and fear of divine judgment. Traditional commentators, such as al-Ṭabarī, interpreted it as the soul constraining itself from its wrongful desire, whereas Ibn Kathīr understood it as the soul staying away from its desires and returning to submissiveness (Al-Ṭabarī, 1994; Ibn Kathīr, 2003). The verse “then indeed, Paradise will be his refuge” (Qur’an, 79:41) completes this argument framework by concisely expressing the strenuous relationship among fear, psychological struggle, and paradise benefits.

As reported by Ibn Ashour (1984), the Qur’anic Arabic homograph *al-Hawā* (desire) (الهوة) refers to what the soul craves for. It is a verbal noun in a passive or receptive sense, similar to the term *al-khalq* (creation), which means “the created.” This term denotes what the sensual soul desires—those tendencies that deny the truth and complete gain. The concept of *al-Hawā* is often aligned with reprehensible or base desires.

As revealed in Example Two, Abdel Haleem (2004), Al-Hilali and Khan (1996), and Pickthall (1930) offered accurate interpretative translations on the basis of Qur’anic exegesis. They translated the Qur’anic Arabic homograph *al-Hawā* (الهوة), meaning “desire,” as *shahwa* (الشهوة) or “base desires, impure evil desires” or “lust”. This term refers to desires and instincts that are prohibited by Islamic law (Sharia). Their renderings successfully captured the implied meaning in the verse, illustrating *shahwa* (الشهوة), which refers to base desires that conflict with religious teachings.

In conclusion, the renderings by Abdel Haleem, Al-Hilali and Khan, and Pickthall are generally accurate and faithful to the original intention because they maintain the appropriate legal–religious connotation of *shahwa* (الشهوة) as referring to prohibited, morally

reprehensible, sinful desires.

4.3 Example 3

Source Surah: إبراهيم Chapter 14, Sūrat Ib'rāhīm (Abraham), verse 43

ST: (وَأَفْنَدْتُهُمْ هَوَاءً) (إبراهيم: 43)

(a) Target Text

1. **Abdel Haleem** (2004): "... a gaping void in their heart" (p. 161)
2. **Al-Hilali and Khan** (1996): "... and their hearts empty" (p.....)
3. **Pickthall** (1930): "... and their hearts as air" (p.....).

4.3.1 Analysis

General Meaning of the Ayah

This verse reveals an eerie scene on Doomsday, where nonbelievers are urged forward to face the day of judgment for their transgressions. They surge ahead—hurried, rapid, propelled by an absolute panic that clutches their hearts. Their hearts, in this horrible hour, are empty voids—like dry, hollow, air-swept chambers bereft of faith, hope, or comfort. This devastating emptiness emulates a soul bared by panic, overcome to the point of spiritual and nervous breakdown. Some scholars compared this empty or void state to a quivering heart on the brink of shattering beneath the overwhelming burden of fear. Through this brilliant portrayal, the verse captures the profound despair of banished souls as they face their unavoidable damnation. Fear devours them completely, with every light of hope dimmed and peace torn away; they are left adrift in the abyss of despair. It is a dominant testament to the seriousness of the moment and the strong justice of kneeling before the eternal presence of the Almighty.

4.3.2 Linguistic Accuracy in Translating the Qur'anic Arabic Homograph al-Hawā (الهوى) into English: Chapter 14, Sūrat Ib'rāhīm (Abraham), verse 43.

As evidenced by Example Three, the term "void" (هوى, hawā') is used figuratively to describe the state of the heart at the moment it nearly sinks from its real place in the chest and trips to the space between the chest and throat—the breath's edge against the seat of sentiment. Classical scholars have interpreted this term as referring to a transient relocation or resting place of the heart during extreme fear, leaving spirit and awareness trembling, as if the heart no longer has its strength or insight. Ibn Abbas, a prominent interpreter, described the heart in this state as "empty of all good" (as cited in Tafsir Al-Tabari, 1990, p. 123).

Al-Qurtubi (1999) described hawā' as mere air devoid of benefit because of panic that symbolizes emptiness, weakness, and a lack of inner peace (Al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an). Likewise, Al-Suddi characterized hawā' as the heart as having left its natural place in the chest and settled in the throat, implying a flight to a less stable and more prone position (as cited in Al-Tabari, 1999). Other scholars, including Mujahid, Murrah, and Ibn Zaid, further represented hawā' as an empty, hollow, porous space devoid of goodness or intellect resembling an abandoned house without occupants or protection (Al-Tabari, 1999, p. 126).

