



## Research Article

© 2021 Al-Sowaidi et.al.  
This is an open access article licensed under the Creative Commons  
Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License  
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

Received: 19 July 2020 / Accepted: 9 November 2020/ Published: 17 January 2021

# Translating Conceptual Qur'anic Metaphor: A Cogno-Translational Approach

Belqes Al-Sowaidi<sup>1,2</sup>

Tawffeek Mohammed<sup>2</sup>

Felix Banda<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Taiz University, Taiz, Yemen

<sup>2</sup>University of the Western Cape,  
Robert Sobukwe Rd, Bellville,  
Cape Town, 7535, South Africa

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2021-0014>

## Abstract

*This study will investigate metaphor translation as a natural phenomenon. It will analyze some of the problems involving the translation of metaphorical expressions in two Qur'anic translations, namely, Yusuf Ali's The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary and Laleh Mehree Bakhtiar's The Sublime Qur'an. The analysis in this study employs both quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as a cognitive framework of metaphor, which helps conciliate the cultural specificity of metaphors and their transference into linguistically and culturally unrelated languages. The present analysis is based on Mandelblit's Cognitive Translation Hypothesizes (CTH) (Mandelblit (1995), Maalej's strategies of translating metaphor (Maalej, 2002, 2008) and Kövecses's concept of Cultural Variation (Kövecses, 2002,2006). This kind of eclecticism provides a wide-ranging approach to be followed while analyzing the translation of Qur'anic metaphors. The approach used in this study does not only deal with the linguistic aspects of Qur'anic metaphors, but also pays attention to their conceptual and cultural aspects. Cross-cultural variation can affect the outcome of translating metaphorical expressions. Thus, the translator is obliged to adopt certain strategies to preserve the subtle nuances of the original Arabic text and its socio-cultural context, while at the same time ensuring that the translation is accessible to the target audience. This study concludes that most of the conceptual metaphors under scrutiny have been literally translated into English, which is frequently inaccurate. English and Arabic often diverge in their conceptualization in general texts, but especially in sensitive texts like the Qur'an. Therefore, the conceptualizations of some Qur'anic metaphors are often lost in translation.*

**Keywords:** Metaphor translation, Qur'an, cognitive translation hypothesis (CTH), cultural variation, conceptual metaphor theory (CMT)

## 1. Introduction

Translation of religious texts has attracted the attention of various scholars who widely agree that translating such sensitive texts is a very arduous task (Al-Sowaidi, 2011). Undoubtedly, translating metaphors present in the Qur'an poses a practical challenge to translators. Therefore, it is a worthy

topic of study to explore this phenomenon, since rendering metaphor across cultures is no straightforward task.

Metaphor has always been a source of discussion and debate in the field of translation studies, as well as in other related disciplines such as cognitive linguistics, and cultural studies. The challenge of translating metaphors, especially methods for translating their essential meaning, have received special attention. It has been argued that the difficulty in translating metaphors resides in the fact that metaphors are sometimes deeply rooted in cultural worldviews, and thus they require in-depth interpretation on the part of the translator (Dobrzyńska, 1995). Therefore, the familiarity of the translator with metaphorical expressions within the socio-cultural and conceptual systems of both languages is essential for rendering faithful translations.

Recently a new approach to the study of metaphor has emerged within the field of cognitive linguistics. Known as the conceptual metaphor theory, this approach to metaphor continues to raise attention and debate among both theorists and researchers. Undoubtedly, the theory, as stated in Lakoff and Johnson's seminal work *Metaphors we Live by* (Gorge Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), plays a significant role in the process of translating, and faithfully rendering metaphorical expressions. Lakoff and his colleagues have pointed out that a considerable number of everyday concepts are linguistically structured using conventional metaphors (Gorge Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). They have also indicated that many recently coined creative metaphorical expressions in literary texts can be interpreted with reference to conventional metaphors (Turner & Lakoff, 1989).

The conceptual metaphor theory notably highlights "the embodied nature of meaning and it focuses on conceptual structures which are likely to be universal and the cognitive processes involved in translation" (Fernández, 2013:168). According to Schäffner (2004: 1258), a cognitive approach to the study of metaphor views it as "a means of understanding one domain of experience (target) in terms of another (source), by means of a mapping from the source onto the target, allowing for knowledge-based inferences, base schema and epistemic correspondence" (Schäffner, 2004: 1258). In this sense, metaphor is not just a matter of language, but one of thought and the basic principles of human cognition (Dobrovolskij & Piirainen, 2005). Metaphors are not only stylistic or rhetorical devices confined to literature, "but rather, basic resources for thought processes in human minds" (Schäffner, 2004). In other words, conceptual metaphors build the daily experiences of people; emotions, abstract concepts, embodied experience, etc. This suggests that human beings live much through metaphors.

The present study aims to investigate the problems involved in the translation of metaphorical expressions from Arabic into English, with special reference to two authoritative Qur'anic translations, namely; Yusuf Ali's *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* and Laleh Mehree Bakhtiar's *The Sublime Qur'an*.

## 2. Literature review

Many studies have addressed the variety of cognitive approaches to metaphor translation of miscellaneous texts but not the Qur'an. Some of those studies are (Al-Hasnawi, 2007; Crofts, 1982; Dickins, n.d.; Fernández, 2011a; Iranmanesh & Kulwinder Kaur, 2010; López & Llopis, 2008; Zouhair Maalej, 2011; Mandelblit, 1995; Mohammad et al., 2007; Nokele, 2015; Safarnejad et al., 2014; Schäffner, 2004) among others.

