
Comparison of Leading English Translations of the Holy Quran by Muslims – Their Format and Distinctive Features in the Age of AI (ChatGPT)

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Abstract

After the rendition of the Holy Quran in Western languages especially the translation of the Holy Quran by Alexander Ross and George Sale in the English Language Muslims attempted to translate the Holy Quran. However, they believed that no translation could stand for the Arabic Text of the Quran. This study evaluates their contribution and conducts a comparative analysis to explore their components and distinctive features along with the example of translations generated by ChatGPT of the selected translators, and its differences, errors or accuracy. AI (Artificial Intelligence) technology plays a transformative role in generating these translations, allowing for more specific linguistic analysis, comparative studies, and broader access to translations of the Quran by leading Muslim Scholars who are familiar to Muslims as well as non-Muslim readers and researchers. This research analyzes the translators' reliability and commitment to the original Arabic meanings, sensitivity to cultural aspects, and target audiences. It evaluates the effectiveness of formatting and explanations in enhancing comprehension for readers unfamiliar with Arabic. By analyzing the translations, on the one hand, this study reveals how each translator's scholarly background and interpretative framework influence their rendition of the Quranic text. The findings provide important insights into the richness of Quranic translations, highlighting their role in advancing Islamic scholarship in the English-speaking world on the other hand, it evaluates the evolving as well as alarming challenges posed by the AI Tools, especially ChatGPT in rendition of the Quran and in retrieving different translations.

Keywords: Translations, Comparison, Style, Format and Distinctive Features, Open AI (Artificial Intelligence) ChatGPT, Differences in rendition, etc.

Introduction and Importance:

A considerable amount of literature has been produced regarding early English translations of the Qur'an by Muslims and non-Muslims, addressing various issues such as mistranslation, interpolation, additions,

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and omissions. However, there has been a relative lack of focus on the formatting trends and methodological approaches followed in these translations. In this paper, we aim to conduct a thorough evaluation of early English translations of the Holy Qur'an by Muslim scholars very well taken by scholars and ordinary readers. Our comparative study explores several distinctive elements thoroughly, including the overall format and structure of these translations, the organization and presentation of the text, and the thematic content of the prefaces crafted by the translators, illuminating how these aspects influence the reader's understanding of the sacred text.

The analysis highlights distinctive components, such as Yusuf Ali's extensive commentary and footnotes, Pickthall's formal language style, and Asad's philosophical insights, providing a detailed understanding of how these translations cater to diverse readers and their interpretative needs. Additionally, this research explores the specific factors that influenced their rendition of the Holy Qur'an, such as linguistic choices, cultural context, and theological perspectives. By providing this brief overview, we hope to create a source that will assist readers and researchers in doing further research and gaining a deeper understanding of these leading and early translations. This groundwork will also encourage further scholarly inquiry into the styles and impacts of these translations on the perception and reception of the Qur'an in the English-speaking world. It becomes more crucial to evaluate the role of AI in generating the Translation of the Quran as well as retrieving existing translations.

Different researchers have compiled the lists of translations of the Holy Qur'an in chronological order.¹ These sources² help readers and researchers to explore the early Muslim translators of the Quran. Among the long list of Muslim translators, I have picked the leading translators who are very well-received by Muslim as well as non-Muslim readers.

In this article, we aim to provide an in-depth review of the various formats, general characteristics, and distinctive features of Muslim translations of the Quran. Our focus will be primarily on the works of five prominent translators: Marmaduke Pickthall, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Muhammad Asad, Shakir and Taqi ud Din Hilali³. Their translations not only convey the original text's meaning but also reflect the cultural and linguistic dimensions of the source text that is Arabic though they have received the criticism as well for some mistakes.

Interestingly, even advanced generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, also frequently acknowledge these translations, ranking them among the most significant interpretations available⁴. This highlights their importance in both authentic online sources and AI tools.

This study serves as a resource for educators, translators, and readers seeking a comprehensive understanding of how contemporary English Quranic translations reflect both traditional Islamic scholarship and meet the modern needs which are emerging due to technological advancement.

Given the influence of these translators, it is crucial to dedicate time to evaluate and analyze their unique features thoroughly and further evaluate their presentation by AI Tools precisely, ChatGPT.

Format of translations and their significant Features:

The significant features and format of the translations by Muslim Scholars are as follows. It is being discussed in the light of printed as well as online available sources and forwards of different translators to keep the discussion authentic and reliable for further research and comparison.

Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1875-1936)⁵ Translation of the Quran:

Pickthall did a lot of effort in this regard. The Nizam of Hyderabad, India offered him a job in the state education service and sponsored his translation. In consultation with al-Azhar Ulama, prominently Mustafa al-Maraghi, (مصطفى المراغي) he finalized his work which was published first in 1930⁶.

Pickthall's translation has been widely accepted. It has been issued in almost every part of the world. Its simplified version has come out recently. With the increasing number of English-speaking Muslims, his translation has been frequently published; more than 80 editions in the last twenty years have been published so far though it is in archaic language but still is in demand.

Particularly, his use of archaic biblical language has been a "stumbling block" for the readers in the opinion of some critics, but his translation is still famous among scholars. In 1996 Arafat K. El-Ashi revised Pickthall's work in modern standard English. Besides achieving the above-stated objective, some mistakes may also be corrected in upcoming editions keeping the original edition in view⁷.

Another equally serious weakness in Pickthall's work is the absence of a sufficient number of explanatory notes. As a result, some readers might not understand or derive as much guidance from the Holy Qur'an as is hoped for due to brief notes and its archaic language.