Linguistically, the Arabic term hawā' indicates emptiness or void, aligning exactly with the figurative use in the verse. Therefore, the heart is depicted as a position of weakness and insecurity without serenity and overwhelmed by fear, much like a vacant shelter without warmth or safety. Through this vivid imagery, the Holy Qur'an transfers the experience of a person suffocated by panic, whose inside light is extinguished and whose heart is a void that withholds all succor and support, a breath away from both oblivion and peace. Generally, regarding the phrase "that which lies between the chest and the throat," the translation transparently **expresses** the verse's supposed meaning, that is, the fu'ād (heart) becomes hollow, emptied, and bereft in such a condition.

In conclusion, the English renderings of al-Hawā by Abdel Haleem as a "gaping void" (Abdel Haleem, 2004), by Al-Hilali and Khan as "empty" (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1996), and by Pickthall as "as air" (Pickthall, 1930) are lacking. While these translations approximate the semantic intent of the original, they do not adequately capture the vivid emotional expression, cultural connotations, and conceptual understanding inherent in the Qur'anic Arabic expression in general and the Qur'anic Arabic homograph al-Hawā (الهوى) in particular.

4.4 Example 4

Source Surah: الحج Chapter 22, Sūrat l-Haj (The Pilgrimage), verse 31

ST: (فَكَأَنَّهُ يَهُوي بِهِ الرِّيحُ) (الحج: 31)

(a) Target Text

1. **Abdel Haleem** (2004): "... or flung to a distant place by the wind" (p. 211)
2. **Al-Hilali and Khan** (1996): "... or the wind had thrown him to a far-off place" (p.....).
3. **Pickthall** (1930): "... or the wind had blown him to a far-off place." (p.....)

4.4.1 Analysis

General Meaning of the Ayah

In Surah Al-Hajj (verse 31), the act of assigning partners with God (shirk) is elaborately depicted through the metaphor of one who falls

from the sky—typifying a fall from the elevated state of monotheism—only to be ripped asunder by birds or to drift into a nameless gulf on the breath of the storm. This metaphor conveys not merely a theological error but also a total spiritual devastation: a split from spiritual nearness, an atomization of the self, and a surrender to unpredictable external influences. The verse epitomizes the Qur’anic view of shirk as an ontological collapse: an irredeemable fall from spiritual guidance to estrangement, instability, and eventual loss.

4.4.2 Linguistic Accuracy in Translating the Qur’anic Arabic Homograph al-Hawā (الهُوَى) into English: Chapter 22, Sūrat l-Haj (The Pilgrimage), verse 31

The word “يَهْوِي” in the verse فَكَأَنَّهُ يَهْوِي بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي مَكَانٍ سَحِيْقٍ (Surah Al-Hajj: 31) means “it carries away” or “it takes far away,” much like the way a bird falls or how the wind carries water from rain, which birds catch or winds carry to a remote place. In the interpretation of Muqātil ibn Sulaymān al-Balkhī (Al-Balkhī, 2007), he clarified that “خُفَاءَ لِلَّهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِينَ بِهِ” means those who are honest and sincere worshippers of Allah, without aligning anyone with Him. He then compared the condition of one who hangs out with Allah to the water released by clouds. In pantheism, it is as if the birds (like eagles) are carried by the wind and taken to a very profound, faraway place (far away from Allah). Therefore, the meaning of “يَهْوِي بِهِ الرِّيحُ” is “the wind carries it and takes it to a deep, faraway place.” This meaning indicates how attributing partners with Allah distances one from Allah’s mercy and protection, just as birds take the water carried by winds far away.

As highlighted in Example Four, the term tahwī (تَهْوِي) in Surah Al-Hajj (22:31) is used to demonstrate the fate of one who commits shirk (Arabic: شُرْك) (associating partners with Allah), comparing it to a person falling from the sky captured by birds or carried away by the wind to a faraway place. Linguistically, tahwī تهوي stems from the root hawā هوى, meaning “to fall” or “to descend rapidly,” and in this context, it means being thrown or flung into a remote inaccessible place. According to Muqātil ibn Sulaymān’s tafsīr (Al-Balkhī, 2007) this imagery portrays the spiritual devastation and distance from spiritual guidance that results from shirk (Arabic: شُرْك), where the person is left susceptible and flung about without aim like a leaf in the wind or birds (Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, 2007, p. 16).

