Apostrophe: A Rhetorical Device of the Qur’an

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Abstract

Rhetoric is a universal feature of communication in spoken and written forms in order to influence the audience. Yet, apostrophe or ‘iltifāt’ in Arabic as a rhetorical device is distinctly used in the Qur’anic discourse. This Qur’anic unmatched utilization of apostrophe aims at expressing a particular meaning or set of meanings by alternating between the use of first, second and third person pronouns, i.e., moving from the speaker to the addressee or the absent or vice versa to elucidate the same message. In order to explain this linguistic phenomenon, and shed light on its functions, some examples from the Qur’an are selected, analyzed and discussed linguistically, and translationally. The various functions of such Qur’anic distinct use of apostrophe as a rhetorical style such as creating terror or shock on the addressee, exclusiveness of the doer of an action, confirmation of certain issues, in addition to gratification of the creator are addressed. In translation, however, the unique Qur’anic employment of apostrophe can be too hard a challenge to overcome. Therefore, and for purely theological and philological reasons, a number of Qur’anic exegeses are consulted, and three authentic interpretations of the Qur’an are exemplified to show some real translation losses in the target text or exegesis as it fails to illuminate the meaning either conveyed or reinforced by apostrophe.

Introduction

Languages themselves are tools that shape up the exchange of contents in communication and determine the form of the communicated issue. Therefore, since the lexicon and the grammar of languages differ, communication styles can be different, too. Yet, rhetoric is a universal feature of communication in spoken and written forms in order to influence other persons. Kennedy (1998), for example, looks at rhetoric as a set of mental and emotional energies passed on from a speaker or writer to an audience or reader through a speech or text. In text linguistics, the status of a text is widely approached from a variety of theoretical views. De Beaugrande (1981), for example, adopts the communicative perspective and thus views the text as a communicative occurrence. This aspect of textuality employs, among other explorative issues to text processing, pronominalization and the semantic factors involved in anaphora resolution.

Anaphora resolution, more specifically, within which apostrophe or ‘iltifāt’ in Arabic can be included, is an active research area in the analysis of language processing (Katalin & Zsolt at http://bmf.hu/conferences/cinti2007/53_LejtoviczKatalin.pdf; Grosz et al. 1995; Hitzeman 1998; Palomar 2001; Roger 2001; Tetrault 2001; Denber 1998 at http://www.wlv.ac.uk/~le1825/anaphora_resolution_papers/denber.ps). As put by Katalin & Zsolt (ibid), anaphora resolution is the process of determining the referent of the anaphors in a piece of discourse. Categories of anaphora include pronouns,
demonstratives, relative pronouns, personal pronouns, and interrogative pronoun type adverbs. They further refer to three main tasks in this process, namely, determining the elements of a sentence that are anaphors, allocating the antecedent candidates of a given anaphora, and deciding which phrase or simple word of the possible candidate list is the antecedent of the given anaphora. In this vein, it is worth differentiating between anaphoric and cataphoric relations. Anaphora refers to the kind of relationship when a pronoun, as a grammatical substitute, is used to refer to a preceding noun phrase. Cataphoric reference, on the other hand, is the use of pro-forms or other grammatical forms to refer to a following noun phrase. These two types of relation are referred to by Huddleston and Pullum (2002) as retrospective and anticipatory anaphora.

De Beaugrande (ibid) further discusses this aspect of pronominalization in the light of centering theory stating that there is one entity for each utterance in a discourse, which is the centre of attention. Yet, the leading scholars who proposed centering as a model to account for the more centrality of certain entities than others mentioned in an utterance are Grosz, Joshi, and Weinstein (1995). They (ibid:203-225) claim that this property of more centrality of certain entities in an utterance imposes constraints on a speaker’s use of different types of referring expressions, and the coherence of a piece of discourse is affected by the compatibility between those properties and the choice of referring expressions. Besides, they (ibid) believe that within the interactions among choice of referring expression, attentional state, the inferences needed to determine the interpretation of an utterance and coherence, “pronouns and definite descriptions are not equivalent with respect to their effect on coherence” because of the differing inferences they create on the part of the recipient.

Before discussing how apostrophe as a rhetorical device is distinctly used in the Qur’anic discourse, it is worth describing how the Qur’an is thought of by Muslims. To them, it is the literal word of Al-Mighty Allah. It is further believed to be among the unlimited multitude of miracles of Allah on earth, and thus is an inimitable book. It is quite possible that not only non-Arab Muslims but also some Arab ones may read or memorize parts of the Qur’an without understanding the exact meanings of them, especially those who are either illiterate or of a modest education. Besides, even literate people, unless steeped in quite many of the texts and acquainting themselves with some related exegesis or ‘tafsīr’ by specialists, they might not be able to fathom the meanings, denoted or conotated, of words since there are some verses that cannot be understood literally. The meaning of a Qur’anic text is determined by a variety of factors, which include among others, the topic or theme addressed in a chapter or ‘sūrah’ and the context in which a verse was revealed.