However, he maintains the conventional, mainstream Muslim stance and he has not twisted or distorted the Qur'anic text to give it any specific perspective. Pickthall's work is free from rigid or dogmatic input, enabling readers to gain first-hand knowledge and understanding of the message of the Qur'an.

Pickthall's rendering of the Holy Qur'an, its arrangement, format, and some qualities are as follows:

Translator's Forward:

Pickthall's translation begins with the Forward, in which he mentioned the methods and manners of the rendition, one of which is the faith of the translator as he has stated:

"It may be reasonably claimed that no Holy Scripture can be fairly presented by one who believes its inspiration and its message..."⁸

Introduction:

It is in two parts in the first he describes the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Makka and in the second part he describes the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Madina in detail. He has presented the Muslim perspective in the light of authentic sources like Seerat-ibn-Hasham (السيره النبويه لابن هشام) and Ibn-i-Khaladun (ابن خلدون). He did not refer to the Orientalists while discussing the biography of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Notes: he has given notes wherever necessary in the translation of the Holy Qur'an. He has referred to the "Al-Beydawi (البيضاوي), Zamakhshari (الزمخشري) and Wahdi's Asbabu-un-Nuzul.(الاسباب النزول للواحي)⁹. A list of suras is also given at the end of the translation.

A generic index is also given for the reader's convenience. His translation is almost literal as he mentioned in his Forward regarding the methodology of his translation, he says:

"The book is here rendered almost literally, and every effort has been made to choose befitting language".¹⁰

He endorsed the traditional standing regarding the translation of the Qur'an and its inimitability that the "Koran cannot be translated" Therefore, he admits that: "It is only an attempt to present the meaning of the Koran- and peradventure something of the charm- in English."¹¹

He has taken every possible step to avoid any discrepancy or divergence in his translation and got it reviewed by very well-known scholars of his time in particular from "Shaykh Mustafa Al-Maraghi"¹² and from those scholars who were equally well-versed in Arabic as well as in English language and then he rendered his translation as he says, "Every care has thus been taken to avoid unwarrantable renderings"¹³. The word "unwarrantable" shows his consciousness and care for the needs of Muslim beliefs and perceptions of Muslims so that everyone may benefit from it without being offended.

Yusuf Ali's Translation, its format, components, and significant features:

Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1872-1953)¹⁴

Perhaps the most important and popular English translation to this day is the one by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, entitled “The Holy Qur’an: Translation and Commentary” It was published from Lahore in 1934. His translation journey started when he traveled to Europe and settled in London, where he began reviewing existing English-language translations of the Holy Quran. Afterwards, he travelled to Pakistan and settled in Lahore where he started working on the project of rendition of the Qur’an into English, with the aid of students at the Islamic College that he was appointed as head. **The translation** was revised and printed many times. The original work has endured selective revisions by two Muslim organizations; once in America by Amana Publications in 1989, and at nearly the same time in 1990 in Saudi Arabia by The Presidency of Islamic Research (IFTA), and the King Fahd Holy Qur’an Printing Complex. Yusuf Ali also made use of a slightly different verse numbering in the first editions; this has later been changed to the now standard Egyptian versions. It seems it was due to the influence of western translators of the Quran.

Its distinction is the detailed notes given in the footnotes and he heavily relied on the authentic and ancient commentaries of Holy Qur’an. The list of references and commentaries of Qur’an is given in the beginning of the translation. His citations are very accurate, and one can cross-check them and see details if needed. Therefore, these notes make it the authentic and reliable translation of the Holy Qur’an, though some critic highlighted the errors in his translation.

Though some scholars have written a critique on his translation still it is among the leading translations of the Holy Qur’an and famous among the learners of the Qur’an. Even ChatGPT highlights it against the prompt that “Who is leading Muslim translator of the Quran?”.

Allama Yusuf Ali’s rendering of the Holy Qur’an, its arrangement, and significant features are as follows:

The preface to the first edition is very important, in which he shares his experience of learning Arabic and reasons for translation, method of translation, the need for notes their sources are given, and their authenticity is also highlighted by him.

Commentaries of the Quran: he has discussed the importance of commentaries with their distinctive features and the way he had benefited from them.

Translation of the Qur’an: under this topic he referred to the history of the translation of Qur’an into European Languages and discussed the need of English translation by Muslim scholars.

Useful Works of reference: name of Dictionaries, Lexicon and Encyclopedias, Sirat-un-Nabi by Shibli Numani, Fath-ur-Rehman, an Arabic Concordance to the Qur'an.

Transliteration of Arabic Words and Names is also given to facilitate the readers. Abbreviations are also given for the convenience of the readers.

Contents: names of Suras in Arabic and English are given along with the notes their numbers and page numbers are also given, which are very helpful for readers to learn about the main ideas of the suras.

Arabic verses parallel to the English translation have been given along with detailed footnotes with citations.

Index: A detailed index comprised of about 58 pages has also been given, greatly helpful for scholars as well as ordinary readers.

Muhammad Asad's Translation of the Qur'an, its significant features:

Muhammad Asad (1900-1992)¹⁵

Muhammad Asad was born in Austria and embraced Islam at the age of 26. He had got a degree in philosophy which helped him to explore the philosophical dimensions of religion as well and he went on to get involved in the political scene of Islam. His translation "The Message of the Qur'an" was published at Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus in 1980. It was a sincere effort at the Qur'an rendition in English.

His translation contains some unorthodox views about miracles and seeks to explain these by allegorical interpretations. As an example, Asad sometimes makes descriptions of the creation and the created order accord with modern scientific theory and occasionally references women, prescribed punishment, and other ethical issues according to modern European values. He served as the first head of the Department of Islamic Studies at the University of Punjab after partition and was among the supporters of Muhammad Ali Jinnah. His translation is still being published and is very well received by researchers.

