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The Effect of Translator's Socio-Cultural Background on Translating Quranic Rhetoric into English

Asst. Prof. Haitham Mahdi Maatooq Al-Tameemi*
College of Arts, University of Basrah, Basrah, Iraq
haithamm1964@gmail.com

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of translators' educational, cultural, and theological backgrounds on rendering Qur'anic rhetoric into English. There is a gap in religious studies (Quranic studies) regarding the effect of translator's educational backgrounds on rendering Quranic rhetoric into English. However, lexical differences among translators are well conducted, the area in which translator's educational merits choices has not been sufficiently investigated. Focusing on key terms such as nafs (soul) and ruh (spirit), as well as verses addressing the People of the Household (Ahl al-Bayt), it employs qualitative comparative textual analysis across multiple translations. Findings show that classical and religiously trained translators prioritize doctrinal fidelity and literal accuracy, while modernist or philosophical translators favor conceptual clarity, ethical guidance, and universality. Contemporary interpreters often balance readability

* **Corresponding Author:** Haitham Mahdi Maatooq, Email: haithamm1964@gmail.com

Affiliation: University of Basrah - Iraq.

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with moral and rhetorical nuance. The study demonstrates that translation is an interpretive act, where lexical choice, explanatory notes, and stylistic decisions are deeply shaped by the translator's socio-cultural and educational context. Understanding these backgrounds is crucial for interpreting variations in meaning, rhetorical effect, and audience's reception in English Qur'an translations.

Keywords: Qur'an Translation, Translator Background, Sociocultural Influence, Ruh

أثر خلفية المترجم على ترجمة البلاغة القرآنية إلى الإنجليزية - منظور اجتماعي ثقافي حول

كيفية تأثير تعليم المترجم على الترجمة

هيثم مهدي معنوق التميمي

كلية الآداب، جامعة البصرة، البصرة، العراق

المستخلص

تبحث هذه الورقة البحثية في أثر الخلفيات التعليمية والثقافية والدينية للمترجمين على ترجمة البلاغة القرآنية إلى الإنجليزية. بالتركيز على مصطلحات رئيسية مثل "الروح" و"الروح"، بالإضافة إلى الآيات الموجهة إلى أهل البيت (عليهم السلام)، تستخدم الدراسة تحليلاً نصياً نوعياً مقارنةً عبر ترجمات متعددة. تُظهر النتائج أن المترجمين القدامى والمتعلمين دينياً يُعطون الأولوية للأمانة العقائدية والدقة الحرفية، بينما يُفضل المترجمون الحداثيون أو الفلاسفيون الوضوح المفاهيمي والتوجيه الأخلاقي والعالمية. غالباً ما يوازن المترجمون المعاصرون بين سهولة القراءة والفروق الأخلاقية والبلاغية. تُظهر الدراسة أن الترجمة فعل تفسيري، حيث يتأثر اختيار المفردات والملاحظات التوضيحية والقرارات الأسلوبية تأثراً عميقاً بالسياق الاجتماعي والثقافي والتعليمي للمترجم. يُعد فهم هذه الخلفيات أمراً بالغ الأهمية لتفسير الاختلافات في المعنى والتأثير البلاغي وتقبل الجمهور للترجمة القرآنية الإنجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ترجمة القرآن الكريم، خلفية المترجم، التأثير الاجتماعي والثقافي، الروح

1.Introduction

Translation is not merely a mechanical process of converting words from one language into another; it is a complex act of cultural negotiation, interpretation, and representation. This complexity becomes even more pronounced when translating sacred texts where linguistic precision, rhetorical beauty, and theological depth converge (Bassnett, 2002). The translator's background (including their education, cultural context, and religious orientation) plays a pivotal role in shaping how Qur'anic rhetoric is rendered into a target language. The Aim of the Study is to analyze how translators' backgrounds affect translation choices in rendering Qur'anic terms, demonstrating the interplay between education, socio-cultural context, and translation strategy.