The inimitability of the Qur’anic discourse is multifaceted, one of which, as will be shown in the analysis below, clearly manifests itself in the incomparable utilization of apostrophe as a rhetorical device. The paper will give an account of some verses embodying apostrophe, show its importance, especially apostrophe from absence to addressing, from speaker to addressee, or from addressee to absent, etc., highlight the various functions of such Qur’anic distinct use of it as a rhetorical style. It will further try to elucidate the wide scope of rhetorical meanings as aided by the rhetorical feature of apostrophe. In this context, the Qur’an is conscious of its inimitability and explicitly
challenges any one to compose a single verse similar to one of its verses. The Qur’an’s claim to being of divine origin as well as the challenge addressed to those who think of it otherwise is overtly stated in the verse:
“If you are in doubt of what We have revealed to Our messenger, then produce one chapter like it. Call upon all your helpers, besides Allah, if you are truthful” (2:23)
Likewise, the Qur’an refers to itself as of unmatched rhetoric, which is plainly expressed in the Nahal sūrah:
“We know indeed that they say: it is a man that teaches him. The tongue of him they wickedly point to is notably foreign, while this is Arabic, pure and clear.” (103)

Apostrophe in Rhetoric

Rhetoric is the art or study of using language effectively and persuasively; it is a skill speakers and writers utilize in the construction of discourse so that it can sound effective and persuading. In its broadest sense, rhetoric is defined in the (Microsoft Bookshelf 98: www.solonschools.org) as "the theory and practice of eloquence, whether spoken or written. Spoken rhetoric is oratory. Rhetoric defines the rules that should govern all prose composition or speech designed to influence people's judgment or feelings." Being a universal linguistic phenomenon, rhetorical devices, in addition to other persuasive techniques, are heavily used by orators and skilled writers to effectively handle a case and convince the audience of their argument. It is because of the effect of their use of rhetorical devices as well as the power of other persuasive techniques that successive generations remember and repeat the words of some celebrities and heros whose contributions to the human legacy are so significant.

As is clear, the key word in this context is effect since the various rhetorical devices are employed to achieve a desired effect on the recipients, a main concern of discourse analysis. Other than apostrophe, rhetoric devices include anaphora, antithesis, apophasis, aporia and aposiopesis, to mention some. Apostrophe or ‘iltifāt’ in Arabic, being the concern of the present work, is derived from a Greek word meaning ‘a turning away’, (Harris: 2007, www.virtualsalt.com/evalu8it.htm). Harris (ibid) defines apostrophe as “a figure of speech in which an absent person, a personified inanimate being, or an abstraction is addressed as though present”, and this sense is maintained when a narrative or dramatic string is interrupted in order to go off the point or deviate by addressing directly someone who is not present, such as ‘Envy, be silent and attend!’ used by Alexander Pope, ‘On a Certain Lady at Court,’ as cited by Harris (ibid).

In literature, especially in lyrics, two types of apostrophe are used as explained by Vendler (2005, retrieved from http://press.princeton.edu/chapters/i8016.pdf), the horizontal and vertical. In this vien, she (ibid) explains that “it has even been claimed that apostrophe—literally, a turning away from one’s strophe to address someone else—is the essence of the lyric…… One possible absent addressee of lyric is a person whom the fictive speaker knows—a lover, a patron, a family member”, which she calls horizontal.
Unlike horizontal apostrophe, in the vertical type, Vender (ibid) further adds that the speaker’s apostrophe is directed to “a person or thing inhabiting a physically inaccessible realm conceived as existing ‘above’ the speaker” where the vertically placed addressee could be a god, and thus the tone used by the speaker rises above the level of respect expressed to a worldly patron or a beloved one and shows the humility a speaker should display when addressing the divine. To voice intense emotion while addressing a personified thing, Richard de Bury, cited in (www.solonschools.org/accounts/CRamlow/) says:

“O value of wisdom that fadeth not away with time, virtue ever flourishing, that cleanseth its possessor from all venom! O heavenly gift of the divine bounty, descending from the Father of lights, that thou mayest exalt the rational soul to the very heavens! Thou art the celestial nourishment of the intellect . . . .”

Features and Functions of Apostrophe

What is ‘iltifaat’ (apostrophe) in Arabic? The noun ‘iltifāt’ is derived from the roots ‘lafata’ and ‘laaffata’, to mean turning and bending. When followed by the preposition ‘an’ (from), it means to turn away or divert from somebody/something and to look back. This has been mentioned in the Qur’an, e.g. in Hud surah: (The Messengers) said: “O Lut! We are Messengers from Thy Lord, by no means shall they reach thee! Now travel with thy family while yet a part of the night remains, and let not any of you look back: but thy wife (will remain behind): To her will hap happen what happens to the people. Morning is their time appointed: Is not the morning nigh?” (11:81). Here, in Lut’s household was one who detracted from the harmony of the family. The wife was disobedient to her husband who was obeying God’s command. She looked back and shared the fate of the wicked inhabitants of the Cities of the Plain, (Ali 2003:532). In Yunus surah (10:78) moreover, it is used by the wicked who are arrogant and bound up in their sin preferring deception to Truth as addressing the prophet Moses. Here, the Qur’an says: “They said: “Hast thou come to us to turn us away from the ways we found our fathers following, in order that thou and thy brother may have greatness in the land? But not we shall believe in you!” (Ali 2003:500).

Terminologically, according to Al-Baghdādī (1983:110), ‘iltifāt’ refers to when a poet diverts from what s/he is talking about to something else before completing the first, then s/he goes back to it to complete the first utterance wherein what has been turned to serves as an exaggeration of the first or to increase its beauty. Likewise, this constitutes a definition of another rhetorical device, digression or parenthesis. It further refers to, as stated by Al-Madani (1968:362), expressing a particular meaning by alternating between the use of first, second and third person pronouns, i.e., moving from the speaker to the addressee or the absent or vice versa to elucidate the same message.
Like other manners of speech, apostrophe consists in signifying something by virtue of grammatical structure in the construction of discourse. Yet, it is an enunciation wherein the speaker interrupts the discourse to address directly a person or a personified thing, either present or absent. Apostrophe is consciously utilized for a host of purposes. In prose, for example, its most common purpose is to exhibit strong and powerful emotion, so passionate a feeling that it sounds hard to hold back. In speech as well, the same feeling is conveyed via apostrophe, especially when the speaker is reproaching an addressee or a group of addresses because of being dissatisfied with their behavior.