Muhammad Asad has succeeded in rendering the Holy Qur'an in a modern perspective. Its arrangement, format, and significant features are as follows: Contents: Names of Suras are given In English only. In the future, works of reference are given comprised of primary sources.

Translation: English translation parallel to the Arabic verses along with notes and their citation is given for the convenience of readers.

Four Appendices are given, and the first appendix is on "Symbols and Allegory in the Qur'an,".

Appendix ii is on "Al-Muqatta'at" (المقطعات), and Appendix iii is on the "Terms and Concepts of Jinns" whereas Appendix iv is on "The Night Journey"

It appears that Muhammad Asad has gone through all the translations of the Holy Qur'an by his predecessors as he commented:

“Still, none of these translations-whether done by Muslims or by non-Muslims- has so far brought the Qur'an nearer to the hearts or minds of people raised in the different religious and psychological climate and revealed something, however little, of its real depth and wisdom.”¹⁶

It shows that he was fully aware of the needs of his time and planned to meet them by doing a translation of the Qur'an in a modern perspective. Therefore, he claims that:

“It is an attempt-perhaps the first attempt- at a real idiomatic, explanatory rendition of the Qur'anic message into a European language.”¹⁷

He reiterates the reality of the inimitability of the Qur'an and says, “Nonetheless, I do not claim to have “translated” the Qur'an in the sense in which, say, Plato or Shakespeare, can be translated. Unlike any other book, its meaning and its linguistic presentation form one unbreakable whole.”¹⁸

However, his rendering of the Qur'an is one of the leading translations of the Qur'an. It has been referred by Muslima as well as non-Muslim scholars such as 'Karen Armstrong who has written books on Seerah and letter to Pakistan.

M. H. Shakir's rendering of the Qur'an and its significant components and features:

Shakir, M.H. (c. 1970)¹⁹:

One of the famous renderings of the Holy Qur'an was by Shakir. Many editions have been published. We know little about him. What is on the record is that he edited the unpublished translation of an Ismaili Shia Pakistani scholar Mahomed Ali Habib (d. 1959).

Originally published in Pakistan in 1968, it was reprinted in 1974 by the leading Shia body, the World Organization for Islamic Services, Iran and USA. Since 1982 it has been reprinted frequently and on a mass scale by Tahrike Tarsile Quran (تحريك ترسيل قران), USA initially as a joint venture with the Shia institutions - Muhammadi Trust, Zahra Trust, Aza Khana-e Zahra and Ahl-ul-Bait Foundation.

This translation has also been published several times by a Sunni publication house in India, “al-Risala/Good word” which is headed by Wahiduddin Khan. As a mission publication, it has been published in Iran, some European countries and mostly in USA. Many of its editions do not contain footnotes. The Shia doctrines and its impact upon the Qur'an is its key feature. Preoccupied with making the Qur'an verifying Shia notions, the translator states that the Qur'an speaks clearly of Hazrat Ali (RA) as being the Prophet Muhammad's chosen successor who possessed perfect knowledge of the Book, the incident of Ghadir Khum, Hussain (RA) as the

divine guide and Shia Imams as the only legitimate interpreters of the Qur'an. Going a step further, it is also highlighted that even the Bible foretells the advent of Hassan (RA) and Hussain (RA) as it refers to them as Shabur and Shabir, respectively.

For instance, it is common knowledge that verse 3 of al-Maidah was revealed on the day of 'Arafah during the Prophet's farewell pilgrimage and marks the completion of divine revelation. Shakir gives its contextual setting the following sectarian twist: "After his last pilgrimage when the Holy Prophet of Islam finally appointed Ali as his successor and Khalifa at Ghadir Khum, the above ayat about perfection of religion and completion of Allah's favours was revealed." In a similar vein, the Qur'anic expression "Ayyam Allah" (the Days of Allah) is misinterpreted: "The Days of Allah are birth and death anniversaries of the Masooms (the infallible Imams)."

Overall, it is in modern English and easy to understand and available online as well.

Shakir has rendered the Holy Qur'an in a simple way. It is apparently easy to read and follow. Its significant features are as given below: Its starts with the certificate of accuracy in printing and publication and then list of the Arabic terms along with English equivalent has also given by the translator in the beginning.

An index of names, terms, places, beliefs, and practices has been given. It also carries certain terms which reflect the sectarian association of the translator.

Page of contents has four columns first column is for surah number, second for English equivalent of the surah names, the third column is the Arabic transliteration of surah names and the fourth and last column refers to the page number. It is easier for the reader to follow and trace the surah, its name, and its equivalent in the English language.

A brief introduction to the Holy Qur'an, Islam, and Muslims has been given.

A Duwa of Imam As-Sadiq (RA) has given to read before the recitation of the Qur'an.

The Duwa translation of the Qur'an starts from the first surah as all Muslim follow the traditional arrangement and numbering of surahs.

Translation ends with the supplication of Hazrat Ali (RA) along with the reference of it from the saying of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It was published by "Ansariyun Publications" Iran.

