

Investigating the Translation of Arabic Conventional Implicatures into English

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Abstract

This paper examines the translation of Arabic conventional implicatures into English exemplified with synonymy and terms of address in two genres: religious (Quranic) texts and literary texts. The objective is to explore the conventional implicated meanings in Arabic cognitive synonyms and address terms which pose difficulties to translators. The data of the study consists of 12 excerpts drawn from Arabic source text and their 12 counterpart excerpts from the English translation. In case of conventional implicatures triggered off by synonyms, the study reveals that the translation of these implicatures depends mainly on the purpose behind their contextual use. If they are used to communicate certain implicated meaning as is the case in religious texts, conveying their inner meanings in translation becomes a necessity. For conventional implicatures triggered off by address terms, translators need to pay attention to their multi-dimensional semantics which are determined by the conventional meaning of the expressions uttered. In both cases translators are urged to use communicative and /or formal translation methods in order to emphasize and convey the message intended by the SL text.

Keywords: Translation Studies, Conventional Implicature, Terms of Address, Synonymy, Communicative Translation.

Introduction

In the literature about pragmatics, implicature is defined as a pragmatic inference (any conclusion that one may draw from a sentence or an utterance) that goes well beyond the literal meaning of utterances and thus resides at some level in the context of

utterance. In other words, it is somewhere in the deep structure of the semantic representation of certain utterances. Lyons says that implicature “rests upon a distinction between what is actually said and what is implied (but not entailed) in saying what is said” (1977: 592). He maintains that in any semantic unit or utterance, there are two realities: One is the linguistic reality which is the mere words of it, and the other is what lies behind the language from two perspectives. One perspective is that of the speaker, and the other is that of the addressee. For example, if we take “it is cold in here” (ibid: 593), the linguistic items “it, is, cold, in, and here” constitute one entity and the other entity depends on the context of utterance outside language. Therefore, the linguistic items, the context of utterance and the principle of co-operation can produce the other reality intended here (the heating should be turned up). So, the gap between what is said (linguistic entity) and what is conveyed (not said) is what we call implicature.

Grice (1975) divides implicature into two major types: Conversational implicature and conventional implicature. Conversational implicature, which is not the concern of the present study, is a special kind of pragmatic inference which lies outside the structure of language. It is context-dependent and is derived from general conversational principles or maxims (Simons 2017). In conventional implicature, on the other hand, “the conventional meaning of the words used will determine what is implicated, besides helping to determine what is said. What is conventionally implicated is part of the meaning force of the utterance” (Grice 1975: 6). In other words, this type of implicature arises from conventional features of the words used in an utterance and it includes all non-truth aspects of what is conveyed by an utterance solely due to the words or forms the sentence contains (Huang 2014). It is closely allied to what is said in the strict sense, at least in that the same clause can determine either the truth conditions of a sentence or a set of conventional implicatures. For example, in (1) below, the clause “that Bill is a linguist” enters into the evaluation of the truth of the sentence but in (2) it does not. In Grice’s system, example (2) would be considered true in case the proposition “that Bill is a linguist” “is surprising regardless of whether that proposition is true or false (Sadock 1978: 282):

1. It is true that Bill is a linguist.
2. It is surprising that Bill is a linguist.

Levinson argues that conventional implicatures are non-truth conditional inferences that are not derived from superordinate pragmatic principles like the maxims but are simply attached by convention to particular lexical items or expressions (1983: 127). Levinson notes that “Oh” as an initial particle in an utterance conventionally implicates that some news has been received and recognized. This particle, says Levinson, has no propositional content that could be analyzed truth-conditionally. He also notes that a very large number of deictic expressions seem to have conventional implicature as a central meaning component. This, argues Levinson, is true as discourse-deictic items as in (1) and social deictic items as in (2) (when used in address):

1. However, moreover, besides, anyway, well, still, furthermore, although, oh, so
2. Sir, madam, mate, your honor, sonny, hey, oi

Levinson (129) cites two French pronouns “vous” and “tu” as a case in point as these two pronouns do not signal any difference in truth conditions, but they differ in the expressed social relationship between speaker and addressee. For instance, using “vous” to a singular addressee conventionally implicates that “the addressee is socially distant from or socially superior to the speaker.”

The present study discusses the translation of two classes of Arabic conventional implicatures into English, namely synonymy and terms of address. It attempts to translate these conventional implicatures in their literary and religious context to show their implicated meanings which are attached to their semantic forms. The study also shows that the meaning of Arabic conventional implicatures is multi-dimensional and it, therefore, should be handled in English translation based on the linguistic meaning of these expressions in their actual context of use as will be shown below in illustrative examples.

Research Methodology

This descriptive qualitative study explores the translation into English of some Arabic conventional implicatures exemplified with synonyms and terms of address and identified by the authors as posing difficulties to translators of Arabic texts into English. Some of these synonymous expressions and social honorifics are considered in extracts taken from literary and religious texts. Some of the examples are taken from the late Egyptian novelist and Noble Prize winner Naguib Mahfouz's (1947) *Zuqaq al-Midaq* and translated into English by Le Gassick (1975). Other extracts are taken from the Holy Quran and translated by Arberry (1986). This significant selection of data from two different sources (sacred and literary texts) is intentionally done to serve the purpose of the study; conventional implicatures of Arabic synonyms and terms of address are clearly exhibited when these expressions are used in literary and religious texts; they generate conventional implicated meanings in these text types, which might be challenging to translators.

In synonymous conventional implicatures, we mainly deal with cognitive (collocable) synonyms which encapsulate conventional meanings in their actual context of use. In terms of address, I deal with absolute and relational terms of address whose implicated meanings in their immediate context are conventional. We cite each example in its Arabic context followed by its English translation. For ease of reference, all examples are bold typed in both the Arabic and English texts. In some cases, where the renditions of the aforementioned translators fail to convey the intended implicature, we suggest our own translation of these conventional implicatures in light of their context of use.

