

Pragmatic Equivalence in the Translation of 'Qaryah' in the Holy Qur'an: An Analysis of Cross-Cultural Implications

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the concept of pragmatic equivalence in the translation of the term 'Qaryah' within the Holy Qur'an and its cross-cultural implications. The study aims to analyze the challenges and opportunities involved in achieving effective cross-cultural communication through translation while preserving the intended pragmatic meaning. The data for this research was collected from the Qur'an, specifically by identifying verses that contain the term 'قرية' and selecting those where the term was pragmatically employed. A number of 15 verses that contain the term 'Qaryah' were chosen in this study. The study compares the translations of Sahih International and Yusuf Ali of the term 'Qaryah' into English. The findings reveal that the translation of the word "قرية" (Qaryah) demonstrates the challenges of capturing the precise meaning and pragmatic implications in English.

الملخص

يدرس هذا البحث مفهوم التكافؤ البراغماتي في ترجمة مصطلح "قرية" في القرآن الكريم وآثاره الثقافية المتنوعة. وبشكل خاص، تهدف الدراسة إلى تحليل التحديات والمجالات في نقل المعنى بشكل فعال أثناء الترجمة مع الحفاظ على المعنى البراغماتي المقصود في النص الأصل وفي بيئة الثقافة الهدف. تتكون بيانات هذا البحث من عدد 15 آية قرآنية تحتوي على مصطلح "قرية"، حيث تم اختيار تلك الآيات التي تم فيها استخدام المصطلح بشكل براغماتي. وتقارن الدراسة ترجمات صحيح انترناشنل ويوسف على مصطلح "قرية" إلى الإنجليزية. حيث كشفت النتائج أنه يصعب ترجمة كلمة "قرية" مع الحفاظ على المعنى الدقيق والآثار البراغماتية المتصلة بها إلى اللغة الإنجليزية.

KEYWORDS: Pragmatic equivalence, Qur'anic translation, 'Qaryah' (village), cultural implications

Introduction

The translation of religious texts presents unique and intricate challenges. This is particularly more apparent when it pertains to capturing the subtle meaning and conveying pragmatic expressions. The Holy Qur'an holds immense significance as a sacred scripture of Islam. It resonates with millions of individuals worldwide. Consequently, attaining pragmatic equivalence in its translation becomes imperative in fostering cross-cultural comprehension and effective communication. The objective of this research is to investigate the pragmatic equivalence in translating the term 'Qaryah' (village) as used in the Holy Qur'an, with a specific emphasis on its cross-cultural implications.

The term 'Qaryah' within the Holy Qur'an exhibits a rich tapestry of pragmatic nuances. It offers a range of meanings and implications that can be applied in various contexts. Indeed, language and culture play pivotal roles in shaping the interpretation and translation of religious texts. Pragmatics has long been an area of research across different cultures. Al-Shabab (1996), Rutherford and Smith (1985), and Coumlas (1981) have underscored the overlooked phenomenon of cross-cultural pragmatics. Their work highlights that achieving pragmatic equivalence in translation often falls short of conveying the intended meaning due to the inappropriate transference of pragmatic norms from one's native language (L1) to the target language (TL) (Taha & Aqil, 2004).

In essence, this research aims to delve into the complexities of translating the term 'Qaryah' in the Holy Qur'an, considering its multifaceted implications within different cultural contexts. By exploring the pragmatic dimensions of this term, the study seeks to shed light on the accurate pragmatic equivalence in its translation. The findings contribute to the broader understanding of the interplay between language, culture, and pragmatics in the translation of religious texts. It ultimately facilitates meaningful cross-cultural dialogue and comprehension of the Holy Qur'an. Thus, the objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the pragmatic nuances of the term 'Qaryah' in the Holy Qur'an.

2. To analyze the implications of achieving pragmatic equivalence in the translation of 'Qaryah' across different cultures.
3. To explore the cross-cultural variations in the translation of 'Qaryah' and their impact on conveying its pragmatic meaning.

It also asks the following research questions:

1. How is the term 'Qaryah' pragmatically used in the Holy Qur'an, particularly in a metaphorical sense?
2. How do different cultures and languages interpret and translate the pragmatic meaning of 'Qaryah' in the Holy Qur'an?
3. What are the cross-cultural implications and variations in the translation of 'Qaryah' in terms of pragmatic equivalence?
4. How can pragmatic equivalence be effectively achieved in the translation of 'Qaryah' in the Holy Qur'an across different cultures?