As it was mentioned earlier that Shakir's rendering reflects his association with sect and even the index he has given reflect it very clearly. For instance, "Ahle-Bait, Ayat-E-Tathir, (33:33; 47:33; 76:8) and under the alphabet "A" he has given "Ali, The Chosen One (2:247) etc. Likewise,

under “G” the event of “Ghadir-e-Khum, (perfection of Religion) verses 3 and 67 of surah five are referred to this event according to his views. He has not given any explanatory notes at the end of the page or surah. Interestingly, readers can go through the Shakir’s plagiarism report.²⁰

Translation by Taqi ud-Din Al-Hilali (1895-1990) and Dr. Muhsin Khan (1927-)²¹:

Muhammad Taqi al-Din al-Hilali and Khan, M.M. are the eminent Islamic scholar, al-Hilali was born in Morocco and studied and taught Islam in various countries, including India. His last major assignment was at the Islamic University, Madinah as Professor of Islamic Faith and Teachings.

M. Muhsin Khan is a physician by profession who was born in Pakistan and gained his medical education in both Pakistan and UK. He worked for the Ministry of Health, in Saudi Arabia, and developed a keen interest in producing literature on Islam. Besides the Qur’an translation in English, in collaboration with Shaykh al-Hilali, he produced the English translation of Sahih al-Bukhari.

Their rendition appeared first in 1977, and during the last decade, at least 15 editions of this work have been published in hard cover, paperback, and pocket size. This translation is available and valued as an authentic translation. This translation showcases key elements of a traditional work. Scholars clearly define their main objectives as follows:

The translation of the meaning of the verses of the Quran related to the attributes of Allah in accordance with the faith of the Prophet’s Companions and those who followed them without giving similarities or examples or distorting or refuting completely or transferring the meanings.

Correction of serious errors that the previous translators had committed in their opinion. They have given the clarification of the obscure and unclear sentences which the previous translators have not done, to leave the English reader in confusion.

It is indeed delivered what is promised by them. The explanatory notes, which are of great help for the readers, are based on authentic Ahadith. Many Qur’anic terms and concepts which are inadequately defined in other English translations are explained satisfactorily. An extensive glossary appended to the work enables readers to gain acquaintance with the message of the Qur’an.

There were some other translators who are not known but they attempted to translate the Holy Qur’an like Muhammad Abdur Rahman, in 1926, published an English version of the Holy Qur’an.²²

It can be said that Sale, Rodwell, Arberry, and N.J Dawood’s translations of the Qur’an were very familiar and well-read translations among the Orientalists. They played leading role in setting trends and methodologies of

the translations.²³ Likewise, among the Muslim translators, Pickthall, Yusuf Ali, Asad and Hallai's translations are famous. Their number of editions are the enough evidence of their wide acceptance among scholars and those who are interested in Qur'anic studies.

After having an overview of translators and their translations the discussion can be concluded briefly that the Muslim and non-Muslim translators approached the Holy Qur'an differently.

George Sale's statement truly represents his and other Orientalist's approach towards the translation of the Holy Qur'an. He has revealed his intent in his preface of the translation:

"It is necessary to enlighten those who had been deceived by Qur'an, those who have positive towards it because of incorrect translations. We must be educated and aware enough to be able to discover the lies around it."²⁴

Their intentions according to their own opinion were to correct the misunderstanding and perplexities that surrounded Christianity because of Islam and distorted the translation of Qur'an in order to create confusion about it and refute it so that their community might not incline towards Islam. Whereas the Muslim translators have faithfully translated the Qur'an and represented the views of classical authorities such as Tafsir- at- Tabari, Al-Qurtubi, and Ibn Kathir, wherever necessary to eliminate the doubts spread by the Orientalists and present the true teaching of Islam and educate the readers etc.²⁵

Discussion and Findings:

The following table will help us to conclude our discussion on the distinctive features and formats given so far.

Format and contents: (Necessary introductions and Notes)

Authentic and well-researched introductions have been provided by several translators, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the text. Notably, Marmaduke Pickthall has adopted a similar approach to that of Orientalist translators such as Ross and Sale without mentioning it. However, while he addresses the polemical perspectives and the misinformation propagated by these earlier Western translators, he refrains from referring to them and explicitly pointing out their errors and mistranslations. It is a wonderful and positive approach to respond to the hostile views of Orientalists and facilitate the readers to access authentic sources to explore the facts and learn about the truth.

In contrast, the other translators have contributed brief yet insightful introductions that faithfully depict the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), drawing upon authentic and primary sources to enhance credibility such as Yusuf Ali and Asad.

They have provided thorough explanations of significant Arabic terms that hold both theological and juristic importance, allowing readers to grasp essential concepts more effectively.

Additionally, these translators have included comprehensive indexes to aid readers in navigating the text. Translators like Yusuf Ali and Asad have developed detailed indexes that facilitate a deeper understanding of the material, providing invaluable resources for those seeking to explore the uniqueness and peculiarities of the Arabic text and the context in which it was revealed. This emphasis on clarity and thoroughness enhances the overall reading experience and fosters a greater appreciation for the subject matter/Quranic text.

Motives and Sources of translations: (Religious Geo-political objectives)

The biggest purpose of their attempts was to highlight and present the true message of the Qur'an and respond to the Orientalists' refutation and hostile views. Service to Allah and mankind especially to the Muslim Community. The translators have made extensive use of authentic and primary sources, demonstrating a commitment to thorough and rigorous research practices. Their citation methods are comprehensive, allowing readers to easily trace references for validation. In fact, they exceed many Western translators in their dedication to utilizing genuine and original materials. In contrast, Orientalists like Ross and George Sale have often depended on secondary sources or incomplete citations, which limits the depth and reliability of their work. This distinction highlights the superior reliability and credibility of the translators' dedication and scholarship.

Usage of Language and Methodology: Archaic and middle language as well as the combination of literal and exegetical translation has been used. Faithful and respectful style of language has been used. Most of them learned Arabic and were equally competent in English Language among the Muslim translators. Arabic has been considered as prerequisite of the translation of the Qur'an, like Pickthall, Asad, Yusuf Ali and Muhsin and Hilali etc.