The Qur'an employs a rich tapestry of rhetorical devices, including metaphors, parallelism, and semantic nuances, which convey spiritual and moral meanings that are often deeply intertwined with the Arabic language and Islamic worldview. Translators, therefore, face the dual challenge of preserving the semantic and aesthetic qualities of the original text while making it comprehensible and meaningful to readers in a different cultural and linguistic context. Variations in translation choices can reveal not only differences in linguistic interpretation but also the subtle influence of the translator's educational background, theological understanding, and cultural sensibilities (Abdul-Raof, 2001).

This study investigates how the educational and cultural backgrounds of prominent translators affect their rendering of key Qur'anic terms and rhetorical expressions into English. By focusing on terms such as *nafs* (soul) and *ruh* (spirit), as well as verses addressing the People of the Household, this research seeks to illuminate the interplay between translator subjectivity and textual fidelity. Through a socio-cultural lens, the study explores how translators' knowledge, beliefs, and experiences shape the English translations of Qur'anic rhetoric, highlighting the intricate relationship between language, culture, and interpretation. The interpretation of the Glorious Qur'an (GQ) is always problematic. Out of these changelings, the interpretation of terms such as "النفس" (*nafs* / soul) and "الروح" (*ruh* / spirit), which carry overlapping but context-dependent meanings. According to Venuti (1995) translators' solutions are relevant to their linguistic, cultural, and ideological frameworks.

Baker (2006) views narrative from social and communication theory, treating narratives across all genres and modes rather than from narratology and linguistics that purely focus on one text. As she puts it, “Narratives in this view are public and personal ‘stories’ that we subscribe to and that guide our behavior. Therefore, narratives have directly to do with personal performance, and identification. Narratives are the stories we tell ourselves, not just those we explicitly tell other people, about the world(s) in which we live. The terms ‘narrative’ and ‘story’ are interchangeable in this context” (2006, p.19). Also, instead of studying story’s` structure, Baker’s narrative account focuses mainly on narratives` function in shaping and representing of social identity (Baker, 2006).

Accordingly, this research is not concerned with the issues of the textual organization of narratives as what is done in narratology. Yet, the study’s stress on the sociopolitical aspect of narrative theory doesn’t necessarily mean to ignore the linguistic aspect of narratives because these two aspects complete each other, and they are interrelated. Also, the social aspect of narratives will not be examined unless their structures are analyzed. Of course, the narrative analyses in the linguistic and social approaches are not the same. In fact, the difference between narratology (or linguistic approach to narrative) and social narrative theory is that in the former case narrative structures are analyzed as the object of study, while in latter approach narratives are examined (although linguistically) in order to show how identity as part of reality is constructed and represented via them.

2 Literature review

2.1 Religious Translation

Linguistics-based approaches towards translation, whose main focus was describing textual forms, ignored the ideological aspects. This kind of deficiency resulted in developing a new trend of research called CDA. advocates, all language use, including translation, is ideological. This area has enjoyed lots of attention and interest over recent decades. The ideology of translation can deal with both process and product of translation. According to Tymoczko (2003), the ideology of translation exists not simply in the translated text, but in the voicing and stance of the translator, and in relevance of the text to the audience who receive it.

With regard to this issue, Schaffner (2003) tried to examine the ideological aspects within the text itself by focusing on both lexical and grammatical level. She concluded that ideology can be extracted from a text by analyzing textual features. The effective role of ideology in defining the translator's intended purpose is absolutely obvious. Based on what Nord (2003) claimed, almost any decision in translation is, consciously or unconsciously, guided by ideological criteria. Many different studies have been conducted regarding particular instances of translation. As an example, Badran (2001) aimed at exploring the relationships between modality and ideology in two different translations of the same political text, one in Arabic and the other in English. He concluded that although both translations seem to present a similar stance to that of the original text, the way in which the central issues were tackled revealed some sort of differences. For instance, the Arabic text was much more cautious considering the extent of damage that could occur when adopting more aggressive method of translation. Besides many articles published in the area of CDA, there are also many dissertations focusing on the same area. Davatgarzadeh (2007) studied the representation of social actors in textbooks. She found that "female social actors were more prominent, expressive and assertive in comparison to male social actors" (Rashidi & Karimi Fam, 2011, p. 116), a piece of finding which was the result of employing van Leeuwen's (1996) framework and Halliday's (2004) transitivity model.