Apostrophe is a grammatical shift referred to by Abdel Haleem (1999:184-210) and Abdul-Raof (2000, 2003) as one of the salient inimitable features extensively used in the Qur’an. Abdel Haleem (ibid) describes this feature as an efficient rhetorical device that supplements the literary expression of texts in addition to realizing the communicative end. The grammatical shifts utilized in the Qur’anic style include changes in person, number, addressee, tense, case marker and using a noun in place of a pronoun, to mention some. To exemplify the employment of this rhetorical feature, Tzortzis (available at www.islam21c.com) explains in the verse to follow how apostrophe ‘iltifāt’ changes to talking about God, in the third person, to God Himself speaking in the first person plural of majesty. This is illustrated in Chapter 4:114 “There is no good in most of their secret talk, only in commanding charity, or good, or reconciliation between people. To anyone who does these things, seeking to please God, We shall give a rich reward” (Ali 2003:222). Here in this verse, Allah, instead of saying ‘He will give him’, speaks in the plural of majesty to bestow His personal assurance of reward to those who do positive actions stated in the verse.

As for the sudden change in person and number, Tzortzis (ibid) cites the following verse that explicitly embodies such a grammatical shift along with Robinson’s (2004) explanation of it in context of its rhetoric.

“He it is who makes you travel by land and sea; until when you are in the ships and they sail on with them in a pleasant breeze, and they rejoice, a violent wind overtakes them and the billows surge in on them from all sides, and they become certain that they are encompassed about, they pray to Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience: ‘If Thou dost deliver us from this, we shall most certainly be of the grateful ones.’ But when He delivers them, lo! they are unjustly rebellious in the earth. O humankind! your rebellion is against your own souls - provision of this world’s life - then to Us shall be your return, so We shall inform you of what you did”, (10:22).

Robinson, cited by Tzortzis (ibid), explains that the three consecutive pronominal shifts are all perfectly logical as used in the verse although at first sight it may sound jumbled and thus confusing. That is, what the shift from the second person plural to the third person plural does is to objectify the addressees and enable them to see
themselves as they are seen by Allah, in addition to realizing how absurd, ridiculous and two-faced their behavior is. Besides, the shift back to the second person plural points to Allah’s turning to admonish them. The final shift from the third person singular to the first person plural articulates His majesty and power, which successfully fulfills the purpose in view of the reference to the resurrection and judgment. These shifts, as put by Tzortzis (ibid), contribute to the dynamic style of the Qur’an and apostrophe is obviously a stylistic feature characterizing the Qur’anic discourse as an accepted rhetorical practice. He further adds that the Qur’an utilizes this feature in a way that corresponds to the theme of the text and at the same time, it increases the effect of the message it puts across. Abdel Haleem is reported by Tzortzis (ibid) to believe that the Qur’an is the only form of Arabic prose to have employed apostrophe ‘iltifāt’ as a rhetorical device in an extensive and complex manner. Thus, it, the Qur’an, is considered stylistically different from any known form of Arabic discourse because of its distinctive use of linguistic and literary devices.

Discussion

Apostrophe, as a figure of speech, is one of the distinctive features of the Qur’an that makes its imitation difficult, as breaking off the current of speech and directing it to something or somebody absent is lost in replication. In other words, the functions of apostrophe in the Qur’anic discourse might not be similarly reproduced in similar ordinary settings, as readers might not grasp this feature easily. In order to elucidate this linguistic phenomenon, and shed light on its functions, some examples from the Qur’an are selected, analyzed and discussed linguistically, and translationally. For purely theological and philological reasons of the study, a number of Qur’anic exegeses are consulted, and three authentic interpretations of the Qur’an are exemplified. Functions of apostrophe such as creating terror or shock on the addressee, exclusiveness of the doer of an action, confirmation of certain issues and subject matters, in addition to gratification of the creator are explained.

Example 1

(ٌُ اىرْ ٔسٕسمم فٓ اىبس َاىبذس دخّّ إذا مىخم فٓ اىفيل َجسٔه بٍم َفسدُا بٍب جبءحٍم زٔخ عبصف)

Arberry (1980:272) “It is He who conveys you on the land and the sea, and when you are in the ship—and the ships run with them with a fair breeze, and they rejoice in it, there comes upon them a strong wind.”

Pickthall (2002:182) “He it is Who makes you to go on the land and the sea till, when you are in the ships and they sail with them a fair breeze and they are glad therein, a stormy wind reaches them”.

Ali (2003:485) “He it is Who enableth you to traverse through land and sea; so that ye even board ships—they sail with them with a favorable wind, and they rejoice thereat; then comes a stormy wind”.
Man is bestowed with many favors from his creator, Allah, and thus should be thankful and grateful. Allah has subjected the land and sea in the service of man, (cf. Aṣ-Ṣābūnī 2008, vol.3,382; Ash-Sha’rāwī 1999, vol.10,5842; Ibn Kathîr 2003:705) as a result of which man is supposed to express gratitude through obedience and thankfulness. Allah has enabled man to travel from one place into another in all spheres, using his physical and intellectual potentials to run his business. In other words, He has made it easy that all natural elements are incorporated in order to make man’s life simple and manageable. Man should not show pride of his inventions and discoveries, as these are not because of his genius and talent, but due to God’s grace and bounty. The verse shows that man rejoices when the ship goes smoothly with gentle winds, but in adversity turns into defenselessness and panic, when stormy winds start striking the ship they are sailing with.