Purpose of the Study

Translations from Arabic into English and vice versa are fraught with difficulties and problems. One of the areas where translators may encounter difficulties is that of translating Arabic conventional implicatures into English. Little in-depth research has been done on the topic within the Arabic Translation Studies and the few articles that address Arabic conventional implicatures remain limited. This study, therefore, aims to address the existing gaps in Arabic

conventional implicatures studies and provides in-depth analysis of the translation of two categories generating these implicatures, namely synonymy and terms of address. It describes the different implicated conventional meanings of these implicatures in their literary and religious texts and presents translators with strategies to overcome the problem under discussion. In particular, the study shows how Arabic cognitive synonyms pose difficulties when translated into English and it distinguishes between absolute and relational terms of address and their translation into English.

Furthermore, the assessment of how professional translators (Le Gassick 1975 & Arberry 1986) have translated these conventional implicatures is examined in relation to three translation equivalences: formal (semantic translation), functional, and ideational (communicative translation). In essence, formal equivalence aims to faithfully replicate the form and meaning of the original text as closely as possible (Nida 1964: 159). On the other hand, functional equivalence seeks to find the nearest natural equivalent to the message in the source language (Nida 1966). Adding to the formal vs. functional equivalence dichotomy, Farghal (1994) introduces the concept of “ideational equivalence”, which focuses on capturing the underlying idea independently of formal and functional constraints. It emphasizes the communicative meaning of an utterance rather than its formal and functional correspondence in the target language.

Limitations of the Study

The primary focus of this study is the translation challenge of Arabic conventional implicatures into English. The purpose of the study is to raise awareness among translators regarding the presence of implied meanings within synonymous expressions and terms of address that can be inferred from their semantic content. Our objective extends beyond providing model translations for the study’s data; instead, we believe that addressing the broader issue would be more beneficial in practical terms. Consequently, the collected data is considered a representative sample, which is utilized to highlight the specific problem and primarily serves to illustrate the difficulties involved in translating Arabic conventional implicatures into English.

Arabic Synonyms as a Class of Conventional Implicature

Synonymy has been examined and defined differently by various authors. According to Palmer (1976: 88), synonymy refers to “sameness of meaning.” Lyons defines synonymous lexical items as those that possess “the same sense” (1977: 446). However, Lyons also emphasizes that for these items to be truly synonymous, they should be interchangeable within a sentence without altering their conceptual meaning. For instance, in the sentence “we found the boys hiding in the shed”. the word “discover” could be substituted with “find” without changing the overall meaning. However, in the sentence “Sir Alexander Fleming discovered Penicillin in 1928”. “find” cannot be replaced with “discover” (cf. Jackson 1988: 65).

The concept of synonymy has sparked debates among European and Arab linguists. In the English language, two contrasting perspectives on synonymy exist: the strict view and the flexible view. The former categorically denies the existence of synonymy, while the latter asserts that any two words sharing at least one sense can be considered synonymous (Preyer 2018). Similarly, in Arabic, there are two opposing camps of scholars when it comes to the notion of synonymy: those who outright reject it and those who embrace it (cf. Al-Saleh, 1960: 292-301). The proponents of the first camp support their stance by arguing that words sharing at least one common semantic component should be categorized as attributes rather than synonyms.

Accordingly, the lexical items *jawād* (lit. fast horse), *aḍham* (lit. completely black horse) are attributes rather than synonyms of *ḥiṣān* (lit. horse). The second team, however, acknowledges the presence of synonymy and recognizes the subtle distinctions among synonymous lexical items.

A compromise stance is taken by several scholars, including Palmer (1976), Larson (1984), Cruse (1986), and Shunnaq (1992). They acknowledge the presence of synonymy in language, but they also argue against the existence of “real”. “identical”. “absolute “or” total” synonyms. Cruse (1986), for instance, asserts that absolute synonyms are non-existent, and even if they do exist, they are extremely rare. He further states that “there is no obvious motivation for the existence of absolute synonyms in a language and one would

expect either that one of the items would fail into obsolescence, or that a difference in semantic function would develop” (ibid: 270).

Shunnaq (1992: 24) categorizes synonymy into five levels based on a scale of similarity. The first level corresponds to antonymy, indicating opposite meanings. The second level comprises near-synonyms, which are words that are almost synonymous but not entirely so. Contextual synonyms make up the third level, consisting of two similar lexical items that can be interchangeable in certain contexts. The fourth level, which is the primary focus of this study, involves cognitive synonyms. To qualify as cognitive synonyms, two conditions must be met: they must be syntactically identical (e.g., noun + noun, adj + adj) and preserve truth conditions (Cruse 1986). Edmonds and Hirst (2016) define cognitive synonyms as words that, when substituted within a sentence, maintain their truth conditions but may alter the expressive meaning, style, or register of the sentence. The Arabic synonymous lexical items examined in this study (examples provided below) fall into this category. The final level is absolute synonymy, characterized by two lexical items sharing an exactly identical meaning.

Hummer argues that a more precise distinction between lexical items should be based on evidence from corpora (2014: 148). Analyzing corpus data allows for insights into the degree of synonymy in terms of shared or exclusive contextual conditions, as well as the preferred contexts for each synonym option. Therefore, studying synonyms in real contexts is crucial, as a word’s meaning emerges from a combination of its context-independent core meaning and explicit differences compared to its synonyms. Consequently, when selecting the appropriate word for a specific situation, one must carefully consider the distinctions between all available options, aiming to convey the desired implicature while avoiding unintended implications. Achieving an exact translation becomes challenging, as each translation possibility may overlook certain senses or convey undesired meanings. Thus, faithful translation requires a sophisticated process of selecting the most suitable or closest synonym provided by one language for a word in another language, considering the particular context (cf. Edmonds & Hirst 2016). The challenge with cognitive synonyms is that they exhibit a strong “synonymy effect” (cf. Hino et al. 2002) and they

often appear to be absolute, making it difficult to grasp their subtle distinctions in meaning.

