Application of Nida's Concept of Formal and Dynamic Equivalence to English Translation of Surah Al-Tariq

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ABSTRACT

The Holy Quran is the last book of Allah revealed to Holy Prophet Muhammad PBUH. It has been translated into many languages of the world. I have chosen English translation of one of its chapters i.e. Surah Al-Tariq to examine Eugene Nida's theory of translation. Considering Formal and Dynamic Equivalence as theoretical framework, I will evaluate the translation of Surah Al-Tariq, translated by an Ahmadi scholar, Muhammad Ali, in order to examine to what extent Eugene Nida's theory of translation is applicable to English translation of Surah Al-Tariq. The Holy Qura'n is comprised of 114 Surahs which are in certain order. Current research will facilitate us apply the same theoretical framework to other Surahs of the Holy Quran in order to enhance our understanding about it.

Keywords: *Formal and dynamic equivalence, English translation, Surah Al-Tariq*

I.   Introduction

The initial translations of The Holy Quran are undoubtedly not professional translations. These translations have been made by Muslim clerics who were not trained and expert translators. Arberry examined that although the original Arabic version of The Holy Quran has been translated into French, Latin, English and other languages but the issue of professional translation by an expert translator remains unsolved.[1] Muhammad Ali belongs to Ahmadiya Community which is not regarded as Muslim so it will be interesting to probe into his version of translation of Surah Al-Tariq. In order to examine Eugene Nida's theory of translation I will systematically proceed with my research. I will begin with the review of literature and then in my research I will give a precise introduction to Formal and Dynamic Equivalence in the section of research methodology. This research will clearly state the objectives of the research as well as the research questions that will be addressed in the section of analysis and finally on the basis of the findings of the analysis conclusion will be made.

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II.   Objectives

Although Nida's theory of translation has been applied to the English translation of different chapters of The Holy Qura'n, that I intend to bring into discussion in the section specified for literature review, yet I could not find any research-oriented study of this particular chapter i.e. Surah Al-Tariq where Nida's theory of translation might have been examined. Therefore, I launch this study to examine how far Eugene Nida's theory of translation is applicable to the English translation of Surah Al-Tariq by Muhammad Ali; keeping in mind this general objective, my current study aims at following aspects:

I.   To provide the researchers a point of departure for the application of Nida's theoretical framework to the religious books,

II.   To examine application of different aspects of Nida's theory to the English Translation of Surah Al-Tariq, and

III. To compare the target text and source text at semantic level.

III.   Problem Statement

As previously mentioned, till sixteenth century we do not find professional translations of the holy Qura'n. If we find a few English translations of Holy Qura'n, these do not fit into the category of professional translations. Muhammad Ali attempted to translate the holy Quran into English in order to make up the previous deficiencies. The current research aims to find out the answers of questions listed below:

I.   How does the theory of equivalency work in the English translation of Sural Al-Tariq by Muhammad Ali?

II.   What are the aspects of Nida's theory of translation evident in the English translation of Surah Al-Tariq?

III. How can Nida's model be applied to the entire translation of The Holy Quran by Muhammad Ali considering this study as a focal point?

IV.   Literature Review

This section has been specified to present the reviews of previous researches on the said topic. Since I have taken Eugene Nida's model of translation as my theoretical framework, first I will princely discus his theory so that forthcoming literature review and analysis may be understood well in the light of the concepts of Eugene Nida regarding translation. After it I will provide a general review of previous studies which used Nida's model as theoretical framework to examine the English translations of The Holy Quran.

V.   Nida's Concept of Formal and Dynamic Equivalence

It is very interesting to find out that Eugene Nida built his theory of translation mainly from his own works i.e. translation of Bible which helped him train himself as an expert and professional translator.[2] His initial works were independently published by his own name and later he co-authored his works with Reiss. Nida argues that science of translating and the theory and practice of translation stand crucial in translation studies.[3]

Jakobson examined the issue of equivalence in his paper: Language in Literature. He concluded that since the code units are different in different languages so full equivalence cannot be achieved.[4] He furthered remarked in this work that message remains the same though the code units differ and equivalence can be achieved even violating the codes of target language.

