

## Demystifying Phraseology: Implications for Translating Quranic Phraseological Units

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### ABSTRACT

This paper examines phraseology as a lexical feature from a Quranic perspective. It explores the importance of demystifying the phraseological theoretical base in order to facilitate the task of translators and second language learners and deal more efficiently with the challenging language aspects of phraseology. Despite prolific publications and the growing interest that research on phraseology generates, too many grey areas still prevail, and many questions remain unanswered. There is a degree of inconsistency and stalemate in the phraseology debate, often yielding fragmented literature and inconclusive evidence. Research on phraseology remains stuck at the level of description and prescription. Similarly, research on translation studies seldom moves beyond comparative analysis of language pairs, examining cross linguistic and cultural differences. The literature does not have a strong theoretical base and is largely anecdotal, lacking empirical data from which to draw clear-cut conclusions on the key issues of translating phraseology. This paper focuses on five selected English translations of the Quran to assess the degree of faithfulness and accuracy in rendering the Quranic phraseology into English. Findings suggested that the five selected translators of the Quran fell short of checking exegesis of the Quranic text. The findings revealed that translations of the Quranic phraseological units gave an echo at best. Results showed the literal translation method was frequently used for translating phraseology; however, this often led to inaccurate and stilted English. The findings suggest that the translation of the Quran in English is still a work in progress, and it needs to be periodically evaluated and updated to address the flaws identified by researchers from different perspectives. Findings are polarised between those who advocate as close a rendering of the Quranic text as possible and those who believe in a 'natural style' in the target text. This study is pertinent because it has several practical implications. Firstly, it will benefit translators of the Quran by providing fresh insights on how to deal with some of the challenges of translating Quranic phraseology. Secondly, it will provide a platform for further research on translating Quranic phraseological units and addressing the current shortcomings. This study has also expanded the extant literature on translating Quranic collocations to benefit future researchers.

### INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to investigate phraseology as a lexical feature from a Quranic perspective. It explores the importance of demystifying the phraseological theoretical base in order to facilitate the task of translators to deal more efficiently with the challenging language aspects of phraseology. Despite the ongoing research and interest that translation and phraseology generate, there is no real consensus and a degree of inconsistency regarding the way phraseology and translation are defined and explained, making conclusive empirical evidence difficult to find. Too many grey areas still prevail, and many questions remain unanswered. There is a degree of inconsistency and stalemate in the phraseology debate, often yielding fragmented literature and inconclusive evidence.

The way language users conceptualise and perceive reality through various linguistic manifestations and mechanisms has long generated interest from both linguists and educationalists. Phraseology can be said to be one of those pervasive language functions that speakers make use of to express a specific communicative purpose. These are used either spontaneously or intentionally to make conversations 'interesting.' It is what makes people actually engage in and enjoy conversations (Nerlich, and Clarke 2001). Different tags have been attached to refer to this word association: *recurrent word-combination, word association, recurrent multi-word sequence, set expression, set phrase, idiomatic phrase, multi-word expression, multiword utterance, phraseological unit, formulaic language, phraseme, idiomatic*

expression, idiom, collocation, and/or poly-lexical expression, etc. What adds to the tangle is that these labels are used by authors in differing and often random and interchangeable ways.

Research on phraseology is sometimes conflicting, sometimes complementary, and at times overlapping, saying what has already been said time and time again (Cowie 1991, Howarth 1998; Kjellmer 1994, Sinclair 1991, Stubbs 2001, etc.). As a result, the phraseology debate appears at times blurred and its terminology entwined, partly because of the nature of the topic itself and partly because of an insufficient knowledge base regarding phraseological units. This can be corroborated by the fact that different authors have come to similar findings and conclusions. For instance, Kunin (1970:210) refers to phraseological units as 'semi-idioms' and 'a stable combination of words with a fully or partially figurative meaning.' Phraseology units are often described as constrained multiword expressions with emotive nuance through metaphoric or idiomatic meaning. According to Mel'čuk (1995:7) 'A phraseological expression, or phraseme, is thus a multiword utterance featuring some unpredictable properties, i.e. a constrained utterance, or a multiword utterance that is not free.' Similarly, Moon (1997:43) views multiword units as 'sequences of words which semantically or syntactically form a meaningful or inseparable unit...that can be lexical units or idiom like phrases.' Take for instance, *ghost writer, basket case, rogue state, miscarriage of justice*, etc.

In the same vein, Gledhill (2011:1) defines phraseology as involving: 'the study of formulaic sequences of words, including idiomatic phrases and proverbial expressions, which stand in contrast to other more prosaic constructions in the language in that they have a highly conventionalised form and frame of reference.' It seems therefore, that some phraseology units carry a special meaning, often consisting of figurative shades of meaning communicating an emotive language function. As argued by Naciscione (2001:53), the cognitive and communicative purpose of phraseology units is achieved because language users make use of both the literal and the figurative meaning. 'A phraseological unit may extend across sentence boundaries and even large stretches of text, creating a continuity, a web of unique interrelationships of figurative and direct meanings, and associative links.' There are some word combinations and phraseological units which have an emotive value, often used to convey a particular communicative function, for example: 'The icing on the cake.' The particular phraseological form by which meaning can be expressed differs from language to language. For instance, in French the imagery changes to *La cerise sur le gâteau* (for *cherry on the cake*), while *Pied noir* literally means 'black foot' but actually refers to former French settlers in Algeria.

