

Investigating the Challenges in Translating Rhetorical Questions in the Holy Qur'an

Nagah Ahmed Palkeer *

Department of English Language, Faculty of Arts, Tobruk University, Tobruk, Libya

nagah.palkeer@tu.edu.ly

دراسة تحديات ترجمة الأسئلة البلاغية في القرآن الكريم

نجاح أحمد بالخير *

قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية الآداب، جامعة طبرق، طبرق، ليبيا

Received: 22-07-2026	Accepted: 26-08-2026	Published: 29-08-2026
		
Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).		

المخلص:

تُعد الأسئلة البلاغية في القرآن الكريم من أبرز الأساليب البلاغية نظراً لما تحمله من دلالات ضمنية وأغراض بلاغية تتجاوز صيغتها الاستفهامية الظاهرة وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تفصي الصعوبات اللغوية المرتبطة بترجمة الأسئلة البلاغية في القرآن الكريم إلى اللغة الإنجليزية، كما تسعى لاستكشاف الصعوبات التي يواجهها المترجمون في نقل المعنى المقصود، ولتحقيق هذا الهدف استخدمت الدراسة المنهج النوعي في تحليل البيانات، حيث تقارن بين أربع ترجمات للقرآن الكريم لرصد التباين في صياغة الأسئلة البلاغية، ولأسيما تلك التي تفيد التهديد والتعجب والتوبيخ والتأكيد. وتتضمن عينة الدراسة أربعة أسئلة بلاغية مختارة وفق معايير محددة من سور مختلفة في القرآن الكريم، وتم تحليل الترجمات الأربعة استناداً إلى المنهج اللغوي ليكون الإطار النظري للدراسة، تُظهر النتائج أن ترجمة الأسئلة البلاغية تمثل تحديات كبيرة حيث تؤدي الاختلافات اللغوية والأسلوبية إلى تباين في المعنى.

الكلمات الدالة: الأسئلة البلاغية، القرآن الكريم، ترجمة عربي- انجليزي، المعنى الحرفي.

Abstract

Rhetorical questions in the Holy Qur'an are one of the crucial rhetorical devices as they convey implicit meanings and rhetorical purposes beyond their interrogative form. This study aims at shedding the light on the linguistic challenges encountered in translating rhetorical questions in the Holy Qur'an into English. It aims to explore the difficulties that translators face in conveying the intended meaning in these questions. In order to fulfil this purpose, a qualitative method was used. The study compares four translations of the Qur'an to identify variations in rendering rhetorical questions, particularly those expressing threat, exclamation, reproach, and affirmation. The sample of this study includes four rhetorical questions selected based on specific criteria from different Surahs in the Holy Quran. The translations of the four Qur'an translators were analyzed based on the linguistic approach as a theoretical framework. The

findings reveal that translating rhetorical questions is challenging, as differences in linguistic and stylistic choices lead to variations in meaning.

Keywords: rhetorical questions, the Holy Qur'an, Arabic-English translation, literal meaning.

Introduction

The Qur'an, Allah's word revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), has presented a significant challenge for translators. It has been translated into many languages to enable Muslims who are non-Arabic speakers to understand the word of Allah. However, the meanings of Qur'anic texts often undergo change and distortion during the translation process. This can be attributed, first, to the unique nature of Qur'anic language itself, and second, to the limitations of the target language. The language of the Quran is highly rhetorical and cannot be compared to ordinary Arabic.

AbdelWali (2007, p. 2) confirms this by stating that the Qur'anic text is a linguistic miracle characterized by semantic, syntactic, rhetorical, cultural, and phonetic features that no other Arabic text can equal. Moreover, it has been proposed by Newmark (1988, p. 15) In the Qur'an, rhetorical questions constitute one of the most prominent rhetorical devices, playing a crucial role in conveying implicit meanings and communicative intentions. A rhetorical question does not seek an actual answer; rather, it serves a specific function intended by the speaker. Larson (1984, p. 257) defines rhetorical questions as interrogative grammatical forms used with a non-question meaning. In translation, Qur'anic rhetorical questions require careful treatment to avoid misinterpretation, as preserving their rhetorical force cannot be achieved through literal translation alone.