Examples and Discussion

Having discussed the problem of synonymy in related theoretical works above, let us examine the problems involved in translating Arabic cognitive synonyms into English. To start with, let us consider the following synonymous pair in their literary context:

1. Mādha yukhabi' lahu al mustaqbal wa mādha yaḍmir lighulāmehi?! Ishtada behi al **qanūṭ** wa ḍā'afa qanūṭuhu mā lāha fī wajhi al mua'llim min al jaza' wa al iṣrār (Zuqaq al Midaq, p.10).

What could the future hold for him and how could he provide for his son? A feeling of **despair** seized him and increased in intensity when he saw the look of regretful determination on Kirsha's face (Le Gassick's translation, Midaq Alley, p.7)

2. Wa-btuliya bifaqdi al 'abnā' falam yabqā lahu walad 'ala kathrati mā khalafa min al aṭfāl. dhāqa marārati alkhaybati ḥatā 'utri'a qalbuha **bilya's** (Zuqaq al-Midaq, p12).

Besides, he had been afflicted with the loss of his children and now none remained, although he had several. He had tasted the bitterness of disappointment so much that his heart almost overflowed with a **despair** that nearly choked him (Le Gassick's translation, Midaq Alley: 8)

The implied conventional meaning of the cognitive synonyms provided in examples 1 and 2 indicates a sense of hopelessness and sadness. Ibn-Manzour (1970), an Arab lexicographer and rhetorician, highlights that the Arabic term *qanūṭ* is employed to denote a state of complete and utter despair, even in relation to positive things. In other words, *qanūṭ* carries a stronger suggestion of hopelessness compared to *ilya's*. Therefore, if a translator aims to stay more faithful to the source language (SL) text, they can utilize ideational equivalence and translate *qanūṭ* as "total or complete despair."

Indeed, it is essential to consider the *skopos* (purpose or intention) of the usage of synonyms with conventional implicated meanings during the translation process, as emphasized by Reiss et al. (2014). According to Cruse (1986), synonyms are employed to elucidate the meaning of another lexical item. Observe the use of “dismiss” below in clarifying the meaning of “cashier”:

“He was cashiered, that is to say, dismissed” (ibid: 267).

However, Newmark (1981) discusses additional purposes for employing synonyms. They are utilized to maintain the coherence of the text and prevent repetition. Furthermore, synonyms can occasionally offer supplementary remarks about the subject matter. Consider the following example:

“Palestine is a small country-it is the Holy Land” (ibid: 103).

Synonymy serves another purpose in literary writing by adding aesthetic value and evoking emotions within the text. Consequently, translators should demonstrate flexibility when dealing with synonymous expressions and should not insist on complete congruence between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) when encountering difficulties in finding an exact equivalent term in the TL. Instead, they should first examine the broader context in which the synonymous expressions are used, considering whether they primarily serve the purpose of redundancy, as often observed in political texts (cf. Shunnaq 1992). Since synonyms in Arabic serve various purposes, translators should consider multiple translation options. Specifically, they can choose between formal, functional, and ideational equivalence. When synonymous expressions are employed to convey specific implicated meanings or to enhance the emotive quality of the text, as frequently seen in religious texts in general and the Holy Quran in particular, the translator should, if feasible, opt for communicative translation to convey the conventional implicated meaning of each synonymous expression. Farghal’s (1994) concept of Ideational Equivalence can also be valuable in this regard. Farghal suggests that when translators become aware of this type of equivalence, it can broaden their translation choices and help avoid awkward or unnatural

expressions, thereby facilitating the successful rendering of terms like *qanūṭ* as “total or complete despair”.

Le Gassick (1975) regards the cognitive synonyms *ilya's* and *qanūṭ* as absolute synonyms and uses “despair” as an equivalent for both terms. In doing so, Le Gassick neutralizes the conventional implicatures of these synonymous expressions, suggesting that he does not perceive a necessity to reflect their implicated conventional meaning in translation within this specific context. It appears that Mahfouz uses the synonymous pair *ilya's* and *qanūṭ* in the given context to avoid repetition and enhance the cohesiveness of the text. Essentially, for stylistic reasons, he avoids repeating the word *qanūṭ*. It is unlikely that Mahfouz intends to convey the conventional meaning of *qanūṭ*; thus Le Gassick's translation of the pair as “despair” is congruent. When translating Arabic cognitive synonyms that generate conventional implicatures, translators should rely on their intuition, considering the situational context (cf. Halliday 1988). Shunnaq (1992: 25) further emphasizes the challenge of translating Arabic cognitive synonyms with conventional implicatures and underscores the importance of intuition in the translation process:

To translate Arabic cognitive synonyms into English could be misleading because of the slight differences which could not be conveyed through the translation process, i.e. nuances, tones, attitudes, etc. If we insist on complete equivalence for the SL and TL items to be synonymous, there will be no translation in most cases. Therefore, the best criterion would be the intuition of a native Arabic speaker, who is supposed to judge such differences better.