The rhetorical feature of the above verse is based on turning away the speech from the addressee to the absent for purely rhetorical functions. Ordinary readers and those who are unaware of the Qur’anic rhetorical elements would think that the verse in question is imbalanced and suffers from pronoun inconsistency. The addresses in the verse are given enough care and regard from Allah, on earth as well as on sea. Due to the calamities of the sea, and the dangers that the sailors may be encountered with, the speech has turned from the addressee to the absent in the second hemistich of the verse, in which these tragedies are expected. This transfer of pronouns is very clear in the verse and is aimed at showing God’s mercy upon His addressees, who are the weak if compared with the power and the danger of the sea. The Qur’anic style has changed to address someone absent, as it is too difficult to directly inform the addressees their catastrophic end. This politeness of the Qur’anic discourse aims at reducing the negative influence that it may create on the subjects, who might not be aware of the ephemeral moments of their lives.

The rhetorical function of the apostrophe in the verse (cf. Aṣ-Ṣābūnī 1981,2:579) is not similarly conveyed in the target language. As apostrophe in the verse constitutes a translation problem, the translators have followed different translation procedures. Since the transfer of the pronoun of the addressee to the pronoun of the absent cannot be reproduced similarly in the target language, Arberry has repeated the noun ‘ships’ in order to make reading the translated text easier; not only this, but he has also translated the Arabic ‘fulk’ differently, one time as ‘ship’, and another time as ‘ships’ aiming at facilitating the reading comprehension of the translated version. The translator might be right as ‘fulk’ can be singular and plural, a linguistic fact that the translator might be unaware of. Pickthall has literally translated the verse, and thus apostrophe cannot be similarly noticed in the target language. It is not easily understood in the source text, let alone in the target language where the translation is not supported with enough explanatory details. To a similar extent, Ali has followed the same procedure adopted by Arberry, but has not repeated the noun ‘ships’, for fear of violating the source text ‘noun-pronoun’ use, shown in ‘ships’ and ‘they’. The three translations have not made reference to the apostrophe as a rhetorical feature of the Qur’an as they are either unaware of this fact, or could have consulted Qur’anic exegeses that have not explained or referred to it (cf. Aṭ-Ṭabarānī 2008, vol.1:382; Ash-Sha’râwî 1991, vol.10:5842; Ibn Kathîr 2003:705).
Example 2

(فارسکی سیل ریک ندلای یخورم من بطن‌ها شراب مختلفاً آلوانه) 69:16

Arberry (1980:293) "And follow the ways of your Lord easy to go upon. Then comes forth out of their bellies a drink of diverse hues".

Pickthall (2002:243) “and follow the ways of your Lord, made smooth (for you). There comes forth from their bellies a drink diverse of hues”.

Ali (2003:654) “And find with skill the spacious paths of its Lord: there issues from within their bodies a drink of varying clours”.

In the verse, the bees are inspired by Allah to follow the ways, made easy by Him, to assimilate juice of various kinds of flowers and fruits (cf. Aṣ-Ṣābūnī 1981, vol.2,48; Ibn Kathīr 2003:819; Aṭ-Ṭabarānī 2008, vol.4,73). Absorbing nectar from this variety of flowers, bees can produce honey that heals men, as shown in the verse. The verse shows that the bees’ kingdom is well organized, and every bee knows well its job, where ‘dhulalan’ indicates two meanings. The first meaning is that which refers to the paths that can lead to various flowers; in other words, Allah has made the way easy so that the bees can maneuver to long distances in search of various kinds of flowers. The second meaning is illustrated in the full obedience of the working bees to perform their job in the right manner, a meaning that entails the responsibility that they are in charge of.

Lack of awareness and poor understanding of the Qur’anic inimitable style of apostrophe may lead to an erroneous comprehension of the text. Turning the addressee or reader from one state to another may be understood as a source of the text weakness; however, full understanding of apostrophe as a language style reinforces the meaning and generates its power. In other words, what might look cohesive and stimulating from the rhetorician's view might be looked at as a shortcoming of the text by ordinary people, and what is cohesive and well tied, might be looked at as language rule violating by poorly educated people. This anaphoric and cataphoric sudden shift in the verse is functional and is not aimlessly adopted. Transferring from one pronoun to another in the same verse attracts the audience attention and calls them for more thinking in the text implications, and rescues them from the boredom and tediousness that they might come through. In other words, apostrophe should be understood as a comforting station, where the audience is fueled up with more power and energy. Apostrophe in the verse under discussion is demonstrated in the change of style from the addressee or the present to the absent. In the first place, the bees are addressed and commanded to take their way which Allah has made easy to follow, as shown in ‘faslukī’, ‘lit. you follow; in the second place, the change of style is illustrated in ‘min buṭūnihā’, ‘lit. from their bellies’, where the bees who are addressed in the first part of verse are ignored in the second. This should not be understood as a source of a Qur’anic shortcoming, but rather as a source of rhetoric and inimitability. Apostrophe here aims at directing the reader or the audience to be alert to the fact that honey is processed or manufactured in the bellies of the bees. It is, thus, the audience who are meant by the apostrophe in order to escape the repetitive use of pronoun which can be irritating and nauseating.
Preserving apostrophe in translation is a hard task and requires that the translator adopts different procedures. Splitting the verse into more than a part in order not to misguide the audience, can be a translation strategy in such a text-type. To exemplify, Arberry and Pickthall have divided the verse into two clauses, one ending after ‘dhulalan’, ‘lit. easy path’, and another starting by ‘yakhruju min butūnihā’, ‘lit. out of their bellies comes forth’. Both translators have tried to facilitate the reading of the translation and simplify its understanding, for fear of their translation misconception and misunderstanding. Though the translations have managed to convey the semantics of the text, they have, however, failed to elucidate the apostrophe of the verse as an inimitable stylistic and rhetorical feature of the text. Contrary to Arberry and Pickthall, Ali has rendered the one clause verse as a one clause translation. However, he has failed to preserve the apostrophe of the original text by ignoring the rhetorical feature of the text through reference to the same addressee of the absent. This is clear when Ali changed ‘faslukī subula rabbikī’, ‘lit. you follow the ways of your Lord’, into ‘tasluku subula rabbiahā’, translated by Ali as ‘and find with skill the spacious paths of its Lord’. This translation strategy of Ali aims at making a pronoun consistency in the verse, without acknowledging that this has resulted in mistranslating the apostrophe as a main component of the original text.