A distinctive feature of Pickthall's translation is its faithfulness to the original text. Unlike his contemporary, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, he does not paraphrase the meaning, and he adheres closely to the Qur'anic text. Being native speaker of English, Pickthall's translation exceeds other translations in the elegance of style and vocabulary. Although he enjoys the distinction of being the first major Muslim translator, but some find it difficult to understand. Modern Language has been used like Shakir, Muhsin, and Halali and a scientific approach has been opted by Asad.

It can be observed that the translation approach adopted is predominantly a combination of phrasal and literal translation methods, enriched with explanatory notes to enhance comprehension. Phrasal

translation focuses on conveying the meaning of expressions as whole sentences or themes, while literal translation seeks to maintain a word-for-word correspondence with the original text. They were familiar with the needs of the reader and to facilitate deeper understanding, notes have been incorporated throughout the translations, providing additional context and clarifications for readers who may not be familiar with certain concepts or Arabic Terms. Pickthall, in his translation, opts for a stylistic choice that incorporates archaic language, which gives the text a classic and timeless feel.

Pickthall's archaic language adds a distinct character to the text, which gives a sense of historical depth. This choice makes it difficult to understand the message on one hand for the ordinary reader and on the other hand it invites readers to engage with the text on a different level and struggle to understand the message of the Quran.

In contrast, other translators have decided to include transliterations for Important and crucial terms like "Muhsin" and "Halali" have done. This practice is essential as it preserves the original phonetics and meanings of these important concepts, allowing readers to appreciate their cultural significance. Furthermore, as we know the detailed notes in the translations serve various purposes, much like those found in the "Yusuf Ali's translation." These notes offer insights into the historical, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of the text, helping to illuminate complex themes and ideas. As a result, readers are not only provided with a translation but are also guided through a rich meaning that enhances their overall experience and understanding of the Arabic text and the true message of the Holy Quran.

Impact and Influence of Translations:

Muslims living in Western countries can access translations of the Holy Qur'an that are both more accurate and authentically reflect the original text. In the past, many Orientalist works were criticized for their biased translations, interpretations, and misrepresentations of Islamic teachings; however, these malicious intentions have come to light. As a result, both Muslims and non-Muslims are now equipped with better resources to understand the Qur'an and its profound messages. Furthermore, there has been a growing recognition among scholars and casual readers alike about the critical importance of understanding the prerequisites for translating the Qur'an from Arabic into other languages, especially in English Language. These prerequisites include a deep knowledge of the Arabic language, familiarity with the cultural and historical context of the text, and an awareness of the theological discourses that are essential for a faithful and comprehensive translation and interpretation. With these considerations in mind, readers can engage more meaningfully with the Qur'an, leading to a

richer understanding of its teachings and significance in the modern world. However, these renditions also have received criticism within the Muslim Community and indicate the need for standard translation of the Quran.

In a nutshell, one can say that Orientalists and their trend is to disregard the requirements and the prerequisites of translation and render it with a so-called objective approach whereas Muslim translators realized the importance of prerequisites of translation of the Qur'an and learning of Arabic and different commentaries of the Quran. Orientalists followed free and narrative methodologies of translations whereas, Muslims tried to render the Qur'an with the closest equivalent or mentioned important information in parentheses for readers or gave detailed notes wherever necessary.

The translation of the Quran is a very vast subject, having uncountable significant and unique features. Some studies have taken place on the methodologies²⁶ and the styles of the translations, and their accuracy according to the source language Arabic. Nonetheless, there is still a need to further explore the trends of translation methodology evolving in the modern era of generative AI such as ChatGPT. Following is the table showing the differences and errors that an AI tool (ChatGPT) can make as compared to other authentic, online sources such as "Quran Explorer, etc. as researchers need to evaluate and examine the produced and generated information by AI against any prompt regarding translation or translator²⁷ of the Quran. It helps Scholars to conduct more rigorous studies of these translations to explore and identify the biases and inaccuracies in the translations and other outcomes of the Generative AI Tools.

The complexities involved in the process of translation are becoming increasingly challenging. On one hand, the task of examining translations from their original language that is Arabic to the target language is vital; it requires meticulous attention to the translation process to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the message of the Quran to be conveyed. On the other hand, it is essential to engage in an ongoing process of evaluation, analysis, and comparison between printed versions and authentic online translations of the Quran, alongside those generated by Open AI. This comprehensive approach is crucial to address the evolving challenges in the field of translation of the Quran and Hadith, ensuring that interpretations remain faithful to the original text while also being accessible to contemporary readers, and researchers.

Muslim scholars are encountering significant difficulties in articulating the original message of the Quran across different languages, as they strive to maintain its depth and meaning. The advent of artificial intelligence further complicates this task, presenting new challenges that

require careful consideration and innovative solutions to meet these challenges by religious scholars and IT professionals.

Example of the Online Translations and Comparison with the Translations Retrieved by ChatGPT a Prominent AI Tool:

Translation of Surah 25 verse 30 is given in the table by the different Translators.