2.2 Features of Religious Texts

Abd-Al- Haleem (2004) shapes that "the Glorious Quran has its own unique style that could be distinguished from other Arabic texts" (qtd. in Maatoq 30). Remarkably, Baker considers that a unique cardinal element is being tackled which is called 'contrast', for instance, day and night, light and dark, paradise and hell, among others. In other words, the Glorious Qur'an is characterized by its unique rhetorical features, which present a formidable challenge for any translator. Its stylistic excellence lies in the intricate use of metaphors, rhythmic patterns, and precise word choices that convey multi-layered meanings. These rhetorical devices are not merely aesthetic; they are deeply intertwined with the theological and linguistic essence of the text. Therefore, a successful translation must go beyond literal meaning to capture the rhetorical force and the communicative intent behind these structures, ensuring that the target audience perceives the stylistic miracle (I'jaz) inherent in the original Arabic discourse. For

Abd-Al- Haleem, "this stylistic feature (contrast) enforces the Islamic message" (qtd.in Maatoq 03). For Iqbal (2013), the artistic mode of the (G.Q) is recognized among other literature writings. It does not look like a poetic construction because of the absence of regular meters (4). Thus, a translator should achieve a sufficient interpretation of the message to enable foreign readers understand the translation (6)"

2.3 Strategies of Religious Translation

Religious translation employs a range of strategies to balance faithfulness to sacred texts with comprehensibility for target audiences. One major approach is literal or formal equivalence, which seeks to preserve the original wording and structure to protect doctrinal accuracy, especially in sacred scriptures (Munday, 2022). In contrast, dynamic or functional equivalence focuses on conveying the intended meaning and effect of the text rather than its exact form, making religious messages more accessible to contemporary readers (Nida & Taber, 1982). Translators may also adopt cultural adaptation (domestication) to align religious concepts with the target culture, or foreignization to retain original religious terms and concepts in order to preserve theological and cultural authenticity (Venuti, 1995). When no direct equivalents exist, transliteration and borrowing are used to maintain doctrinal specificity (Newmark, 1988). Additionally, some religious translations rely on exegetical or commentary-based strategies, incorporating interpretation to clarify complex theological meanings, particularly in Qur'anic and biblical translations (Abdul-Raof, 2005). Finally, Skopos theory emphasizes that the choice of translation strategy depends on the purpose of the translation, whether liturgical, educational, or missionary (Vermeer, 1989; Nord, 1997).

2.4 Culture and Religion

According to Jahn (2025), narrative approach strongly supports the idea that ideology and values determine the structure and content of translated- narrative text. Comparatively, discursive and functional approaches simultaneously look at both communication of meaning and the socially constructed power relations. In both approaches, texts are judged within their own sociopolitical context, and in accordance with the values and good reasons to which texts adhere. Finally, Bassnett (2002) states that translation as a reparation involves more than lingo-textual replacement. It is

“embedded in the cultural and political systems and in history . Basic tenets of cultural turn theories could be tracked in the narrative approach as they are briefly elaborated.