Some word combinations or phraseology units may be viewed as functioning as semantically inseparable word associations operating as single entities, as free combinations or as ready-made units. (Moon 1997, Kunin 1970, Sinclair 1991 and Stubbs 2001). Consider for instance the following

examples: *green light, green fingers, flesh and blood, blue blood, bog standard, low life, back seat driver, break a leg, keyboard warrior, etc.* These phraseological units are a form of loaded language whose main function is to persuade, express emotions or arouse feelings. Phraseological units consist of a denotative meaning which refers to the primary or literal meaning of the word combination as well as a connotative meaning which belongs to the whole word combination, such as 'red tape, tiger mother.' In other words, phraseological units refer to word combinations carrying both a primary meaning and a secondary meaning or a literal and a figurative meaning, where the figurative meaning is predominant. Moreover, phraseological units are context specific i.e. they are used in specific contexts and are non-variable, or fixed sets: *small fry, dress to kill, bread and butter.*

Phraseology is not an unexplored topic, but scholars are still undecided about what criteria to use that determine when a particular word combination can be classified as a phraseological unit. Although the phraseology debate has been investigated from a wide range of perspectives, key issues remain: the lack of strong theoretical base, sporadic literature on phraseology, vagueness and diversity of definitions and interpretations of phraseology and inadequate criteria for demarcating the boundary and measurement of phraseological units.

## THE MUDDLE THAT IS PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

Research on phraseology has provided interesting insights and useful knowledge benefitting both linguists and language learners, yet it is still one of the most challenging language features. The muddle starts with determining why a certain set of words enjoy each other's company and bond well together while others clash. What is the boundary between collocation as a free word combination and a fixed set of phraseological units with a figurative shade of meaning? Although Sinclair (1991), one of the leading authorities on word combinations, indicates that there are two levels which can be used to determine and interpret the meaning of a language text, namely, the Open Choice Principle and the Idiom Principle, there is a fine line between the two options as they are neither uniform nor standardised. As a result, the phraseological units debate is still open, and different labels will continue to be used randomly and interchangeably: *set expression, idiom, set phrase, word association, fixed word-groups, multiword expressions (MWEs) and multiword (MW) patterns, readymade phrases, phraseological units* etc. They function as a vehicle to convey all possible nuances of meaning without a chance of reaching a consensus regarding a universal term for these word combinations. Thus, the boundary between collocations and phraseological units with a hint of figurativeness is not clear cut; it is more of a hybrid mix. However, this terminological vagueness is just a reflection of language in a real communicative setting and attaching a particular label is of little importance because what is in a name? A phraseological unit by any other name is just a word combination. Most phraseo-

logical units overlap because communication takes place in interactive and varied ways. As Steyer (2015:7) points out: ‘Multiword expressions (MWEs) and multiword (MW) patterns are not clear-cut and distinct entities. On the contrary, fragments and overlapping elements with fuzzy borders are typical for real language use. This means that there really are no MWEs as such. In real communicative situations, some components are focused while others fade into the background.’”

In short, phraseological units may consist of a range of figurative hints aimed at achieving special effects. Consider for instance the following examples *cheap and nasty* or *cheap and cheerful, fish and chips, airing cupboard*. In the case of ‘airing cupboard’, it would not make sense when translated in Arabic because it is difficult to conceptualise or have a mental image of what the phrase relates to.

### PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN THE QURAN

Arabic is the language of the Quran. Delisle and Woodworth (1995:17) point out there are ‘several koranic verses [that] explicitly state that Arabic, and no other language was intended to be the vehicle of the divine word.’ According to Pickthall (1935:vii), the Quran is an ‘inimitable symphony, the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy.’ The rhythmic and melodic verses of the Quran have been acknowledged by many scholars. Most of the Quranic text is formulaic language and is self-contained by nature consisting of subtle use of style and diction and the Quran is characterised by frequent repetitions of structures or the same phrases, to the extent that it may be considered, as Arberry (2008:1) put it, ‘neither prose nor poetry, but a unique fusion of both.’ Some word combinations such as **الحياة** al-hayat (Life) is repeated 145 times, as is **الموت** al-mawt (Death).

According to Bannister’s study (2014: 230) *An Oral-Formulaic Study of the Quran*, the Quran is imbued with phraseological units, and it also displays many of the features of oral composition: ‘the Quran is steeped in formulaic diction.’ Thus, much of the language of the Quran consists of short discrete units which need to be understood as formula or phraseological units and not as individual words. This unique rhythmic style of the Quran makes it easier to memorise, which has been the main source of its preservation.

### POSITIONING QURANIC PHRASEOLOGY WITHIN THE BROAD WORD COMBINATION DEBATE

This section attempts to link the general theoretical base of collocation to that of the Quran in order to find out where Quranic collocations fit within the broad collocation debate. It also seeks to demonstrate whether Quranic collocations are in line with the widely accepted set of criteria for determining collocations. Although research on phraseological units is pervasively acknowledged as an established area in almost all language fields (e.g. Cowie 1994, Baker 1992, Granger & Meunier 2008, Meunier & Granger 2008, Römer & Schulze 2009), there is a paucity of collocational and phraseological studies in Arabic/English. The following examines whether Quranic collocational and/or phraseological units are consistent with the following collocation norms:

1. Strings of words that seem to have a certain mutual expectancy
2. Frequent co-occurrence of two or more words
3. An expression consisting of two or more words with a sense of figurativeness
4. An idiom like lexical unit
5. Arbitrary language items recurrent in context whose meaning cannot be inferred from individual words
6. Word association, word partnership with a hint of figurativeness not intended to be understood literally

The above list is informed from the literature and is by no means set in stone.