وَقَالَ الرَّسُولُ يَا رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي اتَّخَذُوا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ مَهْجُورًا²⁸

waqāla l-rasūlu yārabbi inna qawmī ittakhadhū hādhā l-qur'āna mahjūra

Translator	Translation retrieved from ChatGPT ²⁹	Translation retrieved from Online authentic sources	Quran Explorer ³⁰
Marmaduke Pickthall	"And the Messenger saith: O my Lord! Lo! my people have taken this Quran for abandoned."	"And the messenger saith: O my Lord! Lo! Mine own folk make this Qur'an of no account. ³¹	And the messenger saith: O my Lord! Lo! mine own folk make this Qur'an of no account.
Muhammad Asad	And the messenger will say: 'O my Sustainer! Verily, my people have taken this Quran for nothing but a thing of abandonment.'	"AND [on that Day] the Apostle will say: "O my Sustainer! Behold, [some of] my people have come to regard this Qur'an as something [that ought to be] discarded! " ³²	AND [on that Day] the Apostle will say: "O my Sustainer! Behold, [some of] my people have come to regard this Qur'an as something [that ought to be] discarded!"
Abdullah Yusuf Ali	And the Messenger will say: 'O my Lord! Truly my people took this Quran for just an object of ridicule.'"	"Then the Messenger will say: "O my Lord! Truly my people took this Qur'an for just foolish nonsense. " ³³	Then the Messenger will say: "O my Lord! truly my people took this Qur'an for just foolish nonsense."
M.H. Shakir	"And the Messenger will say: O my Lord! Surely, my people have taken this Quran for a forsaken thing."	"And the Messenger cried out: O my Lord! Surely my people have treated this Quran as a forsaken thing." ³⁴	- ³⁵

Taqi ud Din Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan	"And the Messenger will say: 'O my Lord! Verily, my people deserted this Qur'an.'"	"The Messenger (Muhammad ﷺ) will say: "O my Lord! Verily, my people deserted this Qur'an (neither listened to it, nor acted on its laws and teachings). ³⁶	And the Messenger (Muhammad SAW) will say: "O my Lord! Verily, my people deserted this Qur'an (neither listened to it, nor acted on its laws and teachings).
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Careful analysis of the table, as mentioned above, helps readers identify the difference (highlighted in red) between the column one translations retrieved by ChatGPT and the translations through authentic online resources. This means that ChatGPT sometimes doesn't provide the original translation of the writer against the mentioned prompt, which can create confusion and mislead the reader or researcher. In column three, the translation from another online source, Quran Explorer (a frequently used website) has given the same translation as the original, which proves that online resources provide the same translations. Still, ChatGPT gives different and incorrect translations due to its algorithms and designed models. That's why the user must be vigilant while using AI tools, writing relevant and effective prompts, and asking ChatGPT to provide the original translations and information related to the translators for any comparison or research work and to further check it with authentic sources.

When we ask ChatGPT to analyze a verse of the Holy Quran it only gives a generic analysis of the given verse it cannot critically analyze the text like a human, also it only analyzes the linguistic approach of the text without any citations or references, or without considering the original Arabic text which can cause illusion or hallucination. For example, the analysis of the ChatGPT regarding the translation of surah Al-Fatiha verse 1 by Yusuf Ali is given below:

Yusuf Ali: "Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds."

Analysis of ChatGPT: Yusuf Ali's use of "Cherisher and Sustainer" provides additional depth, reflecting God's nurturing aspects. This phraseology is both reverent and poetic, aligning with his classical, embellished style.³⁷

It can be concluded that various translators have approached the interpretation of the Quran with distinct choices in finding equivalent wording as the source language, each striving to capture the essence of the original text according to their expertise. For instance, they have used different terms in translating Mahjura (مَهْجُورًا) such as "deserted," "forsaken

thing," and "foolish nonsense," each offering a unique perspective on a similar concept that does not truly reflect the essence of the message and original Arabic word (مَهْجُورًا). This highlights the complexity of the process and indicates that certain terms and aspects of the Quran may be overlooked by translators, therefore, researchers need to do more rigorous and deeper research on the equivalents of Arabic in English and other languages. It needs to evaluate methodologies of translation and highlight the style according to the Arabic Language and its context.

In addition to this, a closer examination reveals that ChatGPT has made multiple inaccuracies in presenting translations when compared to the original texts available online, which have been specifically marked in red for clarity in the table. These discrepancies serve as a reminder that ChatGPT should not be relied upon without investigation, as it may unintentionally lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations of significant religious content and discourses. This illustrates the importance of consulting authentic sources for the accurate translation of the Quran and a better understanding of the message of the Quran and its interpretation.

Scholars and academicians are strongly encouraged to undertake a thorough comparison of the printed versions of various translations, established online sources, and the responses generated by ChatGPT. This comparison is crucial for drafting comprehensive policies that govern the ethical use of AI tools in academic and religious contexts.

Departments of religious studies, along with religious institutions, have a vital role in compiling a list of authentic sources for the translations of the Holy Quran. This initiative should include careful examination to identify any inaccuracies or errors presented by AI tools, with a particular focus on the shortcomings of ChatGPT.

Moreover, it is imperative for a consortium of religious scholars to carefully assess the most recent websites that showcase new translations of the Quran such as *Islam Awakened*³⁸. These scholars should pay special attention to the works of translators who may not be widely recognized or easily accessible, as these translations can have a profound impact on the public's understanding and interpretation of the text. Therefore, scholars need to examine them along with the leading English translations of the Quran mentioned above and enlist the equivalents to certain terms and words to standardize the translation and evaluate the capacity and capability of the translator to avoid distortion in the message of the Quran.

Refranses

1 Mohammed, Khaleel. "Assessing English Translations of the Qur'an." Middle East Quarterly 12.2 (2005): 59-71.

Binark, Ismet and Halit Eren. World Bibliography Translations of the Meanings of the Holy Qur'an Printed Translations 1515-1980. Istanbul: Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture, 1986.

Tadros, Fawzi Mikhail, comp, The Holy Koran in the Library of Congress-A Bibliography. Washington, D.C.: The Library of Congress, 1993.