Example 3

Arberry (1980:297) "What is with you comes to an end, but what is with God abides; and surely We shall recompense those who were patient their wages".

Pickthall (2002:246) “That which you have wastes away, and that which Allah has remains. And surely We shall pay those are steadfast a recompense of the best of what they used to do”.

Ali (2003:663) “What is with you must vanish: what is with Allah will endure. And We will certainly bestow one those who patiently perverse”.

All that man strives to gain would vanish and come to an end, if compared with what man spends in the cause of Allah (Ibn Kathīr 2003:826; Aṣ-Ṣābūnī 1981,vol.2,55; Aṭ-Ṭabarānī 2008,vol.4,82). This manner of spending one's wealth and property for this purpose would be for man in this life and the hereafter. The verse encourages wealthy and financially capable people to pay in this path, as any temporal advantage is snatched in this life and would have reward on the day of resurrection.

The verse consists of two parts. The first part compares between the case of money spent in the cause of Allah, and that which is spent for one’s own merits. The second part points out the reward that one may gain if he spends his wealth in the cause of Allah; a reward that is much more than what is spent in this life. What is interesting in the verse is rhetorical style of apostrophe shown in the concluding part, a strategy that shows the outcome of the given money in Allah’s path. Stepping from the fact that one’s wealth would vanish, what is with Allah would endure, and what is incessantly spent in the good manner aims at softening the idea that one should not show grief and sorrow for what he
is giving, as what is with Allah would endure. Moreover, the glad tiding that the verse has is promising and is indirectly illustrated in the verse through the transfer from the addressees to the absent. Though some readers or audience may recognize the verse as inconsistent due to this pronoun shift, well versed readers may comprehend it as more rhetorical and more eloquent that in the case of pronoun consistency.

Splitting the verse into more than a clause is a strategy that the three translators have followed in order to be faithful to the semantics of the source text. However, the Qur’anic inimitable feature of apostrophe cannot be felt similarly in the translations, for the reason that target language readers would not understand the verse but in its rendered form, i.e., a verse consisting of two separate clauses. Faithfulness of the semantics has, thus, been achieved at the expense of the verse rhetoric. The forcefulness of the indirect reference to the awards is not reproduced in the receptive language and this is a real translation loss that cannot be easily compensated. The Qur’anic style power lies in this very fact, as reference to someone absent when addressing someone attendant adds extra meanings, a credit that cannot be felt in the three translations. This fact is more truly demonstrated in Qur’anic sessions, for example, where the addresses have enough comprehension of the Qur’anic style that sometimes relays in unordinary ways.

Example 4

َقٕو ٔب أزض ابيعٓ مبءك َ ٔب سمبء أقيعٓ َغٕض اىمبء َقضٓ الأمس

(44:11)

Arberry (1980:244) "And it was said, 'earth', swallow thy waters; and, heaven, abate!' And the water subsided, and the affair was accomplished".

Pickthall (2002:196) “And it was said: O earth! Swallow your water and O sky! Be cleared of clouds! And the water made to subside. And the commandment was fulfilled”.

Ali (2003:521) “Then the word went forth: “O earth! Swallow up thy water, and O sky! Withhold (thy rain)!” and the water abated and the matter was ended”.

The verse is telling about the people of the Prophet Noah, who were taken and afflicted by the stupendous Deluge in the bordering regions of modern Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Iran. The affliction was through the unusual rainfall and springs' bubbling and gushing forth (cf. Az-Zamakhsharî 2005:11; Ibn Kathîr 2003:728; Aţ-Ţabarânî 2008,vol.3,435). The highest peak of the mount Al-Judi, on which the recalcitrant son of Noah tries to betake himself, was submerged by the never witnessed Deluge. None of the prophet's people escaped death except those who embarked on the Ark, and those against whom the word of Allah has not gone.

Ordinary readers who are unaware of the Qur’an stylistics may comprehend the transfer or shift from one state to another as a defect or shortcoming of the text. In reality, this shift tightens up and strengthens the flow and smoothness of the event scenario. Moreover, drawing the reader's attention and protecting him from boredom is a priority of this type of communication. The first part of the verse discusses the divine’s command of afflicting the unbelievers with death. The earth and the sky are personified when addressed as persons present at the time of speech. They are portrayed as having human
qualities when understanding the order of Allah to swallow up water, and withhold rain. The speech shift is illustrated when the earth and sky are addressed as alive entities ‘O earth swallow up thy water, and O sky! withhold thy rain’!, and the marks of the deluge end are described as ‘and the water abated, and the matter was ended; the ark rested on Mount Al-Jūdī, and the word went forth’.