It can be argued in light of the above criteria, that Quranic phraseology is considered as one of the most influential and inspiring sources in Modern Standard Arabic as it possesses a large stock. Although Arabic and English have different thought processes and operate from different mind-sets, they may share some features in how phraseological units are used in terms of function and key components. In the case of the Quran, phraseological units fit well within the broad phraseology criteria. The following is a small sample of the vast number of formulaic expressions used in the Quran:

The above formulaic units show regularity and consistency combining with the collocate **القول** Al-qawli. This word association which is regularly used under the same metrical rhythm is deeply woven into the fabric of the Quran and aims to express a specific communicative purpose. The density and pervasiveness of rhymed prose and phraseological

Collocate/ قول	Sura	Translation	Transliteration
يثبت الله الذين آمنوا بالقول الثابت	Ibrahim,14:27	God will give firmness to those who believe in the firmly rooted word	Yuthabbitu Allāhu Al-Ladhīna ‘Āmanū Bil-Qawli Ath-Thābiti
فلا تقل لهما أف ولا تنهرهما وقل لهما قولا كريما	Al-Isra, 17:23	Be not harsh with them but speak to them respectfully	Falā Taqul Lahumā ‘Uffin Wa Lā Tanharhumā Wa Qul Lahumā Qawlāan Karīmāan
فقولا له قولا لينا	Taha, 20:44	Speak to him gently	Faqūlā Lahu Qawlāan Layyināan
إنا سنلقي عليك قولا ثقيلا	Al-Muzzammil,73:5	We shall send a momentous message down to you	‘Innā Sanulqī `Alayka Qawlāan Thaḳīlāan
إنه لقول فصل	At-tariq,86:13	This is truly a deceive statement	‘Innahu Laqawlun Faṣṭun

units in the Quran create, in many verses, a mesmerising effect which is inimitable in any other form of literary work. What transpires from the above sample is that Quranic phraseological features are consistent with the broad theoretical base on word combinations with a hint of figurativeness, but they are also unique in the sense that they are used in a divine and creative way to convey a particular purpose. They are formulated in a distinctive way and their meaning is distributed and emphasised often rendering them untranslatable in English.

Some Quranic phraseological units are transparent and explicit. They have become part of everyday language; many people who use them are unaware of their Quranic origin. Consider for instance the following examples:

Bannister's (2014) study suggests that 'Medinan' Quranic verses generally have higher formulaic densities, making more consistent use of formulaic diction as demonstrated in the above phrases or word combinations. They possess a figurative meaning which cannot be deduced from the individual components or literal meaning of the constituent parts. It is

this blend of divine character and linguistic specificity that gives the Quranic language its central untranslatable essence. Phraseology in the Quran is a linguistic force and thought-provoking word combinations to express or describe specific situations. Collocations or phraseology units serve a specific communicative function. Phraseological units are an integral part of the language of the Quran and must be interpreted in the context in which they occur; they cannot be translated in isolation. Consider the following phraseological units:

Many parts of the Quran are characterised by the use of:

- formulaic and emotive language such as phraseology units which enrich Modern Standard Arabic which adopted them
- phraseology units express a range of emotions and evoke feelings
- the components of Quranic phraseology units are used in such a creative and sophisticated way that the meaning they carry or emphasise may well be untranslatable in another language. Consider the following examples which demonstrate the use of figurative meaning:

Phraseological collocations	Sura	Translation	Transliteration
وعسى أن تكرهوا شيئا وهو خير لكم	Al-baqara,2:216	You may dislike something although it is good for you	Wa `Asá `An Takrahū Shay`āan Wa Huwa Khayrun Lakum
ضعف الطالب والمطلوب	Al-Hajj,22:73	How feeble are the petitioners and how feeble are those they petition!	Ḍa`ufa Aṭ-Ṭālibu Wa Al-Maṭlūbu
أعمالهم كرماد اشتدت به الريح في يوم عاصف	Ibrahim,14:18	The deeds of those who reject their Lord are like ashes that the wind blows furiously on a stormy day	`A`māluhum Karamādin Ashtaddat Bihi Ar-Rīḥu Fī Yawmin `Āṣifin
إن بعض الظن إثم	Al-Hujuraat,49:12	Some assumptions are sinful	`Inna Ba`ḍa Aḏ-Ḍanni `Ithmun
فأما الزبد فذهب جفاء وأما ما ينفع الناس فيمكث في الأرض	Ar-Ra`d,13:17	The froth disappears, but what is of benefit to man stays behind	Fa`ammā Az-Zabadu Fayadh/habu Jufā`an Wa `Ammā Mā Yanfa`u An-Nāsa Fayamkuthu Fī Al-`Arḍi
واعتصموا بحبل الله جميعا ولا تفرقوا	Al-Imran,3:103	Hold fast to God's rope all together, do not split into factions	Wa A`taṣimū Biḥabli Allāhi Jamī`āan Wa Lā Tafarraqū

Phraseological collocations	Sura	Translation	Transliteration
يعلم خائنة الأعين وما تخفي الصدور	Ghafir,40:19	God is aware of the most furtive of glances, and of all that hearts conceal	Ya`lamu Khā`inata Al-`A`yuni Wa Mā Tukhfī Aṣ-Ṣudūru
أحبب أحذكم أن يأكل لحم أخيه ميتا	Al-Hujuraat,49:12	Would any of you like to eat the flesh of your dead brother?	`Ayuḥibbu `Aḥadukum `An Ya`kula Laḥma `Akhīhi Maytāan
واشتعل الرأس شيبا	Maryam,19:4	And my hair is ashen grey.	Qāla Rabbi `Innī Wahana Al-`Aḏmu Minnī Wa Ashta`ala Ar-Ra`sū Shaybāan

Phraseological collocations	Sura	Translation	Transliteration
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حتى يلج الجمل في سم الخياط	Al-A`raaf,7:40	Even if a thick rope were to pass through the eye of a needle.	Ḥattā Yalija Al-Jamalu Fī Sammi Al-Khiyāṭi
واجتنبوا قول الزور	Al-Hajj,22:30	Shun false utterances.	Wa Ajtanibū Qawla Az-Zūri
ولا تصعر خدك للناس	Luqman,31:18	Do not turn your nose up at people	Wa Lā Tuṣa`ir Khaddaka Lilnāsi



d) Phraseology units extend the use of language to include figures of speech, imagery, metaphor etc.