Morey, Robert. Islamic Invasion. Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1992.

Arberry, A.J. British Orientalists. London: William Collins, 1943.

Barton, James. The Christian Approach to Islam. Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1918.

<http://englishtranslationsofthequran.com/1649-1904.htm>

see for details: Ghulam Sarwar, Hafiz, Translation of the Holy Quran, National Book Foundation, Lahore, 1973. Pp vii- I xxi.

2 A List can be seen:

1. An exhibition was organized by Majlis-e-Aloom-e-Islamiya, Civil Lines Lahore from May 13 to May 20, 1965 in which translation of Holy Qur'an were presented by different scholars and influential people (names are given in the end of the booklet). Its report was written by the Chairman of the Department of Islamic Studies and Arabic, Dr. Abdul Hai Siddiqui, in which Dr Hai compiled a list of translations of the Holy Quran in regional as well as European languages.

kidwai, Abdur-Rahim, "Mustashriqeen and English Translations of Qur'an", (compiled by Akhater Wasay, Prof.), Al-blagh Publications, New Delhi, Ed. 2015. P 18-19.

Yusuf Ali, Abdullah, "The Holy Qur'an: Test Translation & Commentary" Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, Kashmiri Bazar, Lahore Ed. 3rd 1980, pp. xiv-xv.

3 See details:

Jairajpuri, Aslam, "Tareekh-ul-Qur'an" (تاريخ القرآن) Awaz Ishaat Ghar, Urdu Bazar, Lahore, pp109-114.

Sarim, Abdusmad, "Tareekh-ul-Qur'an" (تاريخ القرآن) Idar-e-Aslamiya, Dhanni Ram Road, Anarkali Lahore, Ed. 2nd 1963, pp 139-148.

4 Dr. Atiq-ur-Rehman. (2024). Religious/Quranic Text, Translation, and Generative AI: A Comparative Analysis of Online Sources and ChatGPT. Journal of World Religions and Interfaith Harmony,3(1), P.401. <https://doi.org/10.52461/jwrih.v3i1.3102>

(When we pose the question to ChatGPT, "What is the best English translation of the Holy Quran?" ChatGPT responds that Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation is the best among Muslim translators, while Arberry's translation is the best among Western translators.)

It seems that ChatGPT retrieved the information from the following website:

<https://www.quora.com/How-many-English-translation-versions-of-the-Quran-are-there-and-which-is-the-best-one-amongst-them>

5 Pickthall was a British convert to Islam and embraced Islam in 1914, the son of the Reverend Chas Pickthall, Rector of Chillesford, Suffolk, UK. He received his early education at Harrow. His close association with the Druzes of Mount Lebanon and consequently he inclined towards study of Arabic got closer to Islam and Muslims. In 1919, he served as the Imam of Working Mosque, Surrey and became editor of Islamic Review. It was time when he studied Islam deeply and decided to translate Qur'an into English, as he had found the Qadyani Muhammad Ali's (1917) erroneous translation.

https://brill.com/display/book/edcoll/9789004327597/B9789004327597_015.xml?language=en

file:///D:/Quran.Trans.%20Ross%20&%20Sale/Comparison%20Muslim%20Trans.,%20MArch%202024/9789004327597-B9789004327597_015.Picthal.pdf

"Review on Pickthall's English Translation of the Quran", Muslim World 21 (1931), 287-303 (Name of author is not stated against this article).

Ansari, Iqbal Husain Corrections of Errors in Pickthall's English Translation of the Glorious Quran Karachi Published by the Author, 1991. P. 24.

-Kidwai, A.R. "Review on the revised version of Pickthall's translation in modern English", Muslim World Book Review 18:1 (Autumn 1997), 14-17

Mustashraqueen Aur Angraizi Tarajim-e-Qur'an. P.34-35.

6 Abdulla Yusuf Ali (introductory notes), p. xix.

7 See details in Kidwai's review online: <https://englishqurantranslations.wordpress.com/2014/12/03/pickthall-muhammad-marmaduke/>.

<https://www.globalvillagespace.com/remembering-muhammad-pickthall-qurans-first-credible-english-translator/>

8 Pickthall, Muhammad Marmaduke, "The Glorious Qur'an: an explanatory translation" Accurate Printers, Urdu Bazar, Lahore, 1973, (See Translator's Forward).

9 https://ia601302.us.archive.org/5/items/asbab_nozol/asnz.pdf

10 Ibid (see Pickthall's Translation "Forward.")

11 Ibid (see Pickthall's Translation "Forward")

12 Sheykh Mustafa Al-Maraghi (March 5, 1881-Aug. 22, 1945, AD) Jurist, educator and Former Rector of Al-Azher University Egypt (From 1927-29 & from 1935-45). See details:

<https://biography.yourdictionary.com/mustafa-al-maraghi>

13 Pickthall's Translation "Forward."

14 Mustashrequeen Aur Angraizi k Tarajim-e-Qur'an. (مستشرقین اور انگریزی کے تراجم) (قرآن) P. 35-37.

One can get access to the account/biography through online sources and can do a comparison with ChatGPT accounts:

<https://englishqurantranslations.wordpress.com/2014/12/03/ali-abdullah-yusuf/>

<https://quranyusufali.com/preface-to-first-edition-1934/>

15 Mustashrequeen Aur Angraizi k Tarajim-e-Qur'an. P. 41-42.

Muhammad Asad was born in Austria (now Galicia, Poland) in Leopold Weiss, as a son of a lawyer and grandson of an orthodox rabbi in 1900. At the age of 26, he embraced Islam and went on to get involved in the political scene of Islam. He had got degree in philosophy which helped him to explore the philosophical dimensions of religion as well.