Translation of conceptual metaphor using the cognitive theory has not been given adequate attention. Only a few studies touched upon this area of study. Following is a survey of some of those studies.

Shokr (2006) examined how metaphors are used productively in the Qur'an to widen the text's linguistic scope, thus extending its influence across a broader spectrum of life. He uses Lakoff and Johnson's cognitive theory of metaphor of (1980) to analyze some instances of the "journey" metaphor found in various contexts of the Qur'an.

Eweida (2007) investigated the Qur'anic metaphorical concept of time and its renditions in a number of translations of the Qur'an, also using the cognitive theory of metaphor as a framework

(Gorge Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The study examines several historical, social, and religious aspects of the Qur'anic context in order to evaluate the translations and to clarify certain conceptual metaphor realizations of time in one or both of the languages (Arabic and English).

Al-Saggaf et al., (2013) investigated cognitive metaphorical meanings with specific reference to Pickthall's translation of the Qur'an (Pickthall, 1930) and the Reformist Group's translation (Reformist Group, 2007). The study utilizes a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods with the aim to analyze some verses in *Surat Al-Baqarah* (Arabic: البقرة, "The Heifer"). The study has shown that both translations abound with the use of metaphors. Some of the dominant conceptual metaphors that were found in the two translated texts are "Life is a journey, faith is commerce, hearts are containers and the soul is a person" (Al-Saggaf et al., 2013:1).

Eldin (2014) also deals with metaphor in the Qur'an in line with the cognitive theory of metaphor (Gorge Lakoff & Johnson, 1980 and Turner & Lakoff, 1989). The study illustrates that the polysemous nature of Qur'anic words creates various challenges for the translators, who have encountered problems in the translation of both lexical and figurative meanings of Qur'anic text.

In a similar vein, Al-Ali et al., (2016) study the function of metaphor in the Qur'an within the cognitive theory of metaphor proposed by Lakoff & Turner (Turner & Lakoff, 1989). The study recommends that the application of a cognitive semantic approach can provide valuable insights into metaphors in Islamic religious discourse.

Mehfooz & Ashraf (2017) focus on the conceptual analysis of metaphors about *libās* [i.e., dress] in some specific verses of the Qur'an. They look at these metaphors from the cognitive and linguistic points of view. The study is largely based on the conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) of Lakoff & Johnson (1980). The translations of selected verses of the Qur'an are analyzed and compared with related historical, social, and religious aspects.

Alhusban & Alkhawaldah (2018) examine a number of Qur'anic conceptual metaphors using Kovecses's model of metaphor analysis (Kovecses, 2002). They examine the dichotomy of 'belief' and 'disbelief' in the Qur'an as well as translations of these concepts. The study recommends the use of Kovecses's model in an analysis of the construction of meaning in Qur'anic metaphors.

Hassanein (2019) conducted a study on cognitive linguistic metaphors in the Qur'an. The study is grounded in the cognitive translation process, or the metaphor identification procedure (MIPVU) (Steen, 2010). It attempts to discern the various conceptual metaphors used in the Qur'an. The study also addresses the challenges in the application of MIPVU to the Qur'an, and how far the cognitive metaphors are culturally-bound, but also challengeable.

Maalej (2008) examines the ideological dimension of metaphor at the conceptual, cognitive, and pragmatic levels. The framework of this study is primarily based on Lakoff & Johnson (1980). The study concludes that "non-ideological and ideological uses of metaphor come from popular songs and literary discourse, and promotional and political discourses, respectively" (Maalej, 2011:98).

Ghazala (2012) tackled the issue of translating metaphor based on contemporary developments of conceptual metaphor and cognitive stylistics. His arguments are in support of conceptualizing metaphors in cultural, political, ideological, social, and mental contexts.

Though most of the above studies focus on translating metaphor within the framework of a cognitive approach, they remain few in proportion to the bulk of studies that deal with translating metaphor as a linguistic entity or rhetorical phenomenon. As noted, metaphor is not merely a rhetorical or stylistic device that embellishes meaning; it is rather a cognitive, as well as a cultural concept. The use of metaphor reveals the way people observe the world, and accordingly the culture in which they live.

The current study differs from the studies mentioned above. The scope of this study does not only focus on one approach, nor only considers metaphor as a sheer cognitive entity. The present study uses an eclectic approach that discusses the translation of metaphors from various perspectives. Firstly, the study uses the process of reconceptualizing the source text (ST) into the target text (TT), which is based on Mandelblit's cognitive translation hypothesis (CTH) (Mandelblit, 1995). It also intersects the conceptual theory of metaphor with the theoretical cultural aspects of universality and variation from

Kövecses (Kövecses, 2002, 2006; Kövecses, 2010). Finally, the study depends on (Maalej, 2011; Maalej, 2008) to supplement a detailed investigation of the strategies adopted by translators to minimize gaps of "untranslatability" between languages and cultures. These theoretical and conceptual issues are discussed in section 3.

### 3. Theoretical Considerations

Abstract concepts can be conceptualized through embodied experiences which are correlated with cultural background, and as such have an influence on metaphorical interpretation and understanding (Allan, 2009; Kövecses, 2006; Lakoff & Kövecses, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). As Gibbs Jr & Steen (1999: 146) have pointed out, "culture, body and mind are inseparable". That is, the study of metaphor is not only a matter of culture, but it is also a matter of cognition.

The conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) is well-received both in and outside of the field of cognitive linguistics (Kövecses, 2008: 168). The theoretical framework of the present study is based chiefly on the cognitive translation hypothesis (CTH) proposed by Mandelblit (1995), Maalej's strategies of translating metaphor (Maalej, 2002, 2011; Maalej, 2008) and Kövecses' theory on cultural aspects of universality and variation (Kövecses, 2002, 2006). The above theories are combined to form an eclectic cogno-translational approach, which will be applied in analyzing Qur'anic metaphorical expressions.

The Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) assumes that metaphors are not only figurative, but conceptual devices that can be realized through linguistic expression (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Mandelblit's (1995) hypothesis states that the process of translation requires conceptual mapping on the part of the translator to find a proper cognitive equivalent of the intended meaning. According to her, the cognitive translation hypothesis (CTH) includes two schemes for the translation of metaphors: similar mapping condition (SMC) and different mapping condition (DMC). Regarding the former, Mandelblit claims that the metaphors in both ST and TT have generally similar metaphorical mappings. In such a scenario, the translation of a metaphor is uncomplicated and usually does not pose any difficulties.

She further argues that the process of reconceptualization becomes more difficult whenever a metaphorical expression uses a cognitive domain different from the one of the equivalent target language's metaphorical expression. Undoubtedly, finding an equivalent conceptual metaphor with similar mapping, and thus the attainment of cognitive equivalence, poses various challenges for the translator of an ordinary text, let alone a translator of sensitive religious texts such as the Qur'an or the Bible. The fact that Arabic and English belong to "remotely unrelated cultures that show more dissimilarities than commonalities" (Maalej, 2008:67) complicates the job of a translator and adds additional challenges to a faithful rendition of metaphorical expressions. Hence, Maalej cited five different strategies for the translation of metaphors:

- "(i) Keeping the same metaphorical image, i.e. translating it literally (as long as it sounds natural to target readers);*
- (ii) Changing it into a simile;*
- (iii) Substituting it with an equivalent metaphor in the target language;*
- (iv) Keeping the same metaphorical image, and adding an explanation making the ground of similarity explicit; and*
- (v) Translating it by a paraphrase" (Maalej, 2002:4).*

This study employs Maalej's (2002) strategies with the aim to find out to what extent the application of these helps ensure accurate interaction between the original Arabic socio-cultural contexts and the translated text, and to what extent these strategies compensate for potential loss of meaning, which seems inevitable in the translation of the Qur'an.

The theory that there is interaction between metaphor and culture (Kövecses, 2002, 2006) will be utilized to discuss and analyze translations of a selection of Qur'anic conceptual metaphors in this

study. Whether conceptual metaphors in the Qur'an are universal, culture-specific, or culturally overlap will also be considered in the analysis of the selected verses in this study.

There are many scholars who discuss the central role of culture in conceptual metaphors (Lakoff & Kövecses, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In recent years, there has been greater interest in the study of metaphorical-cultural interface. Kövecses (2006) argues that there are many universal metaphors in addition to "simple" or "primary metaphors" (Kövecses, 2006:156-157). He clarifies that the reason why conceptual metaphors resemble or differ cross-culturally, saying; "The universality or near-universality of metaphor implies that the realization of metaphor occurs in all or most of the languages of the world" (Kövecses, 2006:155-156). Nevertheless, he also argues that "similar metaphor realizations can occur between languages" (Kövecses, 2006:163). The latter are not essential for universal realizations. Kövecses attributes this similarity to the fact that certain "similar conceptual metaphors [are] evolving 'by accident' in the respective languages" (Kövecses, 2006:156). In addition, it [i.e., similarity] has occurred through borrowing from one language to another or "the implication of some sort of universal motivation or understanding that is realized in the metaphors of the cultures" (Kövecses, 2006: 156-157).

#### 4. Aims and Objectives

This study will analyze a selection of translation problems associated with transferring Qur'anic metaphorical expressions from Arabic into English. The analysis utilizes an integrated approach that is based on Mandelblit's Cognitive Translation Hypotheses (CTH) (Mandelblit, 1995), the strategies involving the translation of metaphor as adopted by (Maalej, 2002; Maalej, 2008) and the concept of "cultural variation" by (Kövecses, 2002, 2006). This type of theoretical fusion will provide a wide-ranging approach to the analysis of conceptual metaphors in the Qur'an.

#### 5. Method and Data Collection

This study uses a mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis; both quantitative and qualitative data are used. The study is qualitative in the sense that it describes some challenges of translating conceptual metaphors in the Qur'an. The analysis is primarily based on the eclectic cogno-translational approach described above. The metaphorical expressions under investigation were taken from various chapters of the Qur'an. These selections are then investigated using translations by two renowned translators, namely Yusuf Ali and Laleh Bakhtiar.

Both translations are all readily available online.<sup>1</sup> The former translation represents a more classical approach to translating the Qur'an. The latter represents a modern and more gender-inclusive approach to translation and interpretation of the meanings in the text. Due to the untranslatability of religious texts such as the Qur'an, and the difficulty of interpreting certain subtle nuances of some allegorical and metaphorical expressions, different authentic classical and modern exegeses of the Qur'an have been consulted in order to minimize potential misinterpretation.

Based on rhetorical and stylistic studies of the Qur'an, this study has identified the most common and frequent Qur'anic metaphors. A parallel corpus, which includes the source metaphors and their parallel translations, was compiled. In total, the corpus includes 105 metaphors in two translations. A snapshot of the compiled corpus appears in figure 1.