The translation of Qur'anic rhetorical questions into English presents a significant challenge due to their functional and rhetorical nature, as they are not intended to seek direct answers but to convey specific communicative purposes. These questions are often translated literally or treated as real interrogatives, which results in the loss of their rhetorical functions, such as reproach, denial, affirmation, and amazement, and may lead to distortion of the intended meaning of the Qur'anic text. Therefore, this study aims to examine the extent to which selected English translations of the Qur'an succeed in conveying the rhetorical functions of Qur'anic rhetorical questions and to identify the main challenges translators face in preserving both meaning and rhetorical effect.

The present study aims to investigate the translation of rhetorical questions in the Qur'an and to examine how their rhetorical meanings and communicative functions are conveyed in English translations. More specifically, the study seeks to identify rhetorical questions in selected verses of the Qur'an. Additionally, to analyses the rhetorical functions of these questions in their original Arabic context. Besides, it aims to examine how Qur'anic rhetorical questions are translated into English by four different translators.

1. Literature Review

Previous studies on Qur'anic rhetorical questions have consistently emphasized such interrogatives do not function as genuine requests for information but rather serve specific rhetorical purposes. For instance, Najjar et al. (2019) define rhetorical questions as structures whose form does not correspond to their communicative function, highlighting that they are primarily used to express meanings such as assertion, negation, denial, and exclamation rather than to elicit answers. Their study further demonstrates that the translation of these rhetorical functions into English often results in partial distortion, particularly when the contextual and interpersonal dimensions-referred to as tenor-are not adequately preserved.

The rhetorical question is a visible notion that exists in all languages spoken by people. According to Siemund (2001, p.1015), "arguably, rhetorical questions can be found in all languages of the world, and they also appear to be functioning in a comparable manner." Moreover, Hackstein (2004, p.167) emphasizes rhetorical questions as a across-linguistic phenomenon in both written and oral discourse. Similarly, Najjar and Kadhim (2021) investigate the challenges associated with translating Qur'anic rhetorical questions, arguing that their meanings are deeply tied to discourse functions rather than grammatical form. Their findings reveal that rhetorical questions in the Qur'an frequently convey functions such as negation, testing, and emphasis, and that these functions may be altered or weakened in translation if the translator fails to account for their pragmatic and interpersonal roles. The study adopts a

functional linguistic approach, particularly Halliday's concept of tenor, to show that meaning in rhetorical questions is constructed through context rather than structure alone.

In a similar vein, Al-Smadi (2022) explored the challenges of translating rhetorical questions in the Quranic text through a comparative study of various English translations. The study demonstrated that while translators often succeed in conveying direct semantic meanings, they frequently fail to capture deep pragmatic functions such as irony, longing, and threatening. The researcher recommended that translators should rely more heavily on exegesis (Tafsir) sources to accurately determine the rhetorical purpose before translating. Ali (2018) conducted a pragmatic analysis of rhetorical questions in selected Quranic verses using Speech Act Theory. The study proved that rhetorical questions in the Quran function as directive and expressive acts aimed at producing a specific effect on the recipient. The researcher emphasized that the "perlocutionary effect" is the most vital criterion to consider when analyzing or translating these verses to ensure they are not stripped of their persuasive and emotional content. Abdul-Raof (2006) examined the functions of rhetorical questions in the Quran, investigating the implicatures that arise when a question departs from its literal meaning. The study identified more than fifteen pragmatic functions, asserting that the context (Siyāq) is the primary determinant of the intended meaning, whether it be denial, affirmation, or wonder. This makes context a crucial element in both linguistic analysis and interpretation.

2. Methodology

This part of the research presents an analytical and descriptive study of rhetorical questions within the Glorious Quran. It aims to explore how these questions function beyond their literal meaning, focusing on the stylistic and rhetorical nuances captured in English translations. This chapter outlines the procedures followed in selecting the data and the criteria for choosing the specific translations used for analysis.

2.1 Data collection

In this research, the sample consists of the four authoritative English translations that represent diverse historical, stylistic, and exegetical traditions. The selection of these texts is not arbitrary; rather, it is intended to provide a multifaceted perspective on how divine rhetoric is reconstructed for an English-speaking audience.