Now, let us delve into the topic of successive or collocable cognitive synonyms. These are pairs of synonymous words in Arabic that often appear together. I want to emphasize from the beginning that such pairs of synonyms are typically employed for the purposes of emphasis, style, and aesthetics, rather than further clarifying the conventional implicated meaning. Their function is to embellish the text and evoke emotions. Usually, the second word in the synonymous pair is introduced to create an engaging rhythm within

the text, which is challenging to replicate in translation. When translating such strings of successive cognitive synonyms, Shunnaq (1992: 27) argues that a direct parallel coupling in translation may be unnecessary and might even appear redundant. As these collocated cognitive synonyms heavily rely on the context in which they are used, translators should initially examine the broader context to determine whether they are employed merely for emphasis and aesthetic purposes or if they convey subtle differences and convey specific implicated meanings. Translators should rely on their intuition to assess whether it is necessary to reflect such differences in their translation. When dealing with these cognitive synonyms, translators often find themselves torn between producing faithful renderings or ensuring the natural flow of the translation in the (TL).

For more clarification, consider the synonymous pair in the following example:

3. Eshtaghala fī bid'i ḥayātihi tamurjiyan liṭabīb 'snān fī al jamāliya fafaqiha fanahu bihathqihi wa bar'a fih! wa qad ishtahara biwaṣfātihi almufīda wa in kāna yufaḍil alkhal' ghaliban ka'ḥsan 'ilāj wa rubama kāna khal'u alḍirs fī 'yadatihi almutanaqila '**alīman mūji'an**, illā 'anahu rakhīṣ (Zuqaq al-Mīdaq, p. 8).

Dr. Booshy began his professional life as assistant to a dentist in the Gamaliya district. He learned by observing the dentist's skill and so became proficient himself. He was well known for the effectiveness of his prescriptions, although he generally preferred extraction as the best cure! His roving dental surgery would no doubt have been considered **unbearably painful** were it not for the fact that his fees were so low (Le Gassick's translation, Mīdaq Alley: 5).

Apparently, the bold-typed Arabic synonymous pair is used in this context for emphasis and to make the meaning more comprehensive. Put differently, in using this pair in this particular context, we do not think that the writer (Mahfouz) wants to communicate to the reader the fine shades of meaning which exist between '*alīman* and *mūji'an* but rather he intends to make his text more emotive. The pair is also used by the writer to stress the meaning and to maintain a rhythmic

beauty, which is exhibited in the use of nunation. Arabic tolerates the use of collocable synonyms more than English and therefore it is not necessary to render a string of synonyms in Arabic into a string of synonyms in English since such a practice may render our translation redundant or even awkward (cf. Shunnaq 1992). Le Gassick's (1975) translation (unbearably painful) reflects the writer's implicated meaning, namely that the process of rooting out a tooth in that inexperienced dentist's clinic is so painful. The difference in meaning between *'alīman* and *mūji'an* is so subtle and there is little information in Arabic books concerning the difference. Ibn Manzour (1970) mentions a clearer account when he says that the word *'alīman* very often collocates with the Arabic word *al'adhab* (lit. torture), while the word *mūji'an* is frequently used with the word *almarad* (lit. illness). According to Ibn Manzour (1970), in Arabic we usually say *al'adhabu mūji'an* (lit. Torture is painful), especially God's painful torture and *almarad 'alīman* (lit. Sickness is painful). We may conclude from this that *'alīman* is stronger than *mūji'an* in suggesting pain. However, I do not think translators should try to reflect such fine shades of meaning in their translation in this particular context. All what they need to do is to reflect the pair's overall implicated meaning by resorting to ideational equivalence. Thus, Le Gassick's (1975) translation "unbearably painful" is congruent.

Sometimes collocated cognitive synonyms are figuratively or metaphorically used. To clarify, witness the example below:

4. marhaban ya zuqaq **alhanā wa 'als'ādah**. Dumta wa dama ahluka al'ajilā' ya lihusni hādha almandhar, wa yā lijamāl hā'ula' alnās. māthā arā?! hādhehi Husniya alfaraneh jālisa 'ala 'atabati alfurun kalzakība 'aynan 'ala al'rghifa wa 'aynan 'ala Ji'dah zawjuha (Zuqaq al-Midaq: 29).

"Hello, street of **bliss!**" Long life to you and all your fine inhabitants. What a pretty view and see how handsome the people are! I can see Husniya, the bakeress, sitting like a big sack before the oven with one eye on the loaves and one on Jaada, her husband (Le Gassick's Translation, Midaq Alley: 23).

The synonymous pair *'als'ādah* and *alhanā* are used in the above extract to describe the miserable “Midaq Alley” in Cairo. Here the writer does not really mean that this poor side street in Cairo which consists of a few shops and homes is flourishing but he is in fact being ironic and sarcastic by saying that about Midaq Alley. In such cases, translators face a double-edged problem. They have first to figure out the pair’s conventional implicature and then decide on whether to retain that metaphoric, ironic meaning in their translation (Shehab 2016). Ibn Manzour (1970) maintains that the word *alhanā* in Arabic has to do with the psychological feeling of the person and it lasts longer than *'als'ādah*. Moreover, *alhanā* is something one receives without doing any hard work or exerting any effort. As for *'als'ādah*, Ibn Manzour says, it is limited and is usually felt when one’s needs are met or his wishes are achieved. It might not be easy to find a word in English which can be used to reflect the implicated meaning of *alhanā*. In this case, a translator should manage the situation and use his/her common sense in order to come up with a word that may be deemed a reasonable rendering of *alhanā*. As for Le Gassick (1975), he uses only the word “bliss” as an equivalent for both *'als'ādah* and *alhanā*. Apparently, the use of *'als'ādah* and *alhanā* in our context is meant to emphasize the great happiness Midaq Alley enjoys (ironically speaking) and we may not need to use two different words in English to gloss the meaning of the synonymous pair. Hence Le Gassick’s (1975) “bliss” is a reasonable rendering of these collocable synonyms. However, my intuition tells me that using a parallel coupling in this particular context such as “bliss and happiness” does not seem redundant and it sounds natural in English. I have to mention also that Le Gassick’s rendering should be praised because he encloses his translation within inverted commas and uses an exclamation mark to alert the reader that an ironic meaning is intended by the writer. Newmark (1988) argues that it is quite preferable, when translating ironical utterances, to use inverted commas and/or an exclamation mark in order to alert the readership. Accordingly, *'als'ādah* and *alhanā* could be best translated into something like “bliss and happiness!”