---

<sup>1</sup><https://bit.ly/3jM33sO>

رقم الآية الكريمة	الآية الكريمة	Laleh Bakhtiar's Translation	Ali's Translation
7	ختم الله على قلوبهم وعلى سمعهم وعلى أبصارهم غشاوة ولهم عذاب عظيم	God sealed over their hearts and over their inner hearing and a blindfold over their inner sight. And there is a tremendous punishment for them.	Allah hath set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a veil; great is the penalty they (incur).
10	في قلوبهم مرض فزادهم الله مرضاً ولهم عذاب أليم بما كانوا يكفرون	In their hearts is a sickness. Then, God increased them in sickness, and for them is a painful punishment because they had been lying against themselves.	In their hearts is a disease; and Allah has increased their disease: And grievous is the penalty they (incur), because they are false (to themselves).
16	أولئك الذين اشتروا الضلالة بالهدى فما ربحت تجارتهم وما كانوا مهتدين	Those are those who bought fallacy for guidance, so their trade was not bettered nor had they been ones who are truly guided.	These are they who have bartered Guidance for error: But their traffic is profitless, and they have lost true direction.
17	مثلهم كمثل الذي استوقد نارا فلما اضاءت ما حوله ذهب الله بنورهم وعزّكهم في ظلمات لا يبصرون	Their parable is like a parable of those who started a fire. Then, when it illuminated what was around it, God took away their light and left them in shadows where they perceive not.	Their similitude is that of a man who kindled a fire; when it lighted all around him, Allah took away their light and left them in utter darkness. So they could not see.
27	الذين يتطعون عند الله بين يديهم ويقولون إنما يوصل وينقصن في الأرض أولئك هم الخاسرون	those who break the compact of God after a solemn promise and sever what God commanded that it be joined and make corruption in and on the earth. Those, they are the ones who are losers	Those who break Allah's Covenant after it is ratified, and who sunder what Allah Has ordered to be joined, and do mischief on earth: These cause loss (only) to themselves.

Figure 1: A Snapshot of the Qur'anic Metaphors Corpus

The corpus was then exported to *Dedoose*, a Computer-assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQADAS). The entire corpus was then codified in line with this study's theoretical and conceptual framework described in section 3. A chart of co-occurrence of codes and their statistics appears in figure 2.

Codes	Codes										Totals		
	DMC	Literal translation of metaphor	Metaphor as simile	Paraphrase	Questions	Ali's Translation	Laleh Bakhtiar's	الآية الكريمة	SMC/DW	SMC/SW		Substituting metaphor by an	Transliteration and explanation
DMC		50	1	53		54	64				14		236
Literal translation of metaphor	50			1		61	58		4	66			240
Metaphor as simile	1			1		5	2			6			15
Paraphrase	53	1	1			32	32		7	4			130
Questions													
Ali's Translation	54	61	5	32					4	47	9		212
Laleh Bakhtiar's	64	58	2	32					11	31	13		211
الآية الكريمة													
SMC/DW		4		7		4	11				3		29
SMC/SW		66	6	4		47	31				5		159
Substituting metaphor by an	14					9	13		3	5			44
Transliteration and explanation													
Totals	236	240	15	130		212	211		29	159	44		

Figure 2: The Codification of Data in *Dedoose*

The data in figure 2 was then exported to *Microsoft Excel* for additional data visualization and quantitative data analysis.

For the purpose of qualitative analysis of the two translations in section 6 below, the following procedures were followed:

1. The source text in which a metaphor appears is transliterated and glossed, and the translations (Translation 1 and 2) are provided.
2. The translated conceptual metaphors which are deemed problematic are underlined.
3. In each case of a problematic metaphor, the first number in the bracket refers to the Qur'anic surah (chapter) and the second refers to the number of the 'ayāt (verse).
4. The *Sahih Bukhari* transliteration style, which is readily available online,<sup>2</sup> was used to ensure consistency of transliteration of Arabic into Latin script.
5. The metaphorical images or expressions in the verses are classified and explained according to the noted cogno- translational approach.
6. Suitable translation strategies are provided for problematic metaphorical expressions as suggested by Maalej (2002,2008).

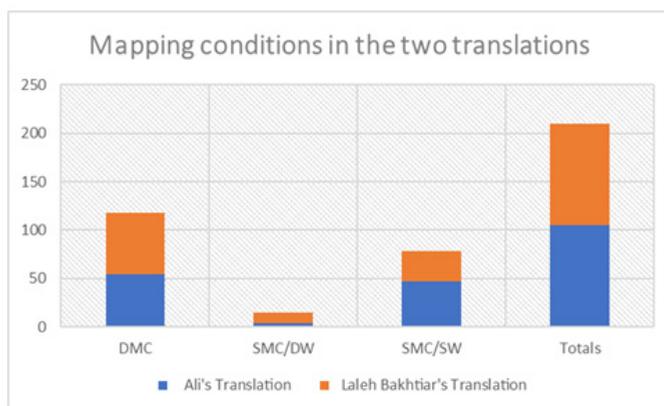
## 6. Discussion

The translation of selected Qur'anic conceptual metaphorical expressions in the corpus has shown that the two translators have used both different mapping condition (DMC) and similar mapping condition (SMC) strategies, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** DMC and SMC in the two translations

	Ali's Translation	Laleh Bakhtiar's Translation
DMC	54	64
SMC/DW	4	11
SMC/SW	47	31
Totals	105	105

The above results are represented in the graph in figure 3.