Nida brought this issue of equivalence to the scientific domain and build his ideas on the recent advancements in the field of Linguistics particularly those of Noam Chomsky.[3] He suggested that Formal Equivalence focuses on the message itself both in form and content. A translated text should match the source text as closely as possible both at semantic level and as well as at linguistic level. Nida calls Dynamic Equivalence as Functional Equivalence and this is what he names as "principle of equivalent effect" where the relationship between the receptor and the target text should be the same as it exists between the receptor and the source text.[2] He further suggests that the message should be tailored according the linguistic needs and cultural expectations of the target audience. Stressing on the naturalness of the expression Nida frames out four fundamental requirements for a successful translation. Firstly, it should make sense, secondly, it should convey the manner and the spirit of the original. On third place it should have natural and easy expression and finally, it should produce a similar response in target text audience.

VI.   Previous Works

Kettani claims that current population of the Muslims in the world is over 2 billion out of which 66% population lives in Asia.[5] Muhammad Ali belongs to Pakistan, South Asia. Apart from him, a bulk of work has been produced by the Muslim and non-Muslim scholars [like Muhammad Ali] on the translation of The Holy Quran in English, Urdu and other languages. Having said this, no work specifically deals with the said theory of Nida and its application to the English Translation of Surah Al-Tariq. Although Nida's theory of translation has been applied to other surahs of The Holy Quran yet this has been applied to the translation of Muslim translators not an Ahmadi translator like Muhammad Ali.

Jabak applied the same theoretical framework (Eugene Nida's theory of Formal and Dynamic Equivalence) to the English translation of Surah Al-Shams.[6] He took his sample Surah for his studies from the authentic English translation of The Holy Quran, *The Qur'an Arabic Text*

with Corresponding English Meanings produced by International (888-889). His findings were appealing as he concluded that Nida's theory of translation was violated in the target text and the translator failed to achieve equivalence.

Yari also worked on adjustments in the Holy Quran based on Nida and Taber's model and revealed that there were adjustments at lexical and semantic level.[7] Examining the English translation of Surah Alzariyat, they also discovered structural adjustments. One thing that they concluded is appealing that the translators remained faithful to the sensitivity of the Quranic verses and did not fall a prey to reduction in case of the translation of abstract words.

Khanlari compared two different English translations of Surah Al-Baqarah by two different translators to examine the application of Nida's theory.[8] They found out the Fooladvand's translation was more understandable because it preserved the structure of the source text and it added interpretation and explanations to certain ambiguous terms in brackets on the other hand Omid Majd's translation was poetic which not only violated the intended meaning of holy verses but also failed to achieve any sort of equivalence.

VII.   Research Method and Data Collection

Since current research is thoroughly qualitative in which I tend to explore the applicability of Nida's theory of translation to the holy verses from Surah Al-Tariq (The Holy Quran), qualitative method of research has been used throughout the research i.e. from data collection to data analysis and conclusion. In order to get the detailed information about Nida's theory of translation I examined two books e.g. Toward a Science of Translating by Nida and The Theory and Practice of Translation by Nida. [3] These books helped me understand the theory to the core. After it I selected the English Translation of Surah Al-Tariq by Muhammad Ali. I examined closely each verse of the said Surah in order to reach just conclusions. The third methodological step in my current study was to keep the original source text of Surah Al-Tariq in parallel to the target text. Of course, the language of source text is Arabic. There are two reasons behind my selection Surah Al-Tariq as source text. The first reason is that it is a short chapter which is quite appropriate for a limited and short study like this. The second reason is that no one has attempted before to examine the applicability of Nida's theory of translation to the English translation of this chapter of Holy Quran. Evaluation and interpretation of the data is made through data driven approach.