Today's reality and world view is constantly changing, and language is used in a creative and innovative way to match and keep pace with these changes. Thus, language goes through a process of recreating, readjusting, adapting and accommodating the new jargon so that it fits with current norms and usage, e.g. *noughties*, *multi-tasker*, *solution-provider*, *web-master*, *chip and pin*; but the language of the Quran is immutable and timeless. Its message is regarded by Muslims as eternal and universal, transcending time and place, providing guidance on every aspect of human life. In terms of translation, conclusions about what the components of the phraseological units mean by themselves should not be jumped at, but what these word combinations are saying needs to be carefully considered. The spirit, not the form, of the word should be conveyed. Language by its nature is inherently ambiguous, making the expression or understanding of the written or spoken word difficult at times, and grasping the true meaning of the Quran is no exception.

For the purpose of this study, five translations were selected to evaluate the accuracy of rendering phraseological units:

Which English version of the Quran is better or more accurate than another is a matter of debate. Each has its

strengths and weaknesses. The five selected translations represent some of the most referred to English translations of the Quran. The rationale for selecting them is summed up as follows:

- Arberry's (2008) translation is the first English translation by a scholar of Arabic. Arberry managed to preserve the faithfulness of the original text by keeping close to the Arabic text. Western scholars consider Arberry's translation as one of the most respected translations achieved by a non-Muslim translator.
- Ali's (2000) translation is one of the most widely used translations in English-speaking countries. It is one of the most popular translations among Muslims and non-Muslims as it is one of the earliest translations of the Quran.
- Abdel Haleem's (2004) translation is a comparatively recent work. Abdel Haleem is a professor of Islamic Studies at the University of London. One of the advantages of Abdel Haleem's translation is that it does not use archaic language and the writing style is user-friendly for readers.
- Asad's (1980) version of the Quran has a parallel Arabic text, useful notes, and four appendices. However, Asad used many footnotes in brackets explanatory words, which, though useful, could have been used more

Phraseological collocations	Sura	Translation	Transliteration
وبئر معطلة وقصر مشيد	Al-Hajj,22:45	How many deserted wells; how many lofty palaces	Wa Bi`rin Mu`aṭṭalatin Wa Qaṣrin Mashīdin
كل نفس ذائقة الموت	Aal-Imran,3:185	Every soul will taste death	Kullu Nafsin Dhā'iqaṭu Al-Mawti
صرعى كأنهم أعجاز نخل خاوية	Al-Haaqqa,69:7	So that you could have seen its people lying dead like hollow palm-trunks	Ṣar`á Ka`annahum `A`jāzu Nakhlin Khāwiyahin

Phraseological collocations	Sura	Translation	Transliteration
واخفض لهما جناح الذل من الرحمة وقل ربي ارحمهما كما ربياني صغيرا	Al-Israa,17:24	And lower your wing in humility towards them in kindness and say, 'Lord, have mercy on them, just as they cared for me when I was little	Wa Akhfiḍ Lahumā Janāḥa Adh-Dhulli Mina Ar-Raḥmati Wa Qul Rrabbi Arḥamhumā Kamā Rabbayānī Ṣaghīrān
واما تعرضن عنهم ابتغاء رحمة من ربك ترجوها فقل لهم قولا ميسورا	Al-Israa,17:28	But if, while seeking some bounty that you expect from your Lord, you turn them down, then at least speak some word of comfort to them	Wa `Immā Tu`ridanna `Anhumu Abtighā`a Raḥmatin Min Rabbika Tarjūhā Faqul Lahum Qawlān Maysūrān
ولا تجعل يدك مغلولة الى عنقك ولا تبسطها كل البسط فتقعد ملوما محسورا	Al-Israa,17:29	Do not be tight-fisted, nor so open-handed that you end up blamed and overwhelmed with regret	Wa Lā Taj`al Yadaka Maghlūlatan `Ilā `Unuqika Wa Lā Tabsuṭhā Kulla Al-Baṣṭi Fataq`uda Malūmān Maḥsūrān

Translators	Titles	Date of edition	Publishers
Arberry	The Koran	2008	Oxford University Press
Ali	The Holy Quran	2000	Wordsworth Editions Limited
Abdel Haleem	The Quran	2004	Oxford University Press
Asad-	The Message of the Quran, Translated and Explained	1980	Andalus Press
Al-Hilali and Khan	Interpretation of the Meaning of the Noble Quran	1983	Maktaba Dar-us-Salam

sparingly. Asad's approach triggered some criticism from some Muslim theologians. According to Khaleel (2005: 48), 'Asad sought to depart from the traditional exegetic approaches and reflected independent thought.'

- Al-Hilali and Khan's (1983) translation, is the most widely published translation as Saudi Arabia has reprinted and distributed millions of copies of this translation worldwide. Moreover, many Muslim scholars favour this translation because it avoids the use of archaisms and was undertaken by two experts.

## TRANSLATING QURANIC PHRASEOLOGY

Understanding how the language of the Quran is communicatively used and how its collocations and rhyming patterns are structurally distributed to convey a particular message, is a prerequisite to translating. One of the salient attributes of the Quran is that it is a closed corpus in the sense that since its revelation and inception, it has not been subject to modification, expansion or change. For Muslims, its authority, authenticity and transparency are undisputed. *لا جدال في النص* (the authenticity of the Quranic text is beyond dispute). As clearly emphasised in the Quran, 'This is the Scripture in which there is no doubt, containing guidance for those who are mindful of God, who believe in the unseen...' (Al-Baqara, 2:2-3)

ذلك الكتاب لا ريب فيه هدى للمتقين الذين يؤمنون بالغيب ويقيمون الصلاة ومما رزقناهم ينفقون

*Dhālika Al-Kitābu Lā Rayba Fīhi Hudāan Lilmuttaqīna Al-Ladhīna Yu'uminūna Bil-Ghaybi Wa Yuqīmūna Aṣ-Ṣalāta Wa Mimmā Razaqnāhum Yunfiqūna*

Translating Quranic phraseology presents difficulties beyond those encountered in dealing with phraseology in other languages owing to the style and complex structure of the Quran. The translation of Quranic phraseology into English is under-researched and limited to a few miscellaneous articles, proposing a number of different approaches to its translation (Bani-Younes 2015, Jabak et al 2016). All the translation theories, models and strategies provided by literature are useful and offer insights into the translation process. However, there is a knowledge gap in terms of the applicability of the existing theoretical base as most theories, models and strategies are difficult to apply to Arabic/English translation because of differences in the thought processes and mindsets and obviously the linguistic differences. The literature review indicates that a number of studies which have been conducted on Arabic collocations and phraseology lack substance and empirical data to support their findings.