To shed more light on the translation of collocable synonyms, let us consider the following synonymous pair:

5. fakfaharra wajh ‘alshā’er wa dhakara maḥsūran ‘ana qahwat “karsha” ākhīr mā tabaqā lahu min alqahwat ‘aw min ‘asbab alrizq fī dunyāh, ba’da jāhin ‘arīd qadīm. wa bil’amsi alqarīb istaghnat ‘anhu kadhalik qahwat alqal’a. Umr ṭawīl wa rizqun munqati’ famādha yaf’al bihayāteh?! wa mā jadwa talqīn ebnuhu albā’s hādha alfān wa qad **bāra wa kasada** (Zuqaq al-Midaq: 9).

The old man’s face clouded and he remembered sadly that Kirsha’s cafe was the only one left to him and, indeed, his last source of livelihood and one which had served him well. Only the day before, the Castle cafe had sent him away. Old as he was, and now with his living cut off, what was he to do with his life? What was the point of teaching his poor son this profession when it **had died like this**? (Le Gassick’s translation, Midaq Alley: 6).

Ibn Mazour (1970) mentions that the word *kasada* is used in Arabic when we find no market for merchandise. That is to say, the products are available but they sell badly. The word *bāra*, he maintains, has to do with a dead stock or trade which has become unprofitable and hence ceased to exist. It is clear from our context that the writer wants to emphasize that the art of saying poetry ceased to have currency among the people of Midaq Alley; listening to a radio replaced listening to poets. The writer could have used only the word *kasada* to reflect this implicated meaning, but he injected the word *bāra* into the text to emphasize the meaning and make it more emotive. I do not think there is a need for translators in this context to maintain the subtle differences which exist between *kasada wa bāra* in their translation. They should worry about the writer’s overall intended implication and reflect it in their rendering resorting to ideational equivalence. Le Gassick’s (1975) acceptable ideational translation below indicates that he realizes the writer’s intended meaning:

It had died like this.

However, other suggested equivalents would be something like the following:

This art is no longer alive and kicking.

This art had become useless and futile.

We turn now to synonymous words in Quranic texts. Consider examples 6 and 7 below:

6. allāhu aladhī yūrsilu **alriyāḥ** fatuthīru saḥāban fa yabsutuhu fī ‘alsamā’ kaifa yashā’u wa yaǰ’aluhū kisafan fatarā lwadqā yakhruju min khilālīhī fa idhā aṣāba bihī man yashā’u min ‘ibādihī idha hum yastabshirūn (Surah 48, Ar-Rum)

Allah is He Who sendeth the **winds** so that they raise a cloud and then spreadeth it along the heaven as He will and breaketh it into fragments, and thou beholdest the rain come forth from the intestines thereof (Arberry’s (1986) translation, Surah 48, Ar-Rūm).

7. wa ammā ‘ādun fa ‘uhlikū bi **rīḥin** ṣarṣarin ‘ātiyah (Al-Haqqah, Surah 6).

And as for A’ad, they were destroyed by **a wind**, furious, roaring (Arberry’s translation, Surah 6, Al-Haqqah).

Although the synonymous pair *alriyāḥ* (lit. winds) and *alrīḥ* (lit. a wind) are not absolute synonyms, we have observed that Arberry (1986) translates them into “winds” and “a wind”, respectively. Arberry’s inadequate translation fails to convey the intended implicatures encapsulated in the two synonymous lexical items. In a non-religious context, using “winds” as an equivalent to *alriyāḥ* or *alrīḥ* is acceptable as both words have almost the same sense in both Arabic and English. Their conventional implicature in Arabic and English is about winds that move or stir up the clouds and send down rain. However, since we are dealing with a Quranic text where slight differences of lexical items do count, it could be more faithful if we translate *alriyāḥ* ideationally into something like “blessed winds”. “Blessed” is added to the translation because the conventional implicature here is that these winds are needed for having rain. The other synonymous word *alrīḥ* is used in Quranic texts to conventionally implicate torment and destruction. This implicated meaning should be reflected in a sacred text like the Holy Quran. Consequently, it can be translated ideationally as “fierce, deadly wind” or functionally as “gale”.

Quranic synonymous verbs can also be problematic for translators when used in a Quranic text. Witness the following example:

8. fakaifa idhā aṣābathum muṣībatun bimā qaddamat ‘aydīhim thumma jā’ūka *yahlifūna* billāhi in aradnā ‘illā ‘ihsānan wa tawfīqā (Surah 62, An-Nisa).

How then, when some ill befalleth them because of that which their hands have sent forth and then they come to thee *swearing by Allah*: we meant naught save kindness and concord (Arberry’s translation, Surah 62, An-Nisa).

9. ‘ahā’ulā’il ladhīna *aqsamtum* lā yanāluhum Allāhu birahmah; ‘udkhuḷū al Jannata lā khawfun ‘alykum wa lā ‘antum tahzanūn (Surah 49, Al-A’raf).

Are these the ones of whom ye *swear* that Allah would not reach them with His mercy? Unto them it hath been said enter the Garden; on you shall come no fear nor shall ye grieve (Arberry’s translation, Surah, 49, Al-A’raf).