VIII.   Analysis and Discussion

In The Holy Quran there are total 114 chapters (Surahs). Surah Al-Tariq is the 86th Surah. In this Surah there are total 17 verses and each verse is logically connected with the other. Total number of words of Surah Al-Tariq in source text, which is written in Arabic, are 69 while the

English translation of the same Surah by Muhammad Ali is comprised of 137 words which is double than the words of source text. This considerable difference of words between both the texts e.g. target text and source text is one of the universal rules of translation proposed by Toury, [9] Chesterman [10] and Munday [11]. All these scholars are of the view that target texts, as a rule, tend to be longer than the source texts. This proves that the English translation of Surah Al-Tariq properly adheres to Nida's transfer stages. Last process in Nida's transfer stage is the "literary transfer". Literary transfer maintains equivalent effect on the audience of target text.

First verse "والسماءالطارق" has been translated as "by the heaven and comer by night!" Form of the source text has aptly been maintained by the translator and the message in target text matches closely with the source text; in this way Formal Equivalence has been achieved. In the second verse there is a phrase "ومادراک" which means " what do you know?" the translator has translated it as "what will make thee know". It shows that neither the form nor the spirit and manner of the original text has been maintained in the target text. In verse 3 "ان کل نفس لماعليهاحافظ" the intended meaning is that for all human beings God has assigned the duty of angels who protect them from every misery. This verse has been translated as "there is nor a soul but over it is a keeper". According to the structure of English grammar here the use of "nor" is also questionable and at the same time the translator has tried to tailor the message according to the linguistic needs and cultural expectations of the target readers but he has been failed to achieve the response of the target readers towards the text as exists between the source text and receptors or the original text.

Regarding the creation of man, original text demonstrates that the man has been created from the water which spurs out from his back and chest. The translator has translated this phenomenon of creation improvising his own notion. Instead of "back and chest" he has used the expression "back and ribs". So in this translation neither Formal Equivalence has been achieved nor Dynamic Equivalence. Target audience cannot get any idea out of this translation what is being conveyed. Had the translator used the brackets in order to explain the said phenomenon of the creation of man, it would have been more appropriate to make the target audience understand the message of the source text.

Source Text (Surah Al-Tariq)	English Translation (Muhammad Ali)
والسماء و الطارق	By the heaven and the Comer by night!
ومادراک ماالطارق	And what will make thee know what the Comer by night is?

ان كل نفس لماعليهاحافظ	There is nor a soul but over it is a keeper.
يخرج من بين الصلب والترآءب	Coming from between the back and the ribs.
والارض ذات الصدع	And the earth opening (with herbage)!
وماهوبالهزل	And it is not a joke.

<div align="center">Table 1.1</div>

Use of brackets in the translated text is nonexistent. There is use of brackets in the translation of a couple of verses. For example, the translation of verse 11 "والارض ذات الصدع" uses bracket at the end to explain the context of the opening of the earth which is "with herbage". Although this use of brackets has not been used throughout the translation, yet where it has been used it enhances the understanding of the message of source text. The verses, like this, where brackets have been used are more prone to Dynamic Equivalence as compare to the verses where brackets have not been used. Similar response from the target audience has not been achieved in the major part of the translation. Verse 14 "وماهوبالهزل" means that the word of God is not useless and absurd, which is translated by Muhammad Ali as "it is not a joke". This proves that although the translator has faithfully attempted to achieve the desired response from the target audience yet he ended up with literal translation of many verses.

IX. Literal Translation

Table 1.2 shows that the translator has ended up with the literal translation of the source text. Although, the translator attempted to make his translation fit in the community of native English speakers in order to achieve Dynamic Equivalence yet the target fails to achieve the desired response from the target audience.