Literal translation of the verse structure can convey its semantics, but would not relay the fact of the apostrophe that lies in. In other words, this linguistic feature, which can hardly be understood in the source text, would not be understood in the target text. Some Qur'an exegeses have even failed to explain this phenomenon and all they provide the reader with is an interpretation of the event (cf. Ibn Kathīr 2003:728; Al-Ṭabarānī 2008,3:435). Consulting these exegeses, for example, would not help the translators whose native language is not that of the Qur'an, in illuminating the apostrophe or referring to it in their translations. On this basis, readers of the translated text would understand the material literally and would not appreciate other linguistic values, such as apostrophe, which add more meanings to the text. Not only does the apostrophe in the verse convey the message that the hard mission of drowning the people of the prophet Noah has ended, but also a divine command was given to the earth and sky to stop bubbling and pouring water; and the Ark has rested on that particular part of the mount so that all people can recognize it, in order to be taken as a lesson for the coming generations. Meanings implied in turning the reader’s attention from the divine’s direct speech of the earth to the termination of the affliction of the defiant people, cannot be comprehended in the literal translation of the verse, and require that the translator should make reference to these values in the bottom of the translation.

Example 5

قد كان لكم آية في قتلتين القتلة في سبيل الله وأخرى كافرة يرونهم مثلهم رأى العين (13:3)

Arberry (1980:74) “There has been a sign for you in the two companies that encountered; one company fighting in the way of God and another unbelieving; they saw them twice the like of them, as the eye sees”).

Pickthall (2002:47) “There was a token for you in two hosts which met: one army fighting in the way of Allah, and another disbelieving, whom they saw as twice their number”.

Ali (2003:128) “There has already been for you a sign in the two armies that met (in a combat): one was fighting in the cause of Allah, the other resisting Allah; they saw with their own eyes twice their number”.

Lessons can be taken from history and past events. In the plain of Badr, Muslims won the battle despite the fact that the number of their enemy was three times more than their poorly-equipped army. Besides, the most experienced and well-trained warriors of the foes such as Abu Jahl were killed in the battle, a leading foe, known as an inveterate and persecutor of Islam. The miraculous aid of Allah has interfered (cf. Az-Zamakhsharī 2005:163; Ibn Kathīr 2003:251; Al-Ṭabarānī 2008:170) in achieving the decisive victory, as it was too difficult for such an ill-equipped force to defeat the large and well-armed
troops of the opposing side. As the verse shows, the enemy saw the Muslims twice their number, and this has helped in their defeat in the battle which is considered as the first meeting that gave the Muslims enough power and confidence.

Apostrophe in this example is illustrated in two positions of the verse. The addressees in the verse are the Muslims who should take lessons from the battle of Badr, where the polytheists were defeated despite the fact that they outnumbered the Muslim believers. The verse starts by drawing the Muslims’ attention to the fact that victory is not always gained on the basis of arms and men, but can be achieved when believers put their trust in Allah, who is the main supporter of his believers. The second person addressees in the verse are the Muslims who should benefit from historical events; thus, a shift is clearly noticed when the speech is directed from ‘you’ as an attendant addressees into ‘they’ as absent ones (Aṣ-Ṣabuni 1981, vol. 1, 190). What attracts the reader’s attention is the smooth shift and transfer from the first person into the second person. This movement might be realized as a defect or a shortcoming of the divine text, whereas it can be considered as a linguistic power. Moreover, the cohesion and coherence of the Qur’anic text in this pronoun transfer is highly appreciated by the divine text rhetorician, though these features can be seen as a source of the text flow deviation.

Translating the apostrophe in the verse cannot be successfully achieved without splitting the verse into independent syntactic units. This division helps in minimizing text misunderstanding possibilities. The translation of the apostrophe part “برونهم مثلهيم رأي العين”, ‘they see them twice their number’ may lead to misunderstanding as ‘they’ is ambiguous to those who are not familiar with the religious text. Reference of the pronoun ‘they’ can be to the ‘believing army or the ‘unbelieving one’. The translator, thus, should have enough knowledge and understanding of this religious discourse in order to relay the meaning faithfully to the target language, and should also disambiguate the text and release it from its foggy and unclear context, at least from the target language reader’s view. This rhetorical feature of the Qur’an creates this translation challenge as the anaphoric and cataphoric reference of nouns and pronouns becomes more complicated when a clear shift or transfer is made from one setting to another. On this basis, the translator can clarify the meaning by translation support of explanatory materials such as the addition of ‘unbelieving army see the believing one twice its number’, where ‘unbelieving’ as an added material tells the reader the exact reference of the pronouns.

Example 6

(وما آتِتم من زكاة تريدون وجه الله فاولنک هم المضعفون) 39:30

Arberry (1980:109) ”but what you give in alms, desiring God's Face, those-they receive recompense manifold”.

Pickthall (2002:383) “but that which you give in charity, seeking Allah’s countenance, has increased manifold”.

Ali (2003:1018) ”But that which ye lay out for charity, seeking the countenance of Allah, (will increase): it is these who will get a recompense multiplied”.

12
In Islam, ‘zakāt’ is an amount of money or property that is ordained on the money or property of the rich to be distributed among the needy. Increase and purity (cf. Ibn Kathīr2003:1134; Aş-Şābūnī 1981,vol.2,383; Āt-Ṭabarānī 2008,vol.5,125) are linguistic meanings of the Islamic term ‘zakāt’, and they have a tight relationship between the taxed money or property, the rich who should pay this certain amount of money or property, and the poor who are liable to receive it. This is the poor people’s right and rich people cannot abstain from paying it in its specific time of the year. In contrast to the English ‘alms’ or ‘charity’ which can be given at any time and optionally, ‘zakāt’ is taken legally and distributed according to the Islamic economic law among the needy at an appointed time.