Arberry (1986) wrongly uses the verb “swear” as an equivalent to the synonymous pair *aqsamtum* (lit. You swore) and *yahlifūna* (lit. They swore). In all contexts in the Holy Quran and as it is evident in the above context, *yahlifūna* generates a conventional implicature of breaking the oath and it is usually ascribed to hypocrites who usually swear with the intention of breaking their promise. *Aqsamtum*, on the other hand, conventionally implicates honest, sincere oaths which are not broken. Thus, such a difference should be accounted for if we choose to be faithful to our translation. Since there is no correspondence in English to capture this subtle difference between the two synonymous pair, we may resort to ideational equivalence as an outlet. Hence, the two verbs can be translated into something like “they untruthfully swear” for *yahlifūna* and “you truthfully swore” for *aqsamtum*.

Before concluding this section, we would like to provide a brief overview of the challenges that arise when translating English cognitive synonyms into Arabic. It is worth mentioning that the difficulties faced by translators when rendering Arabic synonyms into English are, to some extent, similar to those encountered when

translating English synonyms into Arabic. This can be attributed, in part, to the presence of the “synonymy effect” regardless of whether the synonymous pair is in Arabic or English. However, unlike Arabic, English may offer a clearer distinction between the subtle differences among the members of a synonymous pair. So, the main challenge in translating English cognitive synonyms into Arabic lies not in discerning the shades of meaning between them, but rather in finding suitable equivalents in Arabic. Unlike English, Arabic tends to employ an abundance of synonyms, as noted by the Arab rhetorician Al-Suyūṭy, who mentions numerous synonyms for specific words such as “the sword” and “honey.” This suggests the existence of what can be referred to as “extended” cognitive synonyms in Arabic. When it comes to translation, many translators may struggle to capture the slight distinctions that may exist among these extended cognitive synonyms. Consequently, some translators may opt to provide the conceptual, denotative meaning of the synonymous words in their translation, which can result in incongruity, particularly in literary and religious texts. Additionally, when translating English successive synonyms into Arabic, it is important for translators to retain the word-strings involving two or more synonyms in the Arabic translation. Ideally, a parallel coupling in translation can be employed to preserve the aesthetic value of the original text. It is noteworthy that Arabic offers a wide array of synonyms, allowing translators to have multiple options to choose from. However, when translating from Arabic to English, the situation is different. In most cases, translators are not encouraged to maintain word-strings involving multiple synonyms in the English translation. In fact, a parallel coupling in English “may be unnecessary and may even look redundant” (Shunnaq 1992: 27). Shunnaq also emphasizes that in such cases of synonym proliferation, the two or three constituents collectively convey the overall meaning. Therefore, translators should focus on grasping the intended implied meaning that the writer aims to convey when using successive cognitive synonyms and strive to convey that specific meaning in their translation.

Arabic Address Terms as a Class of Conventional Implicature

Terms of address are “words and phrases used for addressing” (Braun 1988: 7). They are words attached to the person to show his/her status, position, and/or rank in society. The use of these terms is “governed by the relationship between two participants the speaker and the hearer” Nevala (2004: 25). Moreover, the speaker’s option for using a certain term of address instead of another is highly predictable from three parameters: speaker-addressee social status, the type of relationship that holds between participants in a speech event and the level of formality imposed by the situation (cf. Potts 2005).

Interestingly, terms of address are studied in light of their linguistic, social and cultural function. Levinson (1983: 63) states that “in many languages, distinctions of fine gradation between the relative ranks of speaker and addressee are systematically encoded throughout... [such terms]”.

Therefore, these terms have a significant role in any language, for they show different levels of relations, relations that might be marked with familiarity, politeness, formality, superiority, intimacy, etc. Terms of address “have been viewed mainly in terms of power and solidarity”. Power involves relations like “older than”, “parent of”, employer of”, “richer than”, “stronger than”, “nobler than”, etc, and solidarity involves relations as “attend the same school”, “have the same parents”, “practise the same profession” etc. (Brown 2011: 10). Thus, these two parameters determine the choice between familiar and respectful terms of address in language. For instance, the choice between the first name *John* and the family name with the social honorific *Mr. Brown* when addressing or referring to the same individual is a matter of power and solidarity (Brown 2011). The more equal and intimate the speaker is to him, the more he/she would call him John and the less equal and more distant he/she is to him, the more he/she would call him Mr. Brown. Therefore, the choice between first name and honorificized family name operationally depends on the type of social relationship between the speaker and addressee or referent. Likewise, the tu/vous distinction (cf. Levinson 1983) in French has direct bearings on the power-solidarity parameter. Levinson explains that the use of plural “vous”

to address one individual conventionally implicates the power of the addressee, i.e. the addressee is socially superior to the speaker, while the choice of “tu” minimizes the power of the addressee and at the same time promotes intimacy and solidarity between speaker and addressee. Thus, the more intimate the speaker is to the addressee, the more he/she would opt for using familiar term(s) of address, and the more distant he/she is to him, the more he/she would opt for using respectful ones.

It is important to note that terms of address come under two types: absolute and relational (Levinson 1983). Absolute terms are “forms reserved for authorized speakers and authorized recipients” (ibid: 90). So, in absolute usages, the addressee earns the right to receive one title of address over another. In other words, a term of address is issued in light of real present qualities assigned to the addressee (at the time of speaking). Accordingly, in Arabic, *duktūr* (lit. doctor) is absolutely used (in Levinson’s sense) provided that the addressee has a PhD or a medical doctor.

On the other hand, relational terms of address are not used to mark the real present qualities ascribed to the addressee, but rather, they are used merely for social purposes. More importantly, relational terms of address have drifted from their denotational signification and acquired a new connotational usage, which is initiated for social purposes. For example, in Arabic, the use of the term *‘ustādh* (lit. professor) by, say, waiters or salesmen to customers, as an expression of respect is relational, whereas the use of the same term by a student to his/her teacher in a school is absolute. Hence, relational terms of address are more difficult to translate than absolute ones since they drift from their traditional usages by acquiring new conventional implicatures and their content cannot be understood from their literal meanings. Once these implicatures are determined in a certain context, they become fixed and unchanged (i.e. conventional) as will be clarified below in ample examples.