Baker’s own approach to translation is globally recognized as “Narrative approach” (Baker, 2006). Translation is seen as “re-narration” in which source narrative (in different text types like scientific, historic, anthropologic, technical, literary, etc.) is re-framed in another language and culture. Contemplating in the domain of social science, translation is considered as different version of an original narrative that holds different sets of values and orientations due to the socio-cultural setting in which it is produced. As each sociopolitical system follows different set of values, their promoted versions of narratives are intentionally composed. Peculiarity of narratives to their own sociocultural context entails translators to pay special attention to the sociopolitical factors affecting the production and interpretation of narratives in the target language. search problem (Baker, 2006). Different translations of the Qur’an into English often vary not only in style but in choice of words for crucial concepts, influenced by the translator’s educational, cultural, and theological background. This study investigates how these factors shape the rendering of Qur’anic rhetoric, with particular focus on “soul” versus “spirit.” In the same way, Parker (2004) puts identity development in the frame of narrativity. In stories, characters are described, a series of actions are held together by a plot, and they are arranged in a sort of temporal order (Schwandt, 2001). Relying on narratives, Parker scrutinizes narrative identities. She believes that narrative approach to identity is a part of social constructionist approaches. As she emphasizes, “narrative identity is a perspective on identity that suggests that our identities exist through and because of narrative” (Parker, 2004, p. 43).

Visibility of the translator, as suggested by Venuti (1995), can be achieved through the foreignization of the translation. Tymoczko (2000) argues that Venuti has not clearly defined the concept of foreignization and that the criteria for foreignization has also not been established where one could recognize between the foreignization and domestication or how could one draw a balance between these two contradictory concepts and how could one go about it during the act of translation. Unless these concepts are not defined the very act of foreignization cannot be done properly for the methods and clear ways of doing this practice are missing in the arguments of Venuti. “Myskja (2013) argues that the boundaries of foreignization and domestication could

be drawn as Venuti (2008) suggests through different means but the actual issue is that the contradiction between domestication and foreignization cannot be taken as universal standards in the practice of translation all over the world. The literary texts may have such characteristics which could be foreignized or not but it cannot be surely said about any text that it was foreignized completely. In this case, these juxtaposed ideas could not be taken as standards. Venuti (1995) highlights that translators' choices are influenced by their linguistic, cultural, and ideological frameworks".

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study conducts a qualitative comparative analysis to evaluate how translators' educational and socio-cultural backgrounds influence rendering of Qur'anic Ayahs. The research focuses on selected Ayahs showing interpretive challenges, particularly words like "nafs" and "ruh", and passages addressing "Ahl al-Bayt". The analysis tackles lexical choice, explanatory notes, syntactic fidelity, rhetorical style, and intend. The model adopted in this study is a qualitative comparative translation analysis model grounded in descriptive translation studies (DTS) and translator-oriented analysis, informed by Venuti's (1995) concepts of domestication and foreignization and supported by insights from sociolect-cultural and ideological approaches to transitioned audience orientation". While classical tafsīr is acknowledged (especially in Yusuf Ali), the model does not perform full exegetical analysis. Instead, it examines how exegetical assumptions surface within translation choices.

3.2 Data Collection

In this study, data is collected from English translations of the Qur'an by three notable translators: Marmaduke Pickthall, A.Y. Ali, and Muhammad Asad. These translations serve as a primary data source to evaluate how each translator's educational, cultural, and ideological backgrounds influence their rendering of specific Qur'anic verses. The selected verses are from the Qur'an, with a focus on those that present interpretive challenges, particularly words like nafs (soul) and ruh (spirit), as well as passages relating to Ahl al-Bayt (the Family of the Prophet).

2. Model Adopted in This Study

3.2. 1 Translators

1. Pickthall

British convert; classical style, seeks Qur'anic solemnity in English (Western Muslim convert, classical Islamic studies background)

2. Ali, A.Y.

Indian translator; blends classical understanding with accessible English prose. . According to Kidwai (1987) Ali's translation was in better English than any previous English translation by an Indian. "His translation represents the sense of original. The cause behind its popularity is its language and availability. "The status of the commentator is also an attraction that invites the modern generations "(qtd.in Matooq, 2019,p 6).