In the translation of the Qur’anic verb yadhhab (يَذْهَب), different translators have adopted varying approaches. Abdel Haleem rendered it as “flung to,” Al-Hilali and Khan opted for “had thrown,” and Pickthall used “had blown.” Although these translations may be linguistically acceptable, they tend to reflect a literal or surface-level rendering that overlooks the deep rhetorical and semantic dimensions of the term within its Qur’anic context. In many instances, yadhhab (يَذْهَب) does not merely denote real removal or motion but carries broad connotations of divine action, such as destruction, annulment, or the deletion of something’s essence. By diminishing this verb to a simplistic physical act, these translations may weaken the theological depth and stylistic elegance of the original Arabic. The Qur’anic language is marked by graceful accuracy and stylistic nuance or shade of meaning that cannot be accurately conveyed and rendered by a literal translation or word-for-word translation without a substantial loss of subtlety.

In this specific context, Abdel Haleem, Al-Hilali and Khan, and Pickthall must go beyond the surface meaning to consider the discourse layers and the relation of the word to the verse’s broad context and the general structure of Qur’anic text. The use of “thrown,” “flung to,” and “had blown” to express yadhhab (يَذْهَب) diminishes the true spirit of the text and warps its implied meaning. In Arabic, the verb can fade into obscurity, gradual disappearance, or complete removal rather than a direct physical action, as suggested by “thrown,” “flung to,” and “had blown.” Such reduction in rendering weakens the rhetorical and religious influence conveyed by the verse and highlights the necessity for critical interpretation that considers the broad context, stylistic structure, and metaphorical function of each term.

The translators’ choices predominantly reflect formal equivalence, emphasizing literal, word-for-word renderings such as “flung” or “thrown.” While this method preserves the original lexical form, it often fails to capture the deeper theological significance of *yadhhab* in the Qur’an. Conversely, dynamic equivalence more effectively conveys the broader sense of divine action and removal embedded in the term. Therefore, striking a balance between formal and dynamic equivalence is crucial to fully communicate the richness and profound spiritual meaning of the original text.

5. Conclusion

This analytical research reveals an important difference in the levels of accuracy of translations of the Qur’anic Arabic homograph al-Hawā (الهُوَى) into the target language. Such difference is apparent in how adequately these translations communicate the true sense and supposed message of the Holy Qur’an with accuracy and expertise. This difference presents a critical challenge to translators, such as Abdel Haleem, Al-Hilali and Khan, and Pickthall, who must exert substantial effort to achieve balance between textual accuracy and deep understanding of faithfulness to the original, ensuring that the translation remains accurate to the spirit of the text while preserving its profound connotations. From this perspective, the translator’s translation strategy is pivotal to the quality of the translation. Abdel Haleem, Al-Hilali and Khan, and Pickthall utilized free and contextual translation, which entails elucidating and clarifying Qur’anic meanings, thereby promoting a profound, meaningful comprehension of the text. This procedure increases the translation’s accuracy and clearness. Conversely, Abdel Haleem, Al-Hilali and Khan, and Pickthall primarily utilized a literal translation method that focuses on directly transferring words and meanings without substantial interpretation. This approach often leads to limitations in expressing the refined rhetorical and semantic subtleties, thereby inadequately conveying the text’s full meaning with accuracy and constancy. Consequently, a gap appears between the formal accuracy of the words and faithful translation that mirrors the gist and hidden meaning of the original text. The success of a translation depends on the translator’s ability to balance accuracy to the original text with pragmatism and versatility in conveying the text’s meanings. Contextual and nuanced translation approaches are especially adequate for complex and challenging text, such as the Holy Qur’an, where an in-depth understanding of historical, linguistic, and spiritual contexts is crucial to

generating a translation that is appropriate, holistic, and genuine.

5.1 General Implications

The translations of the Holy Qur'an produced by Abdel Haleem, Al-Hilali and Khan, and Pickthall are among the highest-quality English translations. This excellence is attributed to the translators' dependence on authoritative Islamic interpretations, such as Tafsir al-Tabari, Al-Qurtubi, Ibn Kathīr, and Ibn 'Āshūr, and their careful pursuit of balancing eloquent style, interpretive richness, and deep meaning. Translations, which are characteristically human efforts, remain unable to reflect the peerless beauty of Allah's divine utterance. Such translations are simple vehicles of the meanings of the Holy Qur'an and do not represent Qur'anic text itself. The Holy Qur'an is Allah's speech, unmatched and inimitable by any created being, be it human or jinn; this is the essence of its miraculous nature. Therefore, translating the meanings of the Holy Qur'an into another language is an immensely challenging endeavor and may sometimes be impossible because of the Qur'an's eloquence and profound semantic depth.

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The authors made significant contributions to the conception and design of the work. The first author carried out the textual analysis. All three authors contributed to the interpretation of the gathered data. All authors edited, proofread, and critically revised the work based on the editor's and reviewers' comments. All authors approved the final version to be published and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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