Examples and Discussion

In examples 10 and 11 below, three informal honorifics *‘ustādh* (lit. professor), *mu’allim* (lit. teacher), and *si-ssayyid* (lit. sir) are used:

10. thumma wamaḍat ‘aynahu albaraqatān baghtatan wa ṣāḥ:
alwaqār ‘anfas ‘āha!
fas’alahu alrajulu mutahayiran:
mādha ta’ni ya *‘ustādh*?!
fankafa’a wajhu Zeita ghaḍaban wa ṣāḥa behi muhtaddan:
‘ustādh? ‘asami’tani ‘aqra’u ‘ala alqubūr (Zuqaq al- Midaq:128).

After a while he suddenly blinked his eyes and shouted,
“Dignity is the most precious type of deformity there is!”
“What do you mean, **reverend Sir**?” asked the old man,
somewhat perplexed.
Zeita’s face clouded with anger as he shouted,
“**Reverend Sir!** Have you ever heard me reciting at burials?” (Le
Gassick’s translation, Midaq Alley: 120).

11. qad qara’a ‘assayyid alḥusainy fī ‘aynayhi nisf
almughmaḍatayn alṭam’nīnah faqāla lahu bihudū’
mubtasiman:
sharrafit dārna ya **mu’allim**
farafa’a almu’alim yadayhi ‘ila ‘amāmatihī wa qal:
sharrafa Allahu qadaruqa ya **si-ssayyid** (Zuqaq al-Midaq: 96).

Hussainy read what was in the man’s half-shut eyes, and, filled
with quiet selfassurance, he politely commenced:
“You have honored our house with your presence, **Mr. Kirsha.**”
The cafe owner raised his hands to his turban in salutation and
said:
“May God reward you for your goodness, **Mr. Hussainy**” (Le
Gassick’s translation, Midaq Alley: 85).

Whereas *‘ustādh* in example 10 above is relationally used (again
in Levinson’s sense) for it does not denote its traditional usage,
mu’allim is absolutely used where the speaker addresses an owner of
a café house (called Kirsha) to show respect, politeness and

superiority of the addressee. The term *mu'allim* in Egyptian Arabic is usually used to address a foreman, a driver, a work supervisor, a chief of workers, etc. The term *'ustādh* can be used in Arabic to address a person who is superior to the speaker. Thus, the two terms, more often than not, conventionally implicate the superiority of the addressee and the relative inferiority of the speaker.

It should be noted that the term *mu'allim* occurs many times throughout the novel. Le Gassick (1975) adopts three strategies in his attempt to convey this title in English. He resorts to paraphrasing it into (Café owner), using a conventional title of address (Mr.) which can be used for any person irrespective of his/her job, and skipping it. Such inconsistency in the translation of the same form of address obliges us to examine its context as it might be acceptable to have all these translations in different contexts and for variation purposes e.g., stylistic reasons. In his rendering of *mu'allim* in example 11 above, Le Gassick (1975) opts for the second strategy, i.e., he provides a formal and conventional title of address (Mr. Kirsha). By so doing, Le Gassick does not reflect the intimate relationship that holds between the speaker and addressee, for “Mr.” plus a proper name marks a formal and distant relationship in English and does not necessarily show that there is a personal relation holding between the speaker and the addressee. However, the term *mu'allim*, which refers to (Kirsha), who is the manager of a café house and supervises the workmen in it, can be best translated into “boss”.

As for the term *'ustādh*, the analysis of the data demonstrates that Le Gassick seems to be aware of the fact that the term is not used in its traditional, absolute sense since he translates it into Reverend Sir. The use of “reverend” by Le Gassick is meant to highlight the speaker’s polite attitude toward the addressee as well as his deference. Parkinson (1985:131) says that there are three typical uses of the term *'ustādh* in Egyptian Arabic. The first usage “involves the use of any high term to attack an addressee who does not deserve to receive it”. Hence sarcasm arises. The second usage, however, involves the name calling mode, as opposed to the strict vocative mode. In the vocative mode, Parkinson argues, the term *'ustādh* has some pragmatic discourse function such as getting

attention, making turn changes, indicating who the addressee is, etc. In the name-calling mode, no such pragmatic functions exist. The term is only used to imply that the addressee has the qualities associated with the word; that is, the term is used in the name calling mode whenever the speaker thinks that the addressee is doing something masterly. For example, *'ustādh* can be used to address a Sheikh (old religious man) who recites the Quran masterly. Finally, the third usage is meant for secondary and elementary school teachers. In Levinson's (1983) system, the first two usages are relational, whereas the last (third) one is absolute.

We can argue that *'ustādh* can be best translated into "past master", since the addressee (called Zaita) is a past master at his job (deforming people by cutting their limbs). However, I should add that *'ustādh* as a relational term of address may furnish a possible ironical interpretation. Going back to our context above, one can assume that the speaker (a man seeking to deform his body in order to be able to work as a beggar) is being ironic by relaying an impolite illocutionary act (insulting) in a seemingly polite way. This is what Leech (1983) calls being offensive in an apparently friendly way; the speaker uses a high term *'ustādh* to attack the addressee (Zaita) who does not deserve to receive it. That is why the addressee in our example above becomes angry for being called *'ustādh*.

Likewise, the honorific term *si-ssayyid* in example 11 above is hard to render because of the title of respect *si*, which might be a short form of *sayyid*. It is important to note that the second part of the term (i.e. *sayyid*) might be ambiguous when it is used alone as a title of address. It might be understood as a name of a person, thus referring to a low-class addressee or as a title of address meaning "Lord or Sir", thus referring to a male addressee who is superior to the speaker or to one who is generally equal to the addressor. The title of address *si-ssayyid* conventionally implies different implicatures depending on its context. It could refer to a man who is the head of a family or group, or to a respected and experienced senior man in a family. Sometimes it is used by a wife when addressing her husband. The term in our example merits the second interpretation since it is used as a title of address to refer politely to a respected senior man in the novel (called Radwan Al-Hussainy).