**Figure 3:** Mapping conditions in the two translations.

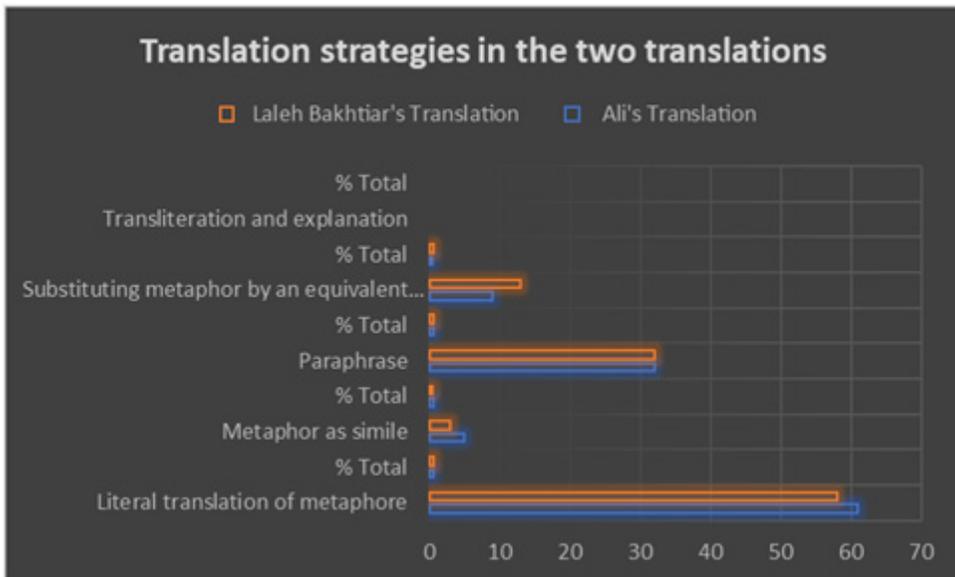
<sup>2</sup> <https://bit.ly/3byIwWo>

As for the strategies adopted in the two translations for rendering conceptual metaphors in the corpus, the literal translation of metaphors tops the list of strategies applied by both translators, followed by paraphrasing, substitution, and the translation of a metaphor as a simile, respectively, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Strategies of translating metaphors in the two translations

	Ali's Translation	Laleh Bakhtiar's Translation
Literal translation of metaphor	61	58
% Total	51,26%	48,74%
Metaphor as simile	5	3
% Total	62,50%	37,50%
Paraphrase	32	32
% Total	50,00%	50,00%
Substituting metaphor by an equivalent metaphor in TL	9	13
% Total	40,91%	59,09%
Transliteration and explanation	0	0
% Total	#DIV/o!	#DIV/o!

The above data is represented in the graph in figure 4.



**Figure 4:** Translation strategies in the two translations

The following sections are qualitative analyses of the translations of conceptual metaphors in five 'ayāt, which have been randomly selected from our corpus. These five metaphors are 'the sealed hearts of the sinners', 'the supreme seat of God', 'Grey hair is a flaming fire', 'the Unseen is a lofty unclimbed mountain' and 'Sinners are thirsty cattle'.

### 6.1 Sinners' hearts are sealed

Translation (1)	Translation (2)	Source Text + Transliteration
God hath set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a <u>veil</u> ; great is the penalty they (incur).	God sealed over their hearts and over their inner hearing and a <u>blindfold</u> over their inner sight. And there is a tremendous punishment for them.	ختم الله على قلوبهم وعلى سمعهم وعلى ابصارهم غشاوة ولهم عذاب عظيم. (7:2) <i>Khatama Allāhu 'Alá Qulūbihim Wa 'Alá Sam'ihim Wa 'Alá 'Abṣārihim Ghishāwatun Wa Lahum 'Adhābun 'Aẓīmun.</i>

The Qur'anic verse above is a clear example of what is known in Arabic rhetoric as *isti'ārah tamthīliyah* or representative metaphor. The rendition of the metaphor by the two translators shows that the metaphor in Arabic and its English translation have the same mapping. The scheme is therefore one of a similar mapping condition (SMC) even though the two translators have used different phrasing. Hence, the translation is straightforward, and the task of the translator is easier (Mandelblit, 1995). The source and target domains share some similarities. This is what Evans and Kövecses called "the partial nature of mapping" (Evans, 2006; Kövecses, 2010a).

Both translations have transferred the same metaphorical concept of *khatama*, rendered as "set a seal" and "sealed". The two translations are in line with the classical interpretations of the verse. Ibn Jurayj interpreted *khatama Allāhu 'alá qulūbihim* as (Allah has set a seal on their hearts". He further noted that the seal is placed on the heart and in the hearing.<sup>3</sup>

In the first translation, the word *ghishāwatun* has been translated as "veil", which is defined in the *Cambridge Dictionary* as "a piece of thin material worn by women to cover the face or head".<sup>4</sup> It is clear then that the word "veil" in English does not preserve the subtle nuances of the Qur'anic word *ghishāwatun*. It is entirely unrelated to the main idea of the ST concept which literally translates as "covering", or any type of layer that covers the eyes. A blindfold, in the second translation, on the other hand, is defined by the *Free Dictionary* either as "a bandage for covering the eyes" or "something that obscures mental or physical vision"<sup>5</sup>. The translation of *ghishāwatun* as "blindfold" sounds closer, though still not an exact match with the ST concept.

As for the strategy used in both translated texts, literal translation has been used. Thus, the same metaphorical image of the ST is retained.