In short, the Quranic text has a high density of phraseology, rhythmic patterns and challenging syntactic structures. The Quran is said to have unique features in terms of eloquence and style, which distinguish it from any other literary Arabic text. Some word combinations of the Quran aim to create several contextual meanings within the same verses. The Quran encompasses a whole range of recurrent word combinations and many of the words form part of a frequent and habitual word-combination in one way or another. Some authors (Dweik & Abu Shakra 2011, Abdel Haleem 2009) argue that the Quran contains excessive collocational expressions in order to be persuasive, informative and to make

an impact. The way phraseology binds together with other language elements, and how the different parts of the Quran are interconnected and explain each other, makes any translation tentative. Every Quranic phraseology has 'a cohesive force' and involves a unique encounter with language and a process of conveying a specific communicative purpose.

## A SAMPLE OF QURANIC PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN TRANSLATION

The process of translating Quranic phraseology involves a unique encounter with language which is said to be both inimitable and untranslatable. Pickthall (1935: vii) stresses that the English translation of the Quran 'is not the *Glorious Quran*, that inimitable symphony, the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy. It is only an attempt to present the meaning of the Quran - and peradventure something of the charm in English. It can never take the place of the Quran in Arabic, nor is it meant to do so.' The process of translating is not a robotic operation of cloning the SL text but an attempt at understanding, interpreting and conveying the closest natural meaning in TL. The process of interpreting the meaning using different sources in order to unravel the expressive and meaningful nature of the intended message is a prerequisite. Translating is exchanging of information and interacting between the SL and TL texts. The aim is to explain and make the meaning accessible. Quranic phraseological units are characterised by

- a) the existence of extended meaning
- b) conveying what the message means as opposed to what the words mean
- c) understanding is whole phrasal unit-oriented information processing, not a word matching between language items.
- d) need to be understood in their actual context of occurrence.

Quranic collocations, phraseology units, are an amalgam of complex, covert, figurative, associative and factual language which can be challenging to understand let alone translate. They come in different forms, types and definitions depending on the focus, the communicative purpose and the author. This study holds the view that the task of translating the Quran is too overwhelming and important to be undertaken by one individual; a collective and team effort and resources can help in achieving a quality translation with confidence. Two views regarding the current translations of the Quran emerged from assessing the quality of the translations of collocations and phraseology units: a) there is an assumption that translating the scripture of such magnitude can be achieved successfully by one individual b) the other view is that translating the Quran is much more complex. There is no master plan and there are no fast-track solutions to address the challenges except through joining forces to form a task force involving a range of experts. Translating the Quran involves a unique encounter with abstract and complex language features conveying specific communicative purpose and its translation is not so much about producing sameness between SL and TL, but it is about conveying the gist of what was said in SL as efficiently and as closely as possible.

The following demonstrates how phraseological Quranic units have been dealt with in translation.

Many current translations of the Quran lack consistency, while others are short on quality in terms of fluency and readability. Some of the translators use archaic language which makes it difficult for the reader to understand, e.g. *And swell not thy cheek (for pride) at men*, while others use a literal translation which often leads to the loss of the nuances of meaning of language from SL to TL as can be seen from this example: *ولا تصعر خدك للناس*

Although the gist of what was said in the Quran comes across in the above renderings, the lexical choice and expression leave much to be desired (*Do not turn your nose up at people And turn not your face away from men with pride*). The translators' task is to convey the meaning with clarity and simplicity. To be accessible to all, the Quranic text in translation should be made as simple as possible. For instance, the above could be expressed as *do not show contempt for people*. In addition, *Turn not thy cheek away from*

*men in scorn, And swell not thy cheek (for pride) at men* are not gender free which could have been avoided as the original word *سائل* does not specifically refer to specifically to *men*.

With regards to the verse *واخفض لهما جناح الذل من الرحمة*, the five translators struggled with carrying across the figurative meaning *جناح الذل* preferring to stay close to SL yielding some stilted expression. A better option, would have been to take the meaning across rather than the phraseology such as: *treating them with humility and kindness*

In the verse *قال رب اني وهن العظم مني واشتعل الرأس شيبا* the translators encountered phraseology which they rendered literally. *واشتعل الرأس شيبا* resulting in rather strange phraseology such as *my head doth glisten with grey, head is all aflame with hoariness, my hair is ashen grey*. Khan and Hilali used a common-sense interpretation suggesting *and grey hair has spread on my head*. As is the case of most phraseological units, a