3.. Muhammad Asad

"Western convert, modernist philosophical approach; emphasizes conceptual clarity and universal applicability (Western convert, modernist Islamic scholar, philosophical approach)".

3.2.2 Justification for approaching multi translators

The study approaches a range of English translations of the Qur'an to investigate how translators' backgrounds affect their rendering of Qur'anic text. Using multiple translators allows for a comparative analysis across diverse educational, cultural, theological, and stylistic frameworks, highlighting how each translator's worldview shapes lexical choice, interpretive strategies, and explanatory notes. Different translators bring varied approaches: some prioritize literal fidelity, others emphasize ethical guidance, or philosophical interpretation. While, contemporary translators may balance readability with doctrinal accuracy. By analyzing a broad spectrum of translations, the study presents a comprehensive realization of the socio-cultural and educational factors affecting Qur'anic translation. This breadth supports the validity of the findings, demonstrating that variations in English renderings are not merely linguistic but deeply influenced by translator identity.

4. Data analysis and discussion

4.1 . القلم /Al-Qalam (68:42)

Although this verse is not about (nafs/ruh) but it is expressed in a style of figurative translation, which may be confused to non-Muslim readers who lack the realization of Arabic language merits.

يَوْمَ يُكْشَفُ عَنْ سَاقٍ وَهُمْ يُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى السُّجُودِ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ يَوْمَ
'iilaa alsujwd fala yastatieun yawman

Translator	English Rendering	analysis	background
Marmaduke Pickthall	On the Day when it will be a stern Day and they will be summoned to prostrate themselves, but they will not be able.	“ <i>yukshafu ‘an sāq</i> ” (“the shin is uncovered”). The metaphorical image is omitted to avoid anthropomorphic implications, and the focus is shifted to the severity of the Day of Judgment.	Pickthall’s translation reflects a Sunni orthodox background and strong theological caution against anthropomorphism. He consistently prioritizes doctrinally acceptable interpretation over preserving Qur’anic figurative imagery.
Yusuf Ali	“The Day that the Shin shall be laid bare, and they shall be summoned to bow in adoration, but they shall not be able.””	Yusuf Ali employs a largely literal translation by retaining the metaphor “ <i>the Shin shall be laid bare.</i> ” He preserves the Qur’anic figurative imagery, allowing the ambiguity of the expression to remain	“Yusuf Ali’s approach reflects a philological and exegetical orientation. Influenced by classical Arabic rhetoric and tafsīr, he balances literalism with interpretation,

Translator	English Rendering	analysis	background
Muhammad Asad	“[It will be] on the Day when man's innermost state will be laid bare, and they will be called upon to prostrate themselves in adoration, but they will not be able.”	<p>in the target text. The theological implications are mitigated through exegetical footnotes, where the phrase is explained metaphorically as a symbol of extreme distress rather than a physical attribute</p>	<p>often relying on extensive commentary to guide readers away from anthropomorphic readings.</p> <p>“A philosophical interpreter who contextualizes the Qur’an for a Western intellectual audience; prioritizes psychological, moral, and existential dimensions over literal lexical meaning”.</p>
		<p>“Interprets <i>sāq</i> as “<i>man's innermost state</i>,” viewing it as the exposure of one’s inner reality on the Day of Judgment; shifts from bodily imagery to .psychological and moral meaning”</p>	

Marmaduke Pickthall’s approach in this verse (Qur’an 68:42) is interpretive and theologically cautious. He avoids a literal rendering of the metaphor “yukshafu ‘an sāq” and instead paraphrases the meaning, emphasizing the severity of the Day of Judgment. By omitting the figurative image, he eliminates any potential anthropomorphic interpretation. This approach reflects Pickthall’s tendency to prioritize doctrinal

acceptability and clarity over preserving Qur’anic imagery, resulting in a translation that conveys the intended sense while reducing rhetorical and metaphorical intensity.