In the analysis of the data, Le Gassick, throughout the novel, uses different translations for the term. He uses “Mister” but in English, the use of “Mr.” alone as a title of address shows offence towards the addressee and does not reflect the intimate relationship that holds between speaker and addressee. To quote Parkinson (1985: 157) “it appears that a translator would often be ill-advised to translate English “Mr.” into “Sayyid” in Egypt, unless the goal is to offend the addressee”. Le Gassick also uses the addressee’s family name prefixed by the title “Mr.” (Mr. Hussainy). This translation deprives the SL text from its informality. However, based on the conventional usages of the term in Egypt, an appropriate rendering of the term could be something like “Patriarch Si-Ssayyid”, or “House Master”.

Other titles of address which present much difficulty in translation for Le Gassick are *u’stah* and *‘afandī* as in example 12 below:

12. qad sa’lnaha yawman a’n alshāb alladhī ra’aynahu ma’ahā
faqālat:

khaṭībī ...ṣāhib ṣalūn ḥilāqah!

wa qālat linafsiha ‘anna ‘ayyat waḥidatun minhunna latu’idu nafsaha sa’īdatan ‘idha khatabahā ṣabi qahwah a’w ḥaddād wa hādha ṣāhib dukkan *u’stah* wa *‘afandī* ‘ayḍan (Zuqaq al-Midaq, p.108).

One day they asked her about the young man “whom they had seen with her” and she had replied:

“He is my fiancé.... He owns a barbershop!”

She asked herself which one of them would not consider herself lucky to become engaged to a cafe waiter or blacksmith’s apprentice. Indeed, he was the owner of a shop, definitely *middle-class*. Moreover, *he wore a suit* (Le Gassick’s translation, Midaq Alley: 98).

These two terms *u’stah* and *‘afandī* do not lend themselves readily for adequate English translation, for they have no direct equivalents in English. The term *u’stah* is borrowed from Persian language and it is a colloquial term for *‘ustādh*; it is used in Arabic as a title for some artificers and could mean master; foreman; overseer; it is also

a form of address for those in lower callings, e.g., to a cab driver, coachman, etc. Parkinson (1985: 141) says that *'ustādh* means “master” (in the master/apprentice relationship) and refers specifically to those professions related to some craft or mechanical (usually hand) skill. In our example, the term refers to a hairdresser and the speaker is proud and boasts that the addressee (her fiancé) is a hairdresser. In terms of translation, Le Gassick’s rendering shows that he misreads the term and provides a nonsense translation, which reads as “middle-class”. However, the term *u'stah* can be translated into “a craftsman”.

Unlike *u'stah*, which is used in absolute sense in our example, *'afandī* is used relationally to designate the speaker’s social rank and position. This term means gentleman when referring to non-Europeans wearing western clothes and tarboosh. It is also used nowadays in military jargon to refer to officials whose ranks are either a “first lieutenant” or “second lieutenant”. Such traditional usage is not applied in our example because address forms are always “culturally dependent and change in the course of time as old criteria become obsolete and come to be replaced by new criteria” (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2003: 4). So, the term *'afandī* is used to conventionally implicate the addressee’s respectable position and/or rank. Le Gassick (1975) renders what the term means according to his own understanding into “he must wear a suit”, which is awkward in English. A good translation of this term might be “Effendi”, which implicates the addressee’s good social standing.

Conclusion

The study has shown that synonymy and terms of address in Arabic give rise to conventional implicature since they have conventional meanings in their different religious and literary contexts and these meanings are derived from their semantic form. In the case of synonymy, we have seen, for example, that *alriyāh* and *alrīh* in their Quranic context always conventionally implicate “blessed winds” and “fierce, deadly wind”, respectively. More often than not, translators use formal equivalence in their translation of conventional implicatures in religious texts and thus they fail to

convey the synonyms' implicated conventional meanings which should be reflected in the translation of sacred texts. Translators seem to be inclined to preserve the aesthetic value of the original and attempt to be accurate by being more faithful to the SL text, but by so doing they distort the intended meaning. Translators must be mindful of the intention behind the use of synonyms in a given context. If synonyms are employed to convey specific implied meanings, particularly in literary works and religious texts, translators should prioritize ideational equivalence over formal equivalence. This has been demonstrated in the ideational translation of *līman* and *mūji'an* into "unbearably painful" as well as the rendering of *yahlifūna* and *aqsamtum* into "They untruthfully swore" and "They truthfully swore", respectively.

When dealing with Arabic address terms, translators need to distinguish between two types of usages: absolute and relational. It is important for translators to understand that relational terms of address are used primarily for social purposes, undergo pragmatic shifts in their meaning and have their own fluctuating relational usages. We have noticed that the term "*ustādh*" in our data conventionally implicates "past master" rather than "professor", which is its absolute conventional implicature.

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Transliteration table

UNGEGN

b	=	ب	t	=	ط
t	=	ت	z	=	ظ
th	=	ث	‘	=	ع
j	=	ج	gh	=	غ
h	=	ح	f	=	ف
kh	=	خ	q	=	ق
d	=	د	k	=	ك
dh	=	ذ	l	=	ل
r	=	ر	m	=	م
z	=	ز	n	=	ن
s	=	س	h	=	ه
sh	=	ش	w	=	و
ṣ	=	ص			
ḍ = ض			y	=	ي
‘= ء					
long vowel a			ā		
long vowel i			ī		
long vowel u			ū		

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