The analytical scope of this study is defined by four translations. Sahih International is included as a contemporary benchmark, favored for its idiomatic clarity and its strict adherence to the consensus of traditional scholarship, which provides a modern linguistic baseline (Saeed, 2008). To contrast this modern approach, the work of Marmaduke Pickthall is utilized for its formal elegance and its historical significance as one of the earliest English renderings by a Muslim scholar; his style is particularly noted for attempting to preserve the "untranslatable" majesty of the original text through a sophisticated and solemn vocabulary.

Furthermore, the translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali is selected for its poetic cadence and its profound ability to capture the spiritual "undertones" of the Quranic verses, making it an essential text for analyzing the aesthetic impact of rhetorical questions (Kidwai, 2007). Complementing these is Muhammad Asad's intellectualized rendering, which is indispensable for this study due to its rigorous focus on the semantic and metaphorical depth of the Arabic language. Asad's approach often prioritizes the underlying "message" and rational implications of the text, providing a crucial contrast to more literal interpretations (Saeed, 2008).

2.2 Data Collection Procedures:

The data set comprises a purposive sample of Quranic verses where the interrogative form is utilized to achieve specific illocutionary forces. The selection was meticulously curated to cover four major rhetorical

categories that are central to Quranic eloquence: Warning and Threat (تهديد وتوعيد), Reproach (توبيخ), Affirmation (تقرير), and Exclamation (تعجب).

By shifting the focus to "Warning and Threat," the study delves into the eschatological and moral gravity inherent in the Quranic address. Each verse was selected based on its clarity in representing one of these functions, ensuring a rich ground for comparing how different translators navigate the tension between the grammatical question and its intended rhetorical "sting" or "awe."

Table (1): Rhetorical question functions as Reproach and its translations

(Al-Hajj: 46)	أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَنُكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْمَلُونَ بِهَا أَوْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِنْ تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ (46)
Sahih International:	So have they not traveled through the land and have hearts by which to reason and ears by which to hear? For indeed, it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts.
Pickthall	Have they not travelled in the land, and have they hearts wherewith to feel and ears wherewith to hear? For indeed it is not the eyes that grow blind, but it is the hearts, which are within the bosoms, that grow blind.
Yusuf Ali	Do they not travel through the land, so that their hearts (and minds) may thus learn wisdom and their ears may thus learn to hear? Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts which are in their breasts.
Muhammad Asad	Have they, then, never journeyed about the earth, letting their hearts gain wisdom and their ears learn to hear? For, verily, it is not their eyes that have become blind—but blind have become the hearts that are in their breasts.

The Interpretation of the Verse

According to Ibn Kathir's interpretation (1999), this verse addresses the situation of disbelievers who deny the truth despite the clear evidence available to them. The verse calls them to travel through the earth and reflect on the fate of previous nations. The rhetorical question is used as a form of reproach and denial, criticizing their failure to use their faculties of reason and hearing properly. It emphasizes that true blindness is not physical blindness, but spiritual blindness of the heart, meaning the inability to perceive and accept truth. Therefore, the question is not asked to obtain an answer, but to highlight their negligence and lack of reflection.

Data Analysis

Table (1) demonstrates the analysis of the four translators of this verse, this comes in the form of a rhetorical question that is not intended to seek an answer, but rather aims at reproach, warning, and provoking reflection. The interrogative particle “أَفَلَمْ” is used here to rebuke those who neglect to take lesson from the signs of Allah on earth, and to urge them toward intellectual and spiritual awareness. Accordingly, the interrogative structure performs a rhetorical function that goes beyond literal meaning to influence the recipient. In these translations, the way this rhetorical question was conveyed differs, as does the degree of preserving the strength of its meaning. Saheeh International adhered to a communicative translation approach., “So have they not traveled...?” maintaining the direct interrogative structure while linking it to a contemplative result, which reflects a literal translation approach to the rhetorical structure

without significant expansion of meaning. Similarly, Marmaduke Pickthall used “Have they not traveled in the land...?” with a Literal translation and limited Interpretation additions such as “wherewith to feel,” which indicates his commitment to a literal translation approach. As for Yusuf Ali, the structure shifted to “Do they not travel through the land...” moving from the implied past in Arabic to the present continuous, and he added interpretive expansions such as “their hearts (and mind) may thus learn wisdom,” which indicates a literal translation English approach aimed at clarifying the rhetorical meaning for the English reader. In contrast, Mohammed Asad presented a paraphrasing translation such as “Have they, then, never journeyed about the earth...?” where he added emphatic particles such as “then” and “never” to strengthen the sense of reproach, and also expanded the sentences to explain the spiritual implication, such as “letting their hearts gain wisdom,” which reflects a focus on conveying the functional meaning rather than the form.