Yusuf Ali’s approach in this verse (Qur’an 68:42) is characterized by measured literalism combined with exegetical guidance. He retains the Qur’anic metaphor “*the Shin shall be laid bare*,” thereby preserving the original rhetorical force and figurative imagery of the source text. Rather than neutralizing or paraphrasing the expression in the main translation, he allows the ambiguity to remain visible to the English reader. At the same time, Yusuf Ali avoids theological misinterpretation through interpretive footnotes, where he explains that the phrase is metaphorical, signifying the severity and terror of the Day of Judgment, not a physical or anthropomorphic attribute. This reflects his broader translational philosophy: faithfulness to the linguistic and stylistic features of the Qur’an, supplemented by commentary to ensure doctrinal clarity

Meanwhile, Asad, (decorated by his philosophical and cross-cultural intellectual formation) interprets the Ayah as “man’s innermost state will be laid bare,” shifting the text toward psychological and moral introspection. His rendering reflects his belief that Qur’anic metaphors often communicate symbolic truths rather than physical realities. Collectively, the three translations demonstrate that Qur’anic translation is inherently interpretive, and that the translators’ ideological, cultural, and scholarly orientations profoundly influence how Qur’anic rhetoric is transmitted into English. Their differing approaches show that translation decisions are inseparable from the translator’s worldview and intended readership, resulting in distinct interpretive outcomes even when translating the same verse.

4.2 لقمان(34) Lukman (wama tadry nafs maadha taksib ghadan wama tadry nafs bi'ayi
 وما تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ مَّاذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ بِأَيِّ أَرْضٍ تَمُوتُ
 ard tamut'(Qur’anic terms “Nafs” and “Ruh

Translator	English rendering	analysis	Background
	“No soul knoweth what it shall earn on the morrow, nor	“Preserves he word <i>soul</i> and uses archaic English to	“British convert to Islam; aimed for a dignified, near-literal

<p>“ Marmaduke Pickthall</p>	<p>doth any soul know in what land it shall die”.</p>	<p>mimic Qur'anic solemnity; maintains lexical closeness to the Arabic”.</p>	<p>rendering that mirrors Qur’anic rhythm and formality”.</p>
<p>Yusuf Ali</p>	<p>“No person knows what is destined for him tomorrow, nor does any person know in what land he shall die”.</p>	<p>“Switches from <i>soul</i> to <i>person</i>, making the verse more general and human-centered; adds interpretive nuance with “destined,” reflecting Qadar”.</p>	<p>“Indian Muslim scholar; known for interpretive, devotional translation with theological commentary intended for English-speaking Muslims”.</p>
<p>Muhammad Asad</p>	<p>“And no human being knows what he will earn tomorrow, and no human being knows in what land he will die.”</p>	<p>Chooses “human being” to emphasize universal applicability; avoids theological coloring; focuses on rational clarity and inclusivity.</p>	<p>“European philosopher and convert to Islam; prefers rational, universal language and avoids theological terminology unless necessary”.</p>

The differences in the translators’ renderings clearly reflect their diverse backgrounds and interpretive priorities. Pickthall’s use of archaic forms and the term “soul” mirrors his classical orientation and desire to preserve Qur’anic solemnity. Yusuf Ali’s choice of “person” and the added nuance of “destined” reflect his devotional background and tendency toward theological explanation”. Asad’s preference for “human being” reflects his philosophical, modernist approach, emphasizing universal human experience rather than traditional theological terminology.