Source Text (Surah Al-Tariq)	English Translation (Muhammad Ali)
So let man consider of what he is ejected.	فلينظرِالانسان مما خُلق
He created of water pouring forth,	خُلِق من مَّاءدافق
Surely he is able to return him. (to life)	إنّهُ على رجعه لقادر
Surely it is a decisive word.	إنّهُ لقول فصل
On the day when hidden things are manifested	يوم تبلى السّرآئر

<div align="center">Table 1.2</div>

Verse 5 in the source text of Holy Quran implies that man should ponder over his creation. Man should consider the process and cycle of creation in order to recognize his creator. The translator's approach in the translation of this verse is derogatory. He has used the word "ejected" for the process of man's creation. In this verse, source text makes its readers understand that from what elements man has been created but the translator translates it as "of what he is ejected". In this way although he has been successful in synchronizing the text with the demands and needs of target audience yet the essence of the message of the source text has not been conveyed properly to the target audience. In this way we cannot claim that Dynamic Equivalence has been achieved by the translator. The immediate verse after it, explains the essence of the creation of man. It explains the man has been created from the water (liquid). The translator translates it as "he is created of water pouring forth". This phrase "water pouring forth" is confusing.

As the previously analyzed source text tells the readers that this water comes out from between the lions and the chests, verse 8 further reinforces this notion that God Almighty restores this water back to chests and lions once it has been discharged out it. The translator has translated this verse as "Surely He is able to return him (to life). Here we can say that although Formal Equivalence has been violated, yet it cannot be stamped as literal translation. The spirit of the message of the source text has been aptly conveyed to the target audience. Brackets have been used aptly in the translation of this verse to convey the actual message. If the brackets had not been used in the end of the translation of this verse, the message would not have been conveyed clearly to the target audience.

Translation of verse 13 is a literal translation. It has nothing to do with Formal or Dynamic Equivalence. Source text in verse 13 means that Holy Quran's decision is the authentic decision. Whatever Holy Quran says regarding the creation of man or overall creation of the entire universe that is the most authentic word. The translator translates it as "Surely it is a decisive word." The question may arise here in the minds of target readers that "what word?" Translator, Muhammad Ali, has used impersonal pronoun "it" surely for Holy Quran but how can it be conveyed to the target readers that "it" stands for Holy Quran? He should have used brackets after "it" to make it clear to the target readers that Quran's word is the ultimate word. Hence, the translation of this verse is only a literal translation which doesn't achieve the desired response from the target audience.

Referring to the day of judgement, source text in verse 8 tells that the secret of the creation of man, with all other secrets, will be revealed to all and these will be tested for their authenticity. As in the previous verse it has been told that Allah has power to restore water back to chests and lions, this secret of restoration will be tested and human beings will come to understand this secret. The translator has used the word "manifested" instead of "tested" in

target text. He conveys to the target readers only that the hidden things will be manifested. Contrary to this expression, the source text is conveying a very deep and philosophical message.

The translation of the last three verses also ends up as literal translation. In these verses Allah says that disbelievers make evil designs. Their plans are against believers, and they are all the time busy in making these plans. Allah, too, makes his plan in order to counter their plans. The translator has translated this message as "they plan a plan and I plan a plan". This translation offers nothing to the target audience that what message is being conveyed. What is the plan of the disbelievers? and whether Allah's plan works against their plans or not. Here, use of brackets was necessary for the convenience of the target readers. Since the translator didn't use brackets and made literal translation of Arabic source text, target readers cannot understand the core message conveyed in these verses.

X.   Conclusion

The above analysis prompts us to conclude that Nida's theory of Formal and Dynamic Equivalence is not applicable to the translation of Surah Al-Tariq. There may be the reason that Muhammad Ali, the translator, didn't intentionally maintain this equivalence and ended up with literal translation that he might not dare change the word of God. He might not intentionally have tailored the word of God according to the linguistic needs and cultural expectations of the target audience. After all the word of God is sacred. Secondly, this sample analysis of Surah Al-Tariq is not enough to make generalizations. One needs to expand this analysis on other chapters of the translated text of The Holy Qur'an. Since this was a short time limited study, I can apply its findings to the entire English translation of The Holy Quran by Muhammad Ali.

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