### 6.2 God's Supreme Seat extends over the heavens and the earth

Translation (1)	Translation (2)	Source Text+ Transliteration
His <u>Throne</u> doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Highest, the Supreme (in glory).	His <u>Seat</u> encompassed the heavens and the earth, and He is not hampered by their safe keeping. And He is The Lofty, The Sublime.	وسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ (255:2) <i>Wasi`a Kursiyuhu As-Samāwāti Wa Al-'Arḍa Wa Lā Ya'ūduhu Ḥifẓuhumā Wa Huwa Al-'Alīyu Al-'Aẓīmu.</i>

*Wasi`a kursiyuhu as-samāwāti aa al-'arḍa* is known as *isti'ārah taṣrīhiyah* (lit. explicit metaphor) in Arabic rhetoric. The scheme follows the different mapping condition (DMC) in both translations, which is indicated by the absence of identical cognitive mapping of the source language expressions *Wasi`a kursiyuhu*. It is apparent that the literal translations in both English translations (1+2) have communicatively failed to maintain the same metaphorical mapping of the original text. This variation in the conceptualization of metaphor across cultures is a major translation challenge and a

<sup>3</sup> <https://bit.ly/2F65Eia>

<sup>4</sup> <https://bit.ly/2ZoVHTj>

<sup>5</sup> <https://bit.ly/2Ds7vNV>

manifestation that some Qur'anic metaphors are culture-bound.

To solve the problem of the differences in both cognitive domains and to avoid the clash with the target culture, a footnote or "an explanation making the ground of similarity explicit" (Maalej, 2002: 4) can be added. However, such explanation should not interrupt the flow and coherence of the text (El-Hassan & Al-Said, 1989).

*Kursiyuhu* literally means 'the footstool' which can never retain the subtle nuances of the original and thus it does not make sense in this context. This magnificent verse describes Allah's Existence, Sovereignty, Supremacy and Knowledge. Therefore, the metaphorical meaning of the original should be carefully retained in the target language. *Kursiyuhu* has been translated by many as 'throne' (Yusuf Ali, Pickthal, Arberry and others). However, it was translated as 'Knowledge' by Shakir and as 'Power' by Muhammad Asad. On the other hand, some translators (e.g. Khan) have opted for the foreignization of the term and they have just transliterated it as *kursi*. Therefore, the exact meaning of *kursi* differs from one translation to another. Each translator's choice for one translation over another is based on the exegesis and/or interpretation of the Qur'an he/she used as a point of reference. In *Tafsir Al-Jalalyan*, for instance, the above verse was interpreted as "His throne subsumes the heavens and the earth". Other exegetes of the Qur'an provide 'dominion and sultanate' as meanings for *kursi* [Tafsir al-Baghawi, 2:255]<sup>6</sup>. Had the translators transliterated the expression *Wasi'a kursiyuhu as-samawati wa al-arda* and supplemented their translations with a footnote or an explanation to clarify the meaning for the target reader, it may have been helpful. It is difficult to find a similar target language conceptual metaphor for this expression, because it is deeply rooted in the Arabic-Islamic culture and faith. Differences in mapping interlingually are inevitable.

### 6.3 Grey hair is a flaming fire

Translation (1)	Translation (2)	Source Text+ Transliteration
Praying: "O my Lord! infirm indeed are my bones, and the hair of my head doth <u>glisten</u> with grey: but never am I unblest, O my Lord, in my prayer to Thee!	He said: My Lord! Truly, I—my bones became feeble and my head became <u>studded</u> with greyness of hair and I be not disappointed in my supplication to Thee, O my Lord.	قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّي وَاشْتَعَلَ الرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا وَلَمْ أَكُنْ بِدُعَائِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا. (4: 19) <i>Qāla Rabbi 'Innī Wahana Al-'Aẓmu Minnī Wa Ashṭa`ala Ar-Ra'su Shaybāan Wa Lam 'Akun Bidu`ā'ika Rabbi Shaqīyāan.</i>

There is an explicit metaphor in *ashta`ala* and implicit metaphor in *shaybāan*. The scheme in this example is a different mapping condition (DMC) in both translations, because the cognitive mapping of the source language expressions of *wa ashta`ala ar-ra'su shaybāan* is not instantiated. According to Kovecses, there must be "a set of systematic correspondences between the source and target domain" (Kovecses, 2002:6) to understand the conceptual domain of Arabic in terms of what the English conceptual domain implies. The English translation does not fully reproduce a plausible matching metaphor. The context of this metaphor concerns the prophet Zakaryah when he was praying for Allah to grant him children in his old age. It is an earnest supplication requesting children using the metaphor *wa ashta`ala ar-ra'su shaybāan*.

In Translation 1, *wa ashta`ala ar-ra'su* has been rendered as "the hair of my head doth glisten". The translator has therefore rendered *ashta`ala*, which can be better translated as 'flare up' as 'glisten'. Glisten is defined in *The Cambridge Dictionary* as 'to shine by reflecting light from a wet or smooth surface'.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the first translation converts the metaphor into sense or paraphrases it but it overlooks the subtle nuance of the Qur'anic word *ashta`ala*, which eloquently shows how speedily his hair went grey.

In Translation (2), *wa ashta`ala ar-ra'suis* has been translated as "my head became studded with

<sup>6</sup> <https://bit.ly/3bv4Akm>

<sup>7</sup> <https://bit.ly/32XFGpt>

greyness of hair". The reference to *ashta`ala* as 'studded' does not retain the force of the source text. 'Studded' is defined in the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* as 'decorated with a lot of studs or small jewels etc.'<sup>8</sup>. Hence, the translation provides a completely different image to the term *ashta`ala*. That is, "studded" does not imply that the "grey hair has spread" throughout the head, as if it is like a spark of fire that spreads through firewood.

It seems that none of the translators kept the same metaphorical image, rather, they have paraphrased it and thus, produced a different type of mapping in a different domain.