Thus, it can be concluded that translators dealt with the rhetorical question in two ways: Saheeh International and Pickthall preserved the question form in English to remain close to the original structure, but this may reduce the perceived intensity of reproach for English readers; whereas Yusuf Ali and Mohammed Asad did not limit themselves to the question form but added words and expansions such as “then,” “never,” and “wisdom,” which made the reproach and idea clearer but slightly moved away from conciseness and the original form.

Table (2): Rhetorical question functions as affirmation and its translations

(Surah Al-Qiyamah: 40)	أَلَيْسَ ذَلِكَ بِقَدِيرٍ عَلَىٰ أَن يُحْيِيَ الْمَوْتَىٰ (40)
Sahih International	Is not that [Creator] Able to give life to the dead?
Pickthall	Is not He (Who doeth so) Able to bring the dead to life?"
Yusuf Ali	Has not He, (the same), The power to give life To the dead ?
Muhammad Asad	Is not He, then; able to bring the dead back to life?

The Interpretation of the Verse

According to the interpretation of Ibn Kathir, verse 40 of Surah Al-Qiyamah — “Is not that [Creator] able to give life to the dead?” — affirms Allah’s complete power to resurrect the dead. Ibn Kathir explains that the verse comes after mentioning the stages of human creation, showing that the One who created الإنسان from a mere drop and perfected him is certainly قادر على إعادته after death. The question in the verse is rhetorical and meant as an affirmation, with the implied answer: “Yes, indeed, He is able.” It serves as a response to those who deny resurrection and emphasizes that the One who began creation can easily repeat it.

Data Analysis

In Table (2), it has been presented that this verse is expressed in the form of a rhetorical question functioning as confirmation, which is not intended to seek an answer, as the response is already self-evident. Rather, it aims at assertion and emphasis on the reality of resurrection after death. The interrogative particle “Is not” performs a strong rhetorical function, combining both negation and interrogation, thereby reinforcing a sense of intellectual compulsion and leading the addressee toward acceptance of the truth without dispute. Hence, the challenge in translating this verse lies in preserving the strength of rhetorical confirmation while maintaining the high degree of conciseness that characterizes the Qur’anic text. In the translations, Saheeh International adopts a literal translation at the beginning: “Is not that [Creator] Able to give life to the dead?” The addition of “[Creator]” serves to clarify the theological reference of the pronoun “that.” Although it preserves the yes/no interrogative structure, this interpretive insertion slightly weakens the rhetorical conciseness of the original text while, at the same time, enhancing clarity for the English reader. Similarly, Marmaduke Pickthall follows a literal translation: “Is not He (Who doeth so) Able to bring the dead to life?”

He maintains the interrogative structure and adds a limited explanatory phrase in parentheses (“Who doeth so”) to link the verse to its preceding context without significant expansion. This preserves a relative degree of conciseness and rhetorical structure, although the archaic language may reduce the immediacy of the rhetorical effect for modern readers. In the translation of Yusuf Ali: “Has not He, (the same), the power to give life to the dead?” His translation is interpretive, as “Able” is replaced with “the power,” shifting the focus from ability to divine authority. The frequent parentheses and parenthetical additions (e.g., “the same”) introduce a strongly explanatory tone aimed at clarifying the theological meaning. However, this comes at the expense of conciseness and the condensed rhetorical rhythm of the original verse. Likewise, Muhammad Asad offers a paraphrasing translation: “Is not He, then, able to bring the dead back to life?” the addition of “then” introduces a logical inference based on the preceding context, thereby strengthening the confirmatory and rhetorical force of the question. The phrase “bring the dead back to life” adds slight interpretive expansion without major distortion of meaning. However, this interpretive approach still results in a reduction of conciseness compared to the original Arabic expression.