The apostrophe in the verse is illustrated in the transfer or shift from addressing the attendants to some people absent (cf. Az-Zamakhsharī 2005:831). However, this transfer should not be understood as a defect or a shortcoming of the text; rather, this shift tightens up the text as the addressees are the ones meant by those who are multiplied in recompense for what they pay. The message can even be stronger when it is indirectly conveyed to the attendants, as those witnessing the speech can respond more quickly and more encouragingly. Shifting from the clause ‘what you give for the sake of charity’ to ‘it is those who are multiplied’ is a pronoun level shift, where the speech is turned from the first person ‘you’ into the second person ‘they’. This rhetorical use of the Qur’an aims at instilling the idea of gain in the minds of those who will pay the charity, as the ones addressed in the verse are those meant in the discourse, and it is the ones who are to be multiplied for doing this altruistic or benevolent action. This meaning and this message can pass unnoticed if the readers are ill-versed and do not have enough awareness of the Qur’anic text implications.

Misconception of these layered meanings can result in real translation challenges, as the Qur’anic exegeses which are the main authoritative references of Qur’an translation, may ignore or uncover these peculiar features. To this extent, the three translations seem to have failed in rendering the exact textual meaning. Thus, ‘those-they receive recompense manifold’ in Arberry’s translation does not convey the intended meaning of the Qur’anic text. This rendition shows that the receiving part of the ‘payment’ manifolds, which is not true by all measures, as the ones who pay for the sake of Allah are blessed in their property, and rewarded for their generosity. Pickthall’s translation of the verse as ‘which you give in charity, seeking Allah’s countenance, has increased manifold’, does not also convey the real intended meaning. The translator seems to have understood ‘the property’ as what is multiplied, which is not the case as the people who pay from their property are rewarded for what they do. Arberry seems to have a different, but again an erroneous understanding of the verse that has driven him to produce a wrong translation. This is clear in rendering the apostrophe part in the verse as ‘it is these who will get a recompense multiplied’. Incapability to capture the real meaning of the verse has led Arberry to think that who receive the payment are multiplied and awarded, a translation that looks odd and strange.

Example 7

(وَاللَّهُ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ الْرِّياحَ فَتَأثَّرَ سَحابَاتُهُ فَسَقَنَاهَا إِلَيْهِ بُلْدَةً مَّيِّتَ فَأَحْيَاهَا بِهِ الأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا) 9:35
Arberry (1980:139) “God is He that looses the winds, that stir up clouds, then We drive it to a dead land”.

Pickthall (2002:413) “And Allah it is who sends the winds and they rise clouds; then We lead it (rain) unto a dead land and revive therewith the earth after its death”.

Ali (2003:1103) “It is Allah Who sends forth the winds, so that they raise up the clouds, and we drive them to a land that is dead, and revive the earth therewith after its death”.

Allah is the main causer of rainfall that revives the earth after it is barren and dead (cf. Ibn Kathîr 2003:1213; Aṣ-Ṣâbûnî 1981, vol. 2, 465). The verse demonstrates the fact that Allah causes the wind to raise clouds that are loaded with rain to irrigate the earth that is dead. It is thus the divine command that interferes to cause the life cycle on earth easy and manageable. Informing man this scientific fact is elaborated through scientific and linguistic inimitabilities that cannot be easily grasped or reproduced in ordinary people's language.

Turning from one way of speech into another (cf. Az-Zamakhsharî 2005:882) is a rhetorical feature that enhances the verse in hand with a linguistic power that can be considered or thought of as a source of weakness by readers, who are unfamiliar with the Qur’anic text or discourse. The verse starts by making reference to God as the doer of the action in the third person singular, He. This is clear in the implementation of the relative pronoun ‘that', which refers to ‘God’. The verse then incorporates the first pronoun ‘We’, in order to show the great power of Allah who causes the rainy clouds to move to a dead land to be revived. This shift of the third person singular ‘He’ into the second plural pronoun ‘We’ aims at telling the reader that Allah is the only One who causes the rain to fall down. Thus, the reader's attention is drawn as he may pause and think about the pronoun shift, and thus comprehend that the verse intends to inform the reader an embedded message through what might be thought of as violation of the readability flow. Readers, poorly charged with the Qur’an rhetorical sense, may understand the verse in such a manner, and consequently consider this as a Qur’anic shortcoming.

The translations of the verse under discussion show a lack of cohesion in the view of the receptive language readers. They may perceive the pronoun shift as a shortcoming of the translated version, as the translators have not provided their translations with illuminating information that can explain apostrophe as a rhetorical feature of the Qur’an. Thus, readers of Arberry’s, Pickthall’s and Ali’s translations may think and they have the right to think that there is no relation between ‘He’ as a doer of sending the winds and stirring the clouds and ‘We’ as the doer of driving the clouds into a dead land, while the pronoun ‘He’ and the pronoun ‘We’ refer to the same subject ‘Allah’ as a doer of both actions. The three translations have made this uneasily covered feature of the Qur’an plainly noticed, without explaining it in supporting details. Lack of supporting the translations with enough explanatory details could be due to the translators’ ignorance of this linguistic feature, or their poor understanding of the Qur’anic discourse. The translators are not aware of the fact that the shift of pronouns aims at confirming the first pronoun by the second one.
Like the ancient Persians who believed in gods of good and evil, the Arabs of the pre-Islamic era used to worship gods that they created such as Jibt (sorcery) and Tagut (evil). Islam is a monotheistic religion as it calls only for one god, Allah. This is clearly illustrated in the verse where Allah has commanded people to take only Him for worship (cf. As-Ṣāḥībī 1981, vol.2, 44; At-Ṭabarānī 2008, vol.4: 68). On this basis, people should fear only the wrath of Allah, and evil has no power over those who trust in Allah.