#### 6.4 The Unseen is a lofty unclimbed mountain

Translation (1)	Translation (2)	Source Text+ Transliteration
Has he <u>penetrated</u> to the Unseen, or has he taken a contract with (God) Most Gracious?	Pursued he the unseen, or took he to himself a compact from The Merciful?	(78:19) أَطَّلَعَ الْغَيْبَ أَمْ انْخَدَعَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمَنِ عَيْدًا. 'Āṭṭala`a Al- <i>G</i> hayba 'Am <i>A</i> ttakhadhha `Inda Ar-Rahmāni `Ahdāan.

There is an implicit metaphor in '*Āṭṭala`a al-ghayba`am attakhadhha`inda Ar-Rahmāni`ahdāan*. The absence of identical conceptual metaphors in the target (e.g. English-speaking) culture compelled the two translators to adopt different mapping condition schemes. That is, the two cultures conceptualize the idea of '*Āṭṭala`a al-ghayba* differently. These infrequencies in using different conceptual metaphors can be interpreted as a dissimilarity in conceptualization between English and Arabic languages and cultures. Kövecses (2005:293) elaborated on this point that the "variation in metaphor conceptualization or culturally-specific instantiations are resulted from differential experiences of people".

'*Āṭṭala`a al-ghayba* implies that gaining knowledge of the unseen is parallel to climbing and exploring a lofty high mountain.

In the first translation, '*Āṭṭala`a al-ghayba* has been translated into "penetrate to the unseen", which is not appropriate in this context. In fact, the word 'penetrate' means 'to enter something and pass or spread through it'<sup>9</sup>. It may also mean 'to probe or infiltrate'.

Pursue in "pursued he the unseen" in Translation (2), on the other hand, means "find out about or be involved in something"<sup>10</sup>.

Both translators have paraphrased the metaphorical expression of '*Āṭṭala`a al-ghayba* which resulted in an inadequate translation that does not retain the force of the original metaphorical expression. The problem can be attributed to the lack of identical cognitive mapping of the SL expression in the TL.

#### 6.5 Sinners are thirsty cattle

Translation (1)	Translation (2)	Source Text+ Transliteration
And We shall drive the sinners to Hell, like thirsty cattle driven down to water.	And We will drive the ones who sin to hell, <u>herding</u> them.	(86:19) وَنَسُوقُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ وُرْدًا. <i>Wa Nasūqu Al-Mujrimīna `Ilā Jahannama Wirdāan</i>

There is a representative metaphor in *wa nasūqu al-mujrimīna`ilā jahannama wirdāan*. While the first translation has adopted the strategy of a similar mapping condition with different wording, the second has opted for the different mapping condition. The metaphor in the first translation has been translated into a simile; "like thirsty cattle driven down to water", which is acceptable in the sense that its theme is related to the conceptual metaphor of the source text, rather than 'herding' in the second translation.

<sup>8</sup><https://bit.ly/2EYveWH>

<sup>9</sup> <https://bit.ly/3lQs6gk>

<sup>10</sup> <https://bit.ly/3jMDEzq>

The second translation has used 'herd' which is defined by *the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* as "a group of animals of the same type that live and feed together".<sup>11</sup> The translation "herding them" does not maintain the same conceptual metaphor in *nasūqu al-mujrimīna 'ilā jahannama wirdāan. Wirdāan*, means either 'thirsty' or 'a watering place'.

The first translator has changed the conceptual metaphor into a simile, which may be more acceptable to the TT readers. The second translator, on the other hand, has translated the conceptual metaphor via paraphrase, and thus has omitted *wirdāan*, insufficiently converting the Qur'anic metaphorical expression.

## 7. Conclusion

This study is primarily based on a cogno-translational approach to translation which combines the cognitive translation hypothesis (CTH) (Mandelblit, 1995) with some theoretical aspects from Maalej (2002, 2008) and Kövecses (2002-2005). This study has compared the source text metaphors to the translations to find out whether the translations meet Mandelblit's schema of a similar mapping condition (SMC) or different mapping condition (DMC). The findings of the study can be summarized as follows:

1. The language of the Qur'an is typically metaphorical, and most of its metaphors are quite conceptual.
2. Most of the conceptual metaphors under study have been literally translated into English, which is frequently inaccurate. However, English and Arabic do not always share the same conceptualizations in general texts, let alone sensitive texts like the Qur'an. Therefore, the conceptualization of some Qur'anic metaphorical expressions is lost in translation.
3. This study revealed that culture is a crucial factor in Qur'anic translation, which concurs with Kövecses, who emphasized that metaphors are "culture- and language-dependent" (Kövecses, 2010:198). As a result, most of the Qur'anic metaphors do not have plausible equivalents in English.