Phraseological collocation	Sura	Ali	Arberry	Asad	Abdel-Haleem	Khan&Hilali
<i>ولا تصعر خدك للناس</i>	Luqman,31:18	And <u>swell not thy cheek (for pride) at men</u>	Turn not <u>thy cheek away from men in scorn</u>	And turn not <u>thy cheek away from people in [false] pride</u>	Do not turn <u>your nose up at people</u>	And turn not <u>your face away from men with pride</u>
<i>واخفض لهما جناح الذل من الرحمة</i>	Al-Isra, 17:24	And, out of <u>kindness, lower to them the wing of humility</u>	<u>and lower to them the wing of humbleness out of mercy</u>	<u>and spread over them humbly the wings of thy tenderness</u>	and <u>lower your wing in humility towards them in kindness</u>	<u>And lower unto them the wing of submission and humility through mercy</u>
<i>قال رب اني وهن العظم مني واشتعل الرأس شيبا</i>	Maryam, 19:4	Praying: "O my Lord! infirm indeed are my bones, <u>and the hair of my head doth glisten with grey</u>	saying, 'O my Lord, behold the bones within me are feeble <u>and my head is all aflame with hoariness</u>	he prayed: "O my Sustainer! Feeble have become my bones, <u>and my head glistens with grey hair</u>	Lord, my bones have weakened <u>and my hair is ashen grey</u>	Saying: "My Lord! Indeed my bones have grown feeble, <u>and grey hair has spread on my head</u>
<i>ولا تجعل يدك مغلولة الى عنقك ولا تبسطها كل البسط فتقعد ملوما محسورا</i>	Al-Isra, 17:49	<u>Make not thy hand tied (like a niggard's) to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach, so that thou become blameworthy and destitute</u>	<u>And keep not thy hand chained to thy neck, nor outspread it widespread altogether, or thou wilt sit reproached and denuded</u>	<u>And neither allow thy hand to remain shackled to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to the utmost limit [of thy capacity], lest thou find thyself blamed [by thy dependents], or even destitute</u>	<u>Do not be tight-fisted, nor so open-handed that you end up blamed and overwhelmed with regret</u>	<u>And let not your hand be tied (like a miser) to your neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach (like a spendthrift), so that you become blameworthy and in severe poverty</u>
<i>واخفض لهما جناح الذل من الرحمة</i>	Al-Isra, 17:24	And, out of <u>kindness, lower to them the wing of humility</u>	<u>and lower to them the wing of humbleness out of mercy</u>	<u>and spread over them humbly the wings of thy tenderness</u>	and <u>lower your wing in humility towards them in kindness</u>	<u>And lower unto them the wing of submission and humility through mercy</u>

direct translation often leads to distortion and ambiguity. The intended meaning of the above is simply *my hair has turned grey*. Translating is not a form of duplication, particularly when dealing with sensitive texts like the Quran, but a means of conveying meaning. The translator's main task is not so much about recovery but the discovery of meaning. The best approach when dealing with Quranic phraseology in translation is to consider the degree of translatability i.e. whether the equivalent expressions enjoy the same stylistic value in their respective contexts and cultures.

As regards the verse *ولا تجعل يدك مغلولة إلى عنقك ولا تبسطها كل البسط فتتعد ملوما محسورا*, if translation is the art of negotiation and compromise, Ali's effort is far from achieving this purpose, using terms which are not in common use in the modern era: *Make not thy hand tied (like a niggard's) to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach, so that thou become blameworthy and destitute.*

The above phraseological unit carries a straightforward meaning not different from its surface meaning. This literal translation, without regard to the connotative or contextual meaning can be erroneous. Often translating the form, not the content or substance of what the Quran actually says and means, has led to controversy. The basic message intended is do not be tight-fisted nor lavish. In other words the message could be simplified as *And let not your hand be chained to your neck nor open it completely lest you regret it.*

The density and the way Quranic phraseology is formulated and articulated is unique and it is a tall order to produce a matching phraseology in English, as evidence shows from the above small sample. The way meaning is distributed, and the way phraseological components are emphasised in the Quran should be rendered in meaning only, not in form.

To conclude, most translations have their limitations and the translations of the Quran are no exception. A further challenge is that the Quranic text transcends to some-

thing which may, in reality, be inexpressible in translation. The five translations of the Quran are undoubtedly useful but there is plenty of room for improvement for each one of them. Vagueness, distorted meaning and incoherence in parts seem to be evident in many of the translations of the Quran.

## ANTONYMY IN THE QURAN

In addition to phraseological units, collocations and other word combinations, the Quran makes extensive use of antonymy. Antonymy is described as the close semantic relationship that lexical items with opposite meaning form. Antonymy is viewed by many authors as one of the most important semantic relations between words and/or word-senses (Murphy 2003, Jones et al. 2012, Cruse, 1986). Antonyms can be defined as lexical pairs which express opposite or incompatible meanings, e.g. *In sickness and in health, for better or for worse, war and peace.*

Antonyms or pairs of words are often used in the Quran to achieve rhetorical effects. For instance, the term sky 'سَمَاء' is often associated with its opposite, land, 'أَرْض' and the term secretly 'سِرًّا' is combined with two different antonyms: openly 'جَهْرًا' and openly 'عَلَانِيَةً'. Consider the following sample of Quranic antonyms:

As the above table shows, there is a plethora of Quran antonyms. This concurrent use of lexical combinations with opposite meaning can be challenging to grasp and render efficiently in English, as highlighted in the above five translations. This view is supported by Al-Kharabsheh and Al-Jdayeh (2017:1) who point out that: '*Quranic antonymy represents a case of semantic non-identity, where two distinct levels of inverse semantic duplicity exist simultaneously: an overt one at the basic level, and a covert one at the metaphorical level.*' The above translations of Quranic antonyms are inevitably just approximations. The incompat-

رب إني وهن العظم مني واشتعل الرأس شيبا	Maryam, 19:4	Praying: "O my Lord! infirm indeed are my bones, <u>and the hair of my head doth glisten with grey</u>	saying, 'O my Lord, behold the bones within me are feeble <u>and my head is all aflame with hoariness</u>	he prayed: "O my Sustainer! Feeble have become my bones, <u>and my head glistens with grey hair</u>	Lord, my bones have weakened, <u>and my hair is ashen grey</u>	Saying: "My Lord! Indeed my bones have grown feeble, <u>and grey hair has spread on my head</u>
ولا تجعل يدك مغلولة إلى عنقك ولا تبسطها كل البسط فتتعد ملوما محسورا	Al-Isra, 17:49	<u>Make not thy hand tied (like a niggard's) to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach, so that thou become blameworthy and destitute.</u>	<u>And keep not thy hand chained to thy neck, nor outspread it widespread altogether, or thou wilt sit reproached and denuded.</u>	<u>And neither allow thy hand to remain shackled to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to the utmost limit [of thy capacity], lest thou find thyself blamed [by thy dependents], or even destitute.</u>	<u>Do not be tight-fisted, nor so open-handed that you end up blamed and overwhelmed with regret</u>	<u>And let not your hand be tied (like a miser) to your neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach (like a spendthrift), so that you become blameworthy and in severe poverty</u>