The rhetorical question in this verse is translated in two main ways. Saheeh International and Pickthall largely preserve the interrogative form with limited explanatory additions, making their translations closer to the Arabic structure, although the rhetorical force of confirmation may be less perceptible to English readers. In contrast, Yusuf Ali and Muhammad Asad employ a more expanded, paraphrastic approach through additions such as “then” and “power,” which enhances theological clarity and explicitness but does so at the expense of conciseness and the dense rhetorical structure of the original text.

Table (3): Rhetorical question functions as exclamation and its translations

(Hud:72)	قَالَتْ يَوٰئِلَيَّ اَلِدُّ وَاَنَا عَجُوزٌ وَهٰذَا بَعْلِي شَيْخًا اِنَّ هٰذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجِيْبٌ ﴿٧٢﴾
Sahih International	She said ,”woe to me! Shall I give while I am an old woman and this, my husband, is an old man? Indeed, this is an amazing thing!”
Pickthall	She said "Woe betide me! Shall I bear a child when I am an old woman, and this my husband is an old man? Lo! this is a strange thing."
Yusuf Ali	She said :”Alas for me ! Shall I bear a child, Seeing I am an old woman, And my husband here Is an old man ? That would indeed Be a wonderful thing ! ”
Muhammad Asad	Said she:"Oh, woe is me! 104 Shall I bear a child, now that I am an old woman and this husband of mine is an old man? Verily, that would be a strange thing indeed!"

The Interpretation of the Verse:

According to the interpretation of Ibn Kathir, verse 72 of Surah Hud describes the astonishment of the wife of Prophet Ibrahim when the angels gave her the glad tidings of a son, Isaac. She exclaimed, “Woe to me! Shall I give birth while I am an old woman and this, my husband, is an old man?” Her reaction reflects her disbelief and amazement at the possibility of childbirth due to her old age and barrenness, as well as her husband’s advanced age. She described it as “a strange thing,” meaning something extraordinary and beyond the usual course of nature.

Data analysis:

Table (3) demonstrates different translations of this verse, it appears in an emotional exclamatory context that reflects the astonishment of Sarah (peace be upon her) upon receiving the news of the divine promise

of a child. The expression “يَا وَيْلَتَى” is used to convey intense surprise and emotional reaction, rather than an actual invocation of destruction. Similarly, the interrogative “Shall I bear a child” carries an exclamatory rhetorical tone, expressing the improbability of the event from her perspective due to natural reasons (old age). Thus, the rhetorical function of the verse lies in evoking astonishment and emotional intensity rather than seeking an answer. In the translation of Saheeh International, the rendering is: “She said, ‘Woe to me! Shall I give birth while I am an old woman and this, my husband, is an old man? Indeed, this is an amazing thing!’” This translation follows a literal translation, preserving the interrogative structure (Shall I give birth) while conveying emotion through “Woe to me.” However, the expression “amazing thing” slightly softens the intensity of astonishment, as it carries a more neutral or even positive connotation, which reduces the original emotional force. Similarly, Marmaduke Pickthall translates it as: “Woe betide me! Shall I bear a child when I am an old woman, and this my husband is an old man? Lo! this is a strange thing.” Pickthall maintains a literal translation, using archaic expressions such as “Woe betide me” and “Lo!”, which reinforce the traditional tone of the text. The phrase “strange thing” conveys a more neutral sense of astonishment, yet the translation still preserves a relatively high degree of conciseness without extensive paraphrasing. In Yusuf Ali, the translation reads: “Alas for me! Shall I bear a child, seeing I am an old woman, and my husband here is an old man? That would indeed be a wonderful thing!”

This is a paraphrasing translation, where “Alas for me” and “wonderful thing” introduce a strong emotional. However, this shifts the meaning of astonishment into something closer to admiration, thereby weakening the sense of rhetorical surprise and improbability. Moreover, the extended syntactic structure reduces conciseness. Finally, Muhammad Asad renders it as: “Oh, woe is me! Shall I bear a child, now that I am an old woman and this husband of mine is an old man? Verily, that would be a strange thing indeed!” Asad adopts translation by paraphrasing, adding emphatic particles such as “Verily” and “indeed” to strengthen the logical and emotional dimension of astonishment. The phrase “strange thing” preserves the sense of improbability, but the structural expansion makes the translation closer to an interpretive explanation rather than a concise rhetorical form. From this analysis It can be concluded that the first two translators (Saheeh International and Pickthall) preserve the interrogative structure and emotional tone of the original verse, though with differences in style. In contrast, the latter two (Yusuf Ali and Muhammad Asad) adopt a more paraphrastic and interpretive approach, which enhances clarity and emotional explanation but reduces rhetorical conciseness.