4.3 wayas'alun وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ ۗ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا 85: الاسراء
ek n alruwh ۗ qul alruwh min 'amr rabiyy wama 'uwtitum min aleilm 'iilaa qalil(85)”

“الروح” (ruh) – Al-Isra 17:85

Translator	Translation	Interpretation of “ruh”	Background Influence
Pickthall	“The Spirit is by command of my Lord...”	General spiritual / angelic	Classical Muslim convert, textual fidelity
Yusuf Ali	“The Spirit is part of my Lord’s domain...” (footnote)	Gabriel	South Asian religious scholar; theological emphasis, and explanatory footnotes
Muhammad Asad	“Divine inspiration [symbolized by the Spirit]...”	Symbolic, abstract	Western modernist; philosophical education

Translators with traditional Islamic education specify *Gabriel*, ensuring the reader understands theological context. Translators with secular or modernist backgrounds render *ruh* as *divine inspiration* or *Spirit*, emphasizing conceptual meaning over personification. Education influences lexical choice: Scholars trained in Islamic sciences prioritize traditional theological readings; literary-trained translators may focus on rhetorical clarity. Cultural background affects interpretive notes: Western scholars often provide reflective/philosophical interpretations; Middle Eastern scholars often adhere to exegesis (tafsir). Socio-cultural context shapes the translation audience: Modern global readership may require terms like *divine inspiration* to bridge understanding.

“The translations of al-rūḥ in Al-Isra 17:85 and Al-Qadr 97:4 reveal that the translators’ backgrounds significantly influence interpretation. Pickthall retains a general, neutral “Spirit,” reflecting classical fidelity. Yusuf Ali, as a South Asian religious scholar, clarifies it as Gabriel in footnotes, emphasizing doctrinal guidance. Asad interprets it symbolically as divine inspiration, reflecting his modernist, philosophical approach. Muhsin Khan explicitly identifies it as Gabriel, reflecting his conservative, Salafi-oriented methodology. These variations show that the rendering of al-rūḥ is shaped less by linguistic necessity and more by each translator’s theological, cultural, and intellectual perspective”.

4. 4 33 انَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا (Al-ahzab: 33) /anama yurid allah liudhhib eankum alrijs 'ahl albayt wayutahirakum thir

Translator	English Rendering	Translation Style / Interpretation	Background Influence
Pickthall	“Allah’s wish is but to remove uncleanness far from you, O Folk of the Household, and cleanse you with a thorough cleansing.”	Pickthall follows a literal-leaning but neutral rendering. He preserves the key terms “ <i>uncleanness</i> ” and “ <i>Household</i> ” without adding interpretive clarification. The translation avoids specifying theological implications regarding the identity of <i>Ahl al-Bayt</i> .	Influenced by Sunni orthodox theology, Pickthall maintains doctrinal neutrality and avoids sectarian interpretation. His caution reflects a desire to prevent the translation from endorsing a particular theological stance.
Yusuf Ali	“And Allah only wishes to remove all abomination from you, ye Members of the Family, and to make you pure and spotless.”	Yusuf Ali adopts a semi-interpretive and stylistically elevated approach. While largely faithful to the source text, he intensifies the meaning through expressive diction	Yusuf Ali’s background in classical tafsīr and morn. He baal-didactic interpretation shapes his translationalances literal translation with rhetorical

		(<i>“pure and spotless”</i>). Exegetical nuances are often addressed in footnotes rather than the main text.	enhancement, guiding readers through commentary rather than explicit textual intervention.
Asad	“And abide quietly in your homes, and do not flaunt your charms as they used to flaunt them in the old days of pagan ignorance; and be constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues, and pay heed unto God and His Apostle: for God only wants to remove from you all that might be loathsome, O you members of the [Prophet’s] household, and to purify you to utmost purity.””	Elaborate, interpretive, explanatory; includes social and moral guidance beyond literal wording.	Western convert and modernist thinker; philosophical and rationalist approach; aims to contextualize Qur’anic instructions for a broader audience.