Antonyms Collocates	Sura	Ali	Arberry	Asad	Abdel-Haleem	Khan & Hilali
لا يستوي أصحاب النار وأصحاب الجنة أصحاب الجنة هم الفائزون	Al-Hashr,59:20	Not equal are the Companions of the Fire and the Companions of the Garden: it is the Companions of the Garden, that will achieve Felicity.	Not equal are the inhabitants of the Fire and the inhabitants of Paradise. The inhabitants of Paradise -- they are the triumphant.	Not equal are those who are destined for the fire and those who are destined for paradise: those who are destined for paradise -- it is they, they [alone] who shall triumph [on Judgment Day]!	There is no comparison between the inhabitants of the Fire and the inhabitants of the Paradise. The inhabitants of Paradise are the successful ones.	Not equal are the dwellers of the Fire and the dwellers of the Paradise. It is the dwellers of Paradise that will be successful.
الذين ينفقون في السراء والضراء والكاظمين الغيظ والعافين عن الناس والله يحب المحسنين	Al-Imran,3:134	Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men;- for God loves those who do good;-	who expend in prosperity and adversity in almsgiving, and restrain their rage, and pardon the offences of their fellowmen; and God loves the good-doers	who spend [in His way] in time of plenty and in time of hardship, and hold in check their anger, and pardon their fellow-men because God loves the doers of good;	Who give, both in prosperity and adversity, who restrain their anger and pardon people- God loves those who do good.	Those who spend [in Allah's Cause - deeds of charity, alms, etc.] in prosperity and in adversity, who repress anger, and who pardon men; verily, Allah loves Al-Muhsinun (the good-doers).
الذين ينفقون أموالهم بالليل والنهار سرا وعلانية فلهم أجرهم عند ربهم ولا خوف عليهم ولا هم يحزنون	Al-Baqarah,2:274	Those who (in charity) spend of their goods by night and by day, in secret and in public, have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.	Those who expend their wealth night and day, secretly and in public, their wage awaits them with their Lord, and no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow.	Those who spend their possessions [for the sake of God] by night and by day, secretly and openly, shall have their reward with their Sustainer, and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.	Those who give, out of their own possessions, by night and by day, in private and in public, will have their reward with their Lord: no fear for them, nor will they grieve.	Those who spend their wealth (in Allah's Cause) by night and day, in secret and in public, they shall have their reward with their Lord. On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.
هو الأول والآخر والظاهر والباطن وهو بكل شيء عليم	Al-Hadid,57:3	He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent: and He has full knowledge of all things.	He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward; He has knowledge of everything.	He is the First and the Last, and the Outward as the Inward: and He has full knowledge of everything.	He is the First and the Last; the Outer and the Inner. He has knowledge of all things.	He is the First (nothing is before Him) and the Last (nothing is after Him), the Most High (nothing is above Him) and the Most Near (nothing is nearer than Him). And He is the All-Knower of everything.
هو الأول والآخر وكل شيء عليم	Al-Hadid,57:3	He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent: and He has full knowledge of all things.	He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward: He has knowledge of everything.	He is the First and the Last, and the Outward as well as the Inward: and He has full knowledge of everything.	He is the First and the Last; the Outer and the Inner. He has knowledge of all things.	He is the First (nothing is before Him) and the Last (nothing is after Him), the Most High (nothing is above Him) and the Most Near (nothing is nearer than Him). And He is the All-Knower of everything.

Antonyms Collocates	Sura	Ali	Arberry	Asad	Abdel-Haleem	Khan & Hilali
رحلة الشتاء والصيف	Quraysh, 106:2	Their covenants (covering) journeys by winter and summer	Their composing for the winter and summer caravan!	Secure in their winter and summer journeys.	Secure in their winter and summer journeys	We cause) the (Quraish) caravans to set forth safe in winter (to the south), and in summer (to the north) without any fear)
رب المشرق والمغرب لااله الا هو فاتخذه وكلا	Al-Muzzammil, 73:9	(He is) Lord of the East and the West: there is no god but He: take Him therefore for (thy) Disposer of Affairs.	Lord of the East and the West: there is no god but He; so take Him for a Guardian.	The Sustainer of the east and the west [is He]: there is no deity save Him: hence, ascribe to Him alone the power to determine thy fate.	He is Lord of the east and west, there is no god but Him, so take Him as your Protector.	(He Alone is) the Lord of the east and the west, La <i>ilaha illa Hawa</i> (none has the right to be worshipped but He). So take Him Alone as <i>Makil</i> (Disposer of your affairs)
وما يستوي الأعمى والصغير	Fatir, 35:19	The blind and the seeing are not alike.	Not equal are the blind and the seeing man.	For [thus it is:] the blind and the seeing are not equal.	The blind and the seeing are not alike	Not alike are the blind (disbelievers in Islamic Monotheism) and the seeing (believers in Islamic Monotheism).
ولا الظلمات ولا النور	Fatir, 35:20	Nor are the depths of Darkness and the Light;	the shadows and the light.	nor are the depths of darkness and the light.	Nor are darkness and light	Nor are (alike) the darkness (disbelief) and the light (Belief in Islamic Monotheism).
ولا الظل ولا الحرور	Fatir, 35:21	Nor are the (chilly) shade and the (genial) heat of the sun.	the shade and the torrid heat.	nor the [cooling] shade and the scorching heat:	Shade and heat are not alike	Nor are (alike) the shade and the sun's heat.
وما يستوي الأحياء ولا الأموات	Fatir, 35:22	Nor are alike those that are living and those that are dead.	not equal are the living and the dead.	and neither are equal the living and the dead [of heart].	Nor are the living and the dead.	Nor are (alike) the living (believers) and the dead (disbelievers).
قل لا يستوي الخبيث والطيب	Al-Maidah, 5:100	Say: "Not equal are things that are bad and things that are good	Say: The corrupt and the good are not equal.	Say: There is no comparison between the bad things and the good things	Say [prophet], Bad cannot be likened to good	Say (O Muhammad) : "Not equal are <i>Al-Khabith</i> (all that is evil and bad as regards things, deeds, beliefs, persons, foods, etc.) and <i>Al-Tayyib</i> (all that is good as regards things, deeds, beliefs, persons, foods, etc.),
يوم تبيض وجوه وتسود وجوه	Al-Imran, 3:106	On the Day when some faces will be (lit up with) white, and some faces will be (in the gloom of) black	the day when some faces are blackened, and some faces whitened.	on the Day [of Judgment] when some faces will shine [with happiness] and some faces will be dark [with grief]	On the Day when some faces brighten and others darken.	On the Day (i.e. the Day of Resurrection) when some faces will become white and some faces will become black