Table (4): Rhetorical question functions threat and warning and its translations

(Al-Araf: 97)	أَفَأَمِنَ أَهْلُ الْقُرَىٰ أَن يَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا بَيِّنًا وَهُمْ نَابِئُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾
Sahih International	Then, did the people of the cities feel secure from Our punishment coming to them at night while they were asleep?
Pickthall	Did the people of the townships then feel secure against the coming of Our wrath upon them at night while they were sleeping?
Yusuf Ali	Did the people of the towns feel secure against the coming of our wrath by night while they were asleep?
Muhammad Asad	Can, then, the people of any community ever feel secure that Our punishment will not come upon them by night, while they are asleep?

The Interpretation of the Verse:

According to the interpretation of Ibn Kathir, verse 97 of Surah Al-A'raf carries a strong warning and admonition from Allah to the disbelieving people of the towns. The verse questions how they can feel secure from Allah's punishment, which may come upon them suddenly at night while they are asleep, or during the day while they are unaware and heedless. This rhetorical question expresses condemnation of

their false sense of security, emphasizing that their disbelief and denial make them deserving of punishment. It serves as a reminder that divine punishment can come unexpectedly, and no one should feel safe while persisting in wrongdoing.

Data analysis:

As table (4) demonstrates, a number of translations seek to render this verse, it expressed in the form of a threatening rhetorical question, which is not intended as a genuine inquiry, but rather aims to negate false feelings of security and to warn against negligence regarding God's punishment. The interrogative particle "أَلَمْ يَـٰ" performs a strong rhetorical function that combines warning and threat, portraying people in a state of complete reassurance while sudden punishment befalls them unexpectedly. This effect is further intensified by the reference to nighttime and sleep, both of which symbolize heedlessness and vulnerability. Thus, the main translational challenge lies in preserving the intensity of warning and the threatening tone without compromising Qur'anic conciseness. In the translation of Saheeh International, the rendering is: "Then, did the people of the cities feel secure from Our punishment coming to them at night while they were asleep?" This literal translation, it maintains the rhetorical interrogative structure, using "Then" to connect the verse to its preceding context. It also clarifies "Our punishment" instead of "bā'sunā." Although the meaning is clear, some syntactic expansion slightly reduces rhetorical conciseness, similarly, Marmaduke Pickthall renders it as: "Did the people of the townships then feel secure against the coming of Our wrath upon them at night while they were sleeping?" Pickthall follows a classical literal translation, preserving the interrogative form. The use of "wrath" adds a strong connotation of divine anger, enhancing the threatening tone of the verse.

In Yusuf Ali, the translation by paraphrasing is: "Did the people of the towns feel secure against the coming of our wrath by night while they were asleep?" This translation is relatively close to Pickthall's in structure but employs simpler language. It preserves the rhetorical question but does not introduce additional elements that intensify the sense of threat or warning. This reflects a literal classical approach, focusing more on general meaning than on rhetorical force. Finally, Muhammad Asad translates it as: "Can, then, the people of any community ever feel secure that Our punishment will not come upon them by night, while they are asleep?" Asad opts for the translation by paraphrasing, adding elements such as "then" and "ever", and expanding "any community", which generalizes the address to all readers. This enhances the didactic and warning function of the verse but moves away from Qur'anic conciseness and introduces a more interpretive. From this analysis It can be concluded that Saheeh International, Pickthall, and Yusuf Ali preserve the original interrogative structure, producing translations that are closer to the Arabic text, though they differ in the intensity of the warning effect. In contrast, Muhammad Asad adopts a more expanded paraphrastic approach, which strengthens the interpretive and didactic function of the verse, but at the expense of conciseness and rhetorical structure.

3. Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the translation of rhetorical questions in the Holy Qur'an and to explore how their rhetorical meanings and communicative functions are conveyed in English translations. In order to achieve this aim, nine Qur'anic verses containing rhetorical questions were carefully selected and analyzed.

Furthermore, the study examined how these nine rhetorical questions were translated into English by four translators: Sahih International, Marmaduke Pickthall, Yusuf Ali, and Muhammad Asad. The comparative analysis revealed noticeable variation in the translators' approaches to rendering rhetorical force. While some translators tended to preserve the interrogative structure of the original Arabic, others employed stylistic or syntactic shifts in an attempt to convey emphasis, rebuke, or affirmation more effectively. Such variation reflects broader translation strategies discussed in translation studies literature (Baker, 2018).

In conclusion, this study highlighted the complexity of translating Qur'anic rhetorical questions and underscored the necessity of considering both rhetorical function and pragmatic meaning. The findings demonstrated that rhetorical questions in the Qur'an are powerful communicative devices that require careful interpretation and sensitive translation. The differences observed among translators reflect

different translational priorities between literal fidelity, interpretive clarity, and stylistic elegance, all of which significantly influence the transfer of rhetorical meaning into the target language.

References

- Abdelwali, M. (2007). The loss in the translation of the Qur'an. *Translation Journal*, 11(2).
- Abdul-Raof, H. (2006). *Arabic rhetoric: A pragmatic analysis*. Routledge.
- Ali, A. Y. (1934). *The Holy Qur'an*. DigiCat.
- Al-Smadi, H. M. (2022). Challenges in translating rhetorical questions in the Holy Quran: A comparative study. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 12(3), 583–590. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1203.19>
- Asad, M. (1980). *The message of the Qur'an*. Dar Al-Andalus.
- Baker, M. (2018). In other words: A coursebook on translation (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Hackstein, O. (2004). Rhetorical questions and the grammaticalization of interrogative pronouns as conjunctions in Indo-European (pp. 167–186).
- Elsaadi, N. M. (2026). EFL Libyan students' Perception towards the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a tool for learning English language: A study at department of English, Sirte University. *مجلة جامعة بني وليد للعلوم الإنسانية والتطبيقية* 11(1), 191-205.
- Ibn Kathir, I. (1999). *Tafsîr ibn kathîr*. Dar-us-Salam.
- Kidwai, A. R. (2007). *Bibliography of the translations of the meanings of the Glorious Qur'an into English, 1649-2002: A critical study*. King Fahd Qur'an Printing Complex.
- Larson, M. (1984). *Meaning-based translation: A guide to cross-language equivalence*. University Press of America.
- Najjar, I. I., Kwee, S. B., & Abu-Alhaj, T. A. (2019). Tenor of Quranic rhetorical questions: With reference to two English translations. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 8(2), 205.
- Adbeeb, S. M. (2016). Pedagogical Philosophy (No One Should Left Behind) by. *مجلة جامعة بني وليد للعلوم الإنسانية والتطبيقية* 1(2), 163-179.
- Najjar, I., & Kadhim, K. A. (2021). Religious translation between Arabic and English, with reference to Quranic rhetorical questions. *Respectus Philologicus*, 39(44), 120–135.
- Newmark, P. (1988). *A textbook of translation*. Prentice Hall.
- Imsallim, R., Abouhajar, N., & Imsallim, W. (2025). Integrating the 5E Instructional Model with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory: Vocabulary Learning through Story-Based Instruction to EFL Libyan Year One Students. *مجلة جامعة بني وليد للعلوم الإنسانية والتطبيقية* 10(3), 272-283.
- Pickthall, M. M. W. (n.d.). English [Pickthall]. *Al Jami' for the Sciences of Quran*. https://quran-uni.com/mos-haf/translations/en_pickthall
- Saeed, A. (2008). *The Qur'an: An introduction*. Routledge.
- Saheeh International. (1997). *The Qur'an: Arabic text with corresponding English meanings*. <https://asimiqbal2nd.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/quran-sahih-international.pdf>
- Siemund, P. (2001). Interrogative constructions. *Language Typology and Language Universals*, 2, 1010–1028.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions, and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of JLABW and/or the editor(s). JLABW and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions, or products referred to in the content.