## References

- Al-Ali, A., El-Sharif, A., & Alzyoud, M. S. (2016). The functions and linguistic analysis of metaphor in the Holy Qur'an. *European Scientific Journal*, 12(14).
- Al-Hasnawi, A. R. (2007). A cognitive approach to translating metaphors. *Translation Journal*, 11(3).
- Alhusban, A. M., & Alkhwaldah, M. (2018). Meaning construction of selected Quranic metaphors. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 10(6), 134-148.
- Allan, K. (2009). *Metaphor and metonymy: A diachronic approach*. Blackwell Pub.
- Al-Saggaf, M. A., Yasin, M. S. M., & Abdullah, I. H. (2013). Cognitive meanings in selected English translated texts of the Noble Qur'an. *QURANICA-International Journal of Quranic Research*, 4(1), 1-18.
- Al-Sowaidi, B. S. A. (2011). *Textuality in near-synonyms translations of the Holy Qur'an into English*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa.
- Crofts, M. (1982). Classification of metaphors. *Notes on Translation*, 90, 16-17.
- Dickins, J. (n.d.). Two models for metaphor translation. *Target*, 17(2), 227-273.
- Dobrovolskij, D., & Piirainen, E. (2005). *Figurative language: Cross-cultural and cross-linguistic perspectives*. Brill.
- Dobrzyńska, T. (1995). Translating metaphor: Problems of meaning. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 24(6), 595-604.
- Eldin, A. A. T. S. (2014). A Cognitive metaphorical analysis of selected verses in the Holy Quran. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 4(6), 16.
- El-Hassan, S., & Al-Said, M. (1989). Lexical issues in translating the Qur'an into English: Obstacles and suggested solutions. *International Journal of Islamic and Arabic Studies*, 6(2), 45-57.
- Eweida, S. (2007). *The realization of time metaphors and the cultural implications: An analysis of the Quran and English Quranic translations*.
- Fauconnier, G., & Turner, M. (2008). *The way we think: Conceptual blending and the mind's hidden complexities*. Basic Books.

<sup>11</sup> <https://bit.ly/3h3tdW9>

- Fernández, E. S. (2011). Translation studies and the cognitive theory of metaphor. *Review of Cognitive Linguistics*, 9(1), 262–279.
- Fernández, E. S. (2013). The impact of cognitive linguistics on descriptive translation studies: Novel metaphors in English-to-Spanish newspaper translation as a case in point. In A. Rojo and Iraide Ibarretxe-Antuñano (Eds.), *Cognitive Linguistics and Translation: Theoretical and Applied Models* (pp. 159–198). Mouton de Gruyter Berlin/New York.
- Ghazala, H. S. (2012). Translating the Metaphor: A cognitive stylistic conceptualization (English–Arabic). *World Journal of English Language*, 2(4), 57.
- Gibbs Jr, R. W., & Steen, G. J. (1999). *Metaphor in cognitive linguistics: Selected Papers from the 5th International Cognitive Linguistics Conference, Amsterdam, 1997* (Vol. 175). John Benjamins Publishing.
- Hassanein, M. (2019). *Conceptual metaphors in the Holy Qur'an: A cognitive linguistic approach* (doctoral dissertation). The University of Suez.
- Iranmanesh, A., & Kulwinder Kaur, G. S. (2010). A cognitive approach and the translation strategies used in the subtitling of metaphors in three American movies. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Translation and Multiculturalism: Found in Translation a Common Voice in a Multicultural World*. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: University of Malaya. Retrieved November, 18.
- Kövecses, Z. (2002). *Metaphor: A practical introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Kövecses, Z. (2005). *Metaphor in culture: Universality and variation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kövecses, Z. (2006). *Language, mind, and culture: A practical introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Kövecses, Z. (2008). Universality and variation in the use of metaphor. *Selected Papers from the 2006 and 2007 Stockholm Metaphor Festivals*, 51–74.
- Kövecses, Z. (2010). Metaphor, language, and culture. *DELTA: Documentação de Estudos Em Lingüística Teórica e Aplicada*, 26(SPE), 739–757.
- Lakoff, George, & Kövecses, Z. (1987). The cognitive model of anger inherent in American English. In D. H. Herring (Ed.), *Cultural models in language and thought* (pp. 195–221). Cambridge University Press.
- Lakoff, George, & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago.
- López, A. M. R., & Llopis, M. Á. O. (2008). Conceptual metaphors and translation: A comparative study of metaphors in English and Spanish financial reports. In P. S. Hernández (Ed.), *Researching and teaching specialized languages: New contexts, new challenges* (pp. 424–434). Servicio de Publicaciones.
- Maalej, Zouhair. (2011). Ideological and non-ideological metaphors: A cognitive-pragmatic perspective. *Metaphor and Cognition*, 97–122.
- Maalej, Zouhair. (2008). Translating metaphor between unrelated cultures: A cognitive-pragmatic perspective. *Sayyab Translation Journal*, 1, 60–81.
- Mandelblit, N. (1995). The cognitive view of metaphor and its implications for translation theory. *Maastricht: Universitaire Pers*, 3, 483–495.
- Mehfooz, M., & Ashraf, R. (2017). Libās (Garment) metaphor in Holy Qur'an: A conceptual metaphorical analysis. *Pakistan Journal of Islamic Research*, 18(1).
- Mohammad, Q. A. Zoubi, Mohammed, N. A. A., & Ali, R. A. (2007). Cogno-cultural issues in translating metaphors. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, 14(3), 230–239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09076760708669040>
- Nokele, A. B. B. (2015). *Translating conceptual metaphor in Mandela's Long Walk to Freedom: A cross-cultural comparison*. University of South Africa (UNISA).
- Safarnejad, F., Ho-Abdullah, I., & Awal, N. M. (2014). Cultural basis of metaphors translation: Case of emotions in Persian and English. *Asian Social Science*, 10(7), 107–118.
- Schäffner, C. (2004). Metaphor and translation: Some implications of a cognitive approach. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 36(7), 1253–1269.
- Searle, J. R. (1975). The logical status of fictional discourse. *New Literary History*, 6(2), 319–332.
- Shokr, M. B. (2006). The metaphorical concept “life is a journey” in the Qur'an: A cognitive-semantic analysis. *Linguists List J*, 10, 94–132.
- Steen, G. (2010). *A method for linguistic metaphor identification: From MIP to MIPVU* (Vol. 14). John Benjamins Publishing.
- Turner, M., & Lakoff, G. (1989). *More than cool reason: A field guide to poetic metaphor*. University of Chicago press.