Antonyms Collocates	Sura	Ali	Arberry	Asad	Abdel-Haleem	Khan & Hilali
وهو الذي مرج البحرين هذا عذب فرات وهذا ملح أحاج وجعل بينهما برزخا وحجرا محجورا	Al-Furqan, 25:53	It is He Who has let free the two bodies of flowing water: One palatable and sweet, and the other salt and bitter	And it is He who let forth the two seas, this one Sweet, grateful to taste, and this salt, bitter to the tongue	AND HE it is who has given freedom of movement to the two great bodies of water – the one sweet and thirst-allaying, and the other salty and bitter	It is He who released the two bodies of flowing water, one sweet and fresh and the other salty and bitter	And it is He Who has let free the two seas (kinds of water), one palatable and sweet, and the other salt and bitter
ولا تستوي الحسنة ولا السيئة ادفع بالتي هي أحسن	Fussilat, 41:34	Nor can goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better	Not equal are the good deed and the evil deed. Repel with that which is fairer and behold	But [since] good and evil cannot be equal, repel thou [evil] with something that is better	Good and evil cannot be equal. [ prophet], repel evil with what is better	The good deed and the evil deed cannot be equal. Repel (the evil) with one which is better
وسيجوه بكرة وأصيلا	Al-Ahzab, 33:42	And glorify Him morning and evening.	and give Him glory at the dawn and in the evening.	and extol His limitless glory from morn to evening.	And glorify Him morning and evening	And glorify His Praises morning and afternoon [the early morning (Fajr) and 'Asr prayers].
ولكن منكم أمة يدعون إلى الخير ويأمرون بالمعروف وينهون عن المنكر وأولئك هم المفلحون	Al-Imran, 3:104	Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong	Let there be one nation of you, calling to good, and bidding to honour, and forbidding dishonour; those are the prosperers.	and that there might grow out of you a community [of people] who invite unto all that is good, and enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong	Be a community that calls for what is good, urges what is right, and forbids what is wrong: those who do this are the successful ones.	Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to all that is good enjoining Al-Ma'ruf (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do) and forbidding Al-Munkar (polytheism and disbelief and all that Islam has forbidden). And it is they who are the successful.

ible information contained in these autonym pairs is more extensive than a translation can convey.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Research on phraseology as a recurring word combination has a broad scope with the dual purposes of contributing to the theoretical knowledge base on collocation and to make collocation learnable and teachable to second language learners. Research on collocations is polarised between those who examined them from a statistical perspective, as frequency-based lexical units, while others viewed them from a conventional perspective as usage-based lexically restricted units (Granger and Paquot, 2008). Although collocation in its generic sense is understood to mean a close relationship that words form and then frequently appear together, it is often used as an umbrella term to refer to a wide variety of labels such as: 'phraseological units, language chunks, extended lexical units, fixed expressions, formulaic sequences, predictable pattern, etc.' Many definitions of phraseological units tend to overlap. Wray (2000: 465) highlighted some 50 terms that have been used to refer to phraseological units. Many studies on collocations and phraseological units are written in a language that is either ambiguous or highly jargonistic. There is a need to demystify and standardise the research and move it beyond what is already known and established as the base.

The assessed sample of Quranic collocations across five translations have their strengths, but also their weaknesses. The English translations of the Quran, and its formulaic expressions in particular, tend to be influenced by 'word-for-word' translation. In the main, the translators were not exploratory enough and stayed close to the source language, rendering the word rather than the meaning, instead of translating the message and providing the gist of what was said in Arabic, seeking to preserve the sense as much as possible. A 'thought for thought' translation would be the best choice to accurately convey what the original phraseological units say. Some translators have underestimated the complexity of translating Quranic formulaic expressions. The above small sample shows that transferring just the words in English leaves behind the meaning, the rhythmic and poetic effect of the Quran. One of the major challenges of translating the Quran is that each word has rarely a precise equivalent in English. Thus, to transfer Quranic phraseological units literally, is not a sufficient guarantee of making the text accessible and understandable in the target language. Between word-for-word or sense-for-sense translation approaches, the translator of the Quran walks a tightrope; he/she must have a grasp of the centre of gravity, a sense of balance. The language of the Quran is used in an individual and creative way in order to convey a particular meaning and strike a chord to elicit and trigger a strong emotional response. Thus, any future translation of the Quran should be a collective effort, not an individual endeavour. The translator should translate the embedded message of the phraseology, not the form of the word combination, the matter not the manner. To translate the meaning not the word should be the main aim of the translator.

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