Pickthall’s translation is largely literal and deliberately neutral. He closely follows the lexical meaning of the Arabic text, rendering *al-rijs* as “uncleanness” and *Ahl al-Bayt* as “Folk of the Household” without interpretive expansion. By avoiding explanatory

additions, he minimizes theological interpretation, particularly regarding debates over the identity and status of *Ahl al-Bayt*. This approach prioritizes doctrinal caution and textual fidelity, but it also reduces the rhetorical and exegetical richness of the verse. While, Yusuf Ali adopts a semi-interpretive and stylistically expressive approach. While he retains the core meaning, his choice of elevated diction—such as “abomination” and “pure and spotless”—adds moral and emphatic force to the verse. Rather than clarifying theological issues within the translation itself, he relies on footnotes and commentary to guide interpretation. This method preserves the Qur’anic tone while subtly shaping reader perception through expressive language. As for Asad, he adopts a strongly interpretive and exegetical approach in translating this verse. He renders *al-rijs* as “all that is loathsome,” expanding the term beyond physical impurity to include moral and spiritual corruption. His translation foregrounds meaning rather than form, and he explicitly frames the verse within a contextual and rational interpretation. Unlike Pickthall and Yusuf Ali, Asad does not maintain strict neutrality; instead, he actively guides the reader through interpretive clarification, often supported by extensive footnotes. He emphasizes the ethical intent of the verse rather than theological or sectarian implications concerning *Ahl al-Bayt*. This reflects his broader philosophy of translating the Qur’an as a message-oriented, conceptually reasoned text, making implicit meanings explicit for modern readers. In comparison, Asad’s rendering sacrifices some of the original rhetorical conciseness in favor of semantic transparency and intellectual accessibility, aligning with his reformist and rationalist exegetical background

5. Conclusion

The comparison proves that Qur’anic translation is not merely a linguistic transfer but, an interpretive act formed by the translator’s cultural background, and ideological features. The alteration among soul, person, and human being reveal how each translator frames the theological and human features of the text according to his own perspective. Whether through Pickthall’s classical fidelity, Yusuf Ali’s devotional exegesis. Asad’s philosophical universalism, Thus, the diversity of renderings reflects not differences in the Qur’anic message, but differences in how translators conceptualize their role, their audience, and the function of sacred text in translation. This confirms the central argument that translator background is a decisive factor in shaping the rhetorical, lexical, and ideological contours of Qur’anic translation.

“The comparison of the translators’ approaches in both cases “soul/person” and al-rūḥ (Al-Isra 17:85 & Al-Qadr 97:4) clearly proves that translator background profoundly shapes interpretive and lexical choices. Firstly, the selection of soul, person, or human being reflects each translator’s theological orientation, target audience, and linguistic philosophy. Secondly, the interpretation of al-rūḥ ranges from neutral spiritual designation to explicit identification as Gabriel or a symbolic divine force, reflecting the translators’ backgrounds. The alteration across both terms underscore that the background of the translator determines how Qur’anic rhetoric, metaphors, and theological concepts are conveyed in English. This confirms the central thesis that translator background is a decisive merit in shaping both the meaning and reception of the Qur’anic text in translation”.

Across all three interpretations, the analysis adheres that translator background precisely, shapes Qur’anic translation. Lexical choices such as: soul vs. person vs. human being, or neutral or literal vs. interpretive approaches to Ahl al-Bayt reflect each translator’s worldview, religious orientation, and intended audience. Translation is therefore not a neutral linguistic act; it is an interpretive process where the translator’s cultural background mediates the Qur’anic text for the target readership. These cases collectively confirm that understanding translator background is essential to evaluating differences in Qur’anic renderings and their rhetorical, ethical, and theological nuances.

5.1 Recommendations

1. Reader Awareness: Understanding translator background aids comprehension, particularly for key theological or philosophical concepts.
2. Selection of Translation: Readers seeking doctrinal fidelity may prefer traditional scholars, while those seeking universalist or accessible English may choose modernist interpreters.
3. Future Research: Comparative studies of additional Qur’anic terms, multi-language translations, or audience reception studies can further elucidate the impact of translator identity.

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