<https://culture.pl/en/article/muhammad-asad-the-polish-jewish-muslim-intellectual>

16 Asad, Muhammad, "The Message of the Qur'an", Dar- Al-Andalus Gibraltar, 1980, p. ii.

17 Ibid (Forward) p. v

18 Ibid. (Forward) p. v

19 Kidwai, A.R. "Review of the Holy Quran translated by M.H. Shakir", Muslim World Book Review 6:3 (Autumn 1986), p. 57.; details can be retrieved from the given link as well:

<https://englishqurantranslations.wordpress.com/2014/12/03/shakir-m-h/>

<https://ahmadiyya.org/movement/shakir.htm>

20 <https://www.muslim.org/intro/ShakirPlagiarismReport.htm>

21 Mustashreeqeen Aur Angraizi k Tarajim-e-Qur'an. (مستشرقین اور انگریزی کے تراجم) (قرآن) Pp. 40-41.

Kidwai, A.R. "A New English Translation of the Quran" Muslim World League Journal 23:4 (1995), 38- 41.

Kidwai, A.R. "Review on Hilali's and Khan's Noble Quran" Muslim World Book Review 15:3 (1995), 3-5.

<https://dusunnah.com/article/biography-of-shaykh-mu%E1%B8%A5ammad-taqi-addin-al-hilali-al-maghribi/>

<https://dusp.org/authors/muhsin-khan.htm>

22 See list given at the end of "Mustashreeqeen Aur Angraizi k Tarajim-e-Qur'an. (مستشرقین اور انگریزی کے تراجم قرآن) Pp. 107-111

23 See details: Dr. Atiq-ur-Rehman, Dr. Abid Naeem, and Dr. Muhammad Hammad Lakhvi. 2024. "Comparison of Translations by Orientalists, Format, Factors, and Distinctive Features of Their Translations". AL-IDA'AT Research Journal 4(1) pp30-31.

<https://alasar.com.pk/ojs3308/index.php/alidaat/article/view/286>.

24 Sale, p. xvi

25 See details: Kidwai, A.R. "A New English Translation of the Quran" Muslim World League Journal 23:4 (1995), 38- 41.

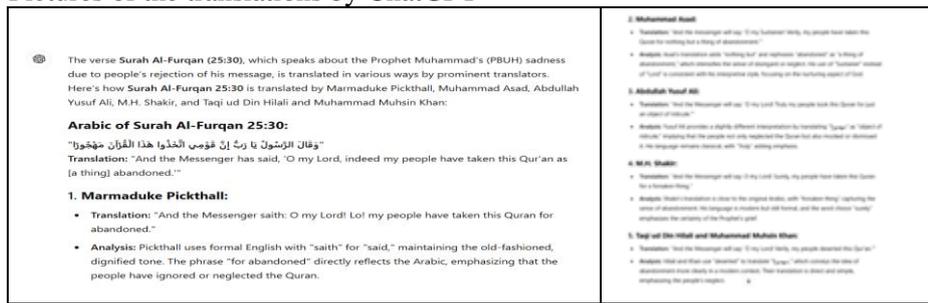
Kidwai, A.R. "Review on Hilali's and Khan's Noble Quran" Muslim World Book Review 15:3 (1995), 3-5.

26 Such as word-for-word translation, literal translation, faithful translation, communicative translation, semantic translation, free translation, etc.

27 ChatGPT asserts that it can translate verses from the Quran; however, it often generates inaccurate translations, leading to potential misinterpretations of the original text.

28 Al Quran 25:30

29 Pictures of the translations by ChatGPT



30 <https://www.quranexplorer.com/quran/>

Same translations as Quran Explorer on the given links:

<https://quran.com/25?startingVerse=30>

https://quranenc.com/en/browse/english_hilali_khan/25

<https://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=25&verse=30>

31 <https://legacy.quran.com/25/30>

32 <https://www.islamawakened.com/quran/25/30/>

33 <https://legacy.quran.com/25/30>

34 ibed

35 M.H. Shakir's translation is not given

36 https://quranenc.com/en/browse/english_saheeh/25#30

37 See some analyses are given by ChatGPT in the screenshot: (Comparisons can be made using online/printed authentic sources with ChatGPT's analysis which seems generic and retrieved from open sources.)

"Lord of the Worlds" captures the reverent tone and grandness without elaboration.

- **Muhammad Asad:** "All praise is due to God alone, the Sustainer of all the worlds."
 - **Analysis:** Asad's translation chooses "God alone" to emphasize monotheism and "Sustainer" to reflect God's role in providing and maintaining creation. His choice of words brings a more interpretive, explanatory dimension.
- **Yusuf Ali:** "Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds."
 - **Analysis:** Yusuf Ali's use of "Cherisher and Sustainer" provides additional depth, reflecting God's nurturing aspects. This phraseology is both reverent and poetic, aligning with his classical, embellished style.
- **Shakir:** "All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds."
 - **Analysis:** Shakir follows closely to the literal structure of the Arabic text, staying plain and accessible. The absence of additional descriptors like "Cherisher" or "Sustainer" keeps the translation concise.
- **Taqi ud Din Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan:** "All the praises and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the 'Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists)."
- **Analysis:** This translation adds interpretive clarity with "mankind, jinn, and all that exists" to define "Alamin." The additional context within parentheses reflects the translators' intent

Message ChatGPT

ChatGPT can make mistakes. Check important info.

38 <https://www.islamawakened.com/quran/25/st76.htm>