A Study in the Translation of Some Quranic Verses Including Ironic Expressions into English

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ABSTRACT

This study is intended to investigate the problems that translators encounter when translating ironic expressions in the Holy Quran into English. Some of these expressions have been singled out and then analyzed with reference to three well-known translations of the Quran. In addition, some well-known exegeses have been consulted to clarify the meaning intended in the Quranic expressions. Two important and interrelated issues have been discussed: how the expressions of irony have been translated, and how they should (or can) be translated in accordance with the interpretation. There are cases where translators of the Holy Quran do not convey the irony intended in the Holy Quran; therefore, some strategies have been suggested by the researcher.

The study indicates that a translator might face the problem of not being able to convey the irony intended in the source text. This problem comes as a result of various reasons. For example, some grammatical structures are used to convey meanings other than those literally and originally suggested by these structures. In addition, some lexical items are used with some combinations in a certain way that makes them loaded with irony in Arabic; however, when coming to the given renderings we find that they may convey the propositional content but failing to convey the intended shades of irony.
To deal with these problems, a translator can use certain strategies such as rendering the propositional content and using footnotes to clarify the intended irony. Translators can also use explanatory words between brackets to indicate that these words are not originally mentioned in the text. In some cases it is possible to convey the intended irony directly regardless of the literal meaning. However, this is not the case with all ironic expressions in the Holy Quran, for there are cases where the intended irony can be easily rendered by giving the literal meaning.