Turning away from one pronoun into another in the same verse of the Qur’anic discourse is a rhetorical feature that empowers the text and makes its inimitability hard to achieve. Apostrophe in the verse in question is manifest when Allah has addressed people to take one God instead of two, then moves to conclude the verse by ‘fear Me’. The aim of the pronoun change is incurring more trepidation in the hearts of the addressees, by making clear the fact that Allah is the only One to be obeyed and worshipped (cf. Az-Zamakhsharī 2005: 575; Ash-Sha’rāwī 1991, vol.13, 7994). Pronoun shift, as a rhetorical feature, is illustrated in the verse through the use of the pronoun of absent to that of present as conveying an intended message indirectly is sometimes stronger and even more influential, especially on those who have enough linguistic and religious background. In other words, the intended meaning in the verse is that ‘do not take two gods for worship, as you have Me as an only God, and thus fear Me’. Readers of the religious discourse should not take the literal use of pronouns as the last resort of understanding the text, as what is hidden is sometimes more than what floats on the surface.

Translators of the Qur’an should consider apostrophe as a rhetorical feature and comprehend its various functions, as to render the divine text faithfully in the target language Translating the verse literally has preserved the literal meaning, and ignored the other layered meanings, embedded in the fact that apostrophe in the verse is purposefully used. Stressing the fact that believers should have only ‘One God’ is manipulated in the shift of ‘two gods, one god’ into ‘fear Me’. Good translators, who are supposed to be good readers, should refer the target text audience to this Qur’anic aspect by providing explanatory details about the stress of the idea that it is only Allah which is meant in the whole verse. This substantiation is not clear in Arberry’s translation who only conveys the literal meaning, where the translated version gives an output similar to that understood by source text ordinary readers. However, the point of confirming the oneness of God as a creator to be worshipped is manifest in Pickthall’s translation “So of Me, Me
only, be in awe”, and in Ali’s translation “then fear Me (and Me alone)”, though the two translations have not referred to apostrophe of the verse.

Example 9

(آلم تر أنَّ الله أنزل من السماء ماءً فأخرجننا به ثمرات متنوعة ألوانها) فأطر: 27

Arberry (1980:141) "Has thou not seen that God sends down out of heaven (water) and therewith We bring forth fruits of diverse hues".

Pickthall (2002:415) “Have you not seen that Allah causes waters to fall from the sky, and we produce therewith fruit of divers hues”.

Ali (2003:1109) “Seest thou not that Allah sends sown rain from the sky? With it We then bring out produce of various colours”.

Allah’s artistry is manifest in producing a wonderful variety of flowers, trees, crops and fruits with different colors, tastes, shapes and sizes (cf. Az-Zamakhsharî 2005:885; Ibn Kathîr 2003:1216; Aṣ-Ṣabûnî 1981,vol.2,471) through rainfalls. Man is addressed in the verse to look around himself and contemplate in God’s inimitable creativity of plants transformation from the undeveloped stage to that of maturity. The attribution of this skillfulness to Allah is clear in the use of the first pronoun ‘We’ after the reference to the doer of the action ‘Allah’ as absent. This shift from ‘you’ as a second pronoun addressee to ‘Allah’ as an absent noun, then to ‘We’ as a first pronoun is rhetorical and aims at confirming the fact that 'We', used to mean 'I', is the main producer of the beautiful nature.

The rhetoric of the Qur’an in the verse is illustrated in the apostrophe which might be understood as a weakness or shortcoming of the religious text by ordinary readers. Some readers may think that there is some missing material between the first clause of the verse and the second one. In other words, the subject of the second clause in the verse ‘We’ should be preceded by another clause, where the first person plural ‘We’ is the subject. Understanding the verse as such may justify the reader’s misconception of the real function of apostrophe as a rhetorical feature of the Qur’an. However, rhetoricians and Qur’an well-versed readers can understand the religious text conversely, as they can observe that the Qur’anic text is not an ordinary one, as any thought of deviation is geared to incur a linguistic power on the text and its readers. Thus, what might be understood as textually loose by certain readers is rhetorical and emblematic by other readers, especially those who have enough understanding and awareness of the embedded themes and functions.

Preserving the rhetorical feature of apostrophe in the verse is based on the literal understanding of the text, sometimes, and on making some modifications on the text at other times. Thus, Arberry and Pickthall have rendered the text literally without illuminating the linguistic feature of apostrophe; their rendition is based on the literal understanding of the text, and may be the misconception of the language use. Readers of such translations will also not discover this linguistic feature, which is initially not explained by the translators themselves. Unlike both translators, Ali has opted for ‘addition’ as a translation strategy, where 'then' in his translation separates between the
two clauses, and gives the reader of the translated version an opportunity to have more comprehension of the text. In other words, readers of this translation will understand that the subject of the two clauses is the same, a fact that might not be understood similarly by readers of the other translations. Translators of such a type of text should make recourse to Qur’anic exegeses and commentaries in order to avoid any translation pitfalls as target text misconception is based on source text misunderstanding.

Conclusion

A certain number of conclusions have been drawn from the various points illustrated in the study. It has been found out that apostrophe has not received enough attention in the Qur’anic exegeses against which the discussion of the examples was conducted. The study has investigated that apostrophe has various functions that cannot be easily grasped by ordinary readers of the Qur’an. Also, it has been found that, unlike an ordinary transcript, the Qur’anic text is rhetorical and this requires that deep contemplation in the religious document should be exerted, as to have enough understanding of the various textual implications. In addition, the study has demonstrated that misapprehension of the rhetorical feature of the Qur’anic text may lead readers to consider it as poorly structured, and lacking coherence and unity. As understanding apostrophe is problematic in the source text, its translation collides with many linguistic and extra-linguistic complications, that cannot be resolved without exerting different types of efforts that can help in preserving the feature in the target language.
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