Literature review

The translation of the Qur'an has been a subject of extensive debate spanning centuries. It kept captivating the attention of Islamic scholars, Translation Studies scholars, and translators alike. The complexity of this issue is “due to its highly sensitive language, being the word of God, a change in word order may result in a semantic change and therefore ruin the intended meaning.” (Khalaf & Yusoff, 2012, p. 73). In other words, even the slightest modification in the arrangement of words has the potential to engender a notable alteration in semantic connotations, ultimately shall jeopardize the intended signification. Thus, within this discourse, two prominent perspectives have emerged, encapsulating the argument surrounding the translatability of the Qur'an. Abdul-Raof (2017) asserts that the meaning of the Holy Qur'an can indeed be conveyed into other languages through translation. However, it stresses that these translations should be understood as interpretations of the original Arabic

text rather than outright replacements. This viewpoint aligns with the historical practices of early Muslim scholars who engaged in translating the Quran during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad. Abdul-Raof (2017) further posits that the unique nature and linguistic intricacies of the Holy Qur'an make it impossible to achieve a truly equivalent translation in any other language. Hassan (2020) argues that the Arabic version of the Qur'an remains the sole authoritative text, and any endeavor to translate it inevitably results in interpretation rather than a direct representation due to its unique characteristics of words. This, in fact, maintains the inherent limitations of Qur'anic translation, which is widely endorsed among Muslim scholars. They contend that no translation can fully capture the complexities embedded within the original Arabic text of the Qur'an. This perspective stands in contrast to the Christian approach to the Bible, where translations into various languages are considered equally valid and authoritative.

However, in attempt to transfer the subtleties of Qur'anic meanings and the unique linguistic and semantic Quranic features into different languages - and hence different cultures -, translation scholars suggest the concept of Pragmatic Equivalence. The term of pragmatic equivalence has been first suggested by Koller (1979) cited in Panou (2013, p. 3). Koller defined pragmatic equivalence as the level of translation that achieves the same effect on the target audience as the original text on its audience (ibid). Pragmatic equivalence in translation transcends mere word-for-word rendering and strives to capture the intended message's essence, impact, and cultural backdrop. It recognizes that effective communication extends beyond linguistic precision, demanding an understanding of the social and cultural features that shape language usage in specific contexts. Pragmatic equivalence seeks to replicate the source text's communicative intent in the target language. It takes into account the cultural, social, and contextual factors that may influence interpretation.

In the context of Holy Qur'an, few studies have investigated the utility of pragmatic equivalence as a means not to translate accurately the words of Holy Qur'an, but also to convey the spiritual, moral, and cultural guidance embedded in the text. However, such translation cannot be achieved in straightforward manner due to linguistic and cultural gaps between

different languages. Abdul-Raof (2001, p. 9) argues that distinctions in syntax, semantics, and pragmatics among languages result in instances of both lack of equivalence and untranslatability. Consequently, translators face constraints by these limitations. Hassan (2020) conducts a study aimed to investigate the debate surrounding the accuracy and fluency of selected English translations of the Qur'an. It specifically examines the pragmatic features that impart a unique impact on the Qur'anic text and evaluates the extent to which these translations deviate from the original message. The study finds out that certain translators have prioritized literal word-for-word translations over communicative one. It mentions that adhering strictly to the original text is the sole means of preserving its integrity. However, this approach has led to inconsistencies in translating Qur'anic literary devices, partly due to limited access to authoritative Qur'anic interpretations.

Albarakati (2019) explores the strategies used to translate euphemisms, for example, which are a form of pragmatic use of language, in the Qur'an into English. He examines four different English translations of the Qur'an and analyzes their approach to rendering sex-related euphemisms. Albarakati, thus, argues that the choice between foreignized and domesticated translation strategies is crucial for conveying the euphemistic intent, hence the pragmatic intent, of the original Arabic text. Foreignization involves retaining the Arabic euphemisms in the English translation, while domestication involves replacing them with English euphemisms. The study found out that the four translations employ a combination of both foreignization and domestication techniques. Some translations favor foreignization, preserving the literal meaning of the Arabic euphemisms, while others lean towards domestication, using more familiar English euphemisms. The study concludes that both foreignized and domesticated translations can be effective in conveying the euphemistic intent of the Qur'an. The choice of strategy ultimately depends on the translator's goals and the intended audience of the translation. Further, Al-Azab and al-Misned (2012) carry out a study that aimed to explore pragmatic losses of Qur'an translation. The study revealed that pragmatic losses in Qur'anic translations may evaporate the pleasure of the sacred text. The study categorizes the pragmatic losses in the English translation of the Holy Qur'an in the perspective of overall morphosyntactic structure.

Research methods

This section outlines the methodology employed in this study which explores the pragmatic equivalence of the term 'Qaryah' in the Holy Qur'an. The study aims to analyze the cross-cultural aspects of translating the term 'Qaryah' in the Holy Qur'an. It specifically focuses on its pragmatic usage in a metaphorical sense. The data for this research was collected from the Qur'an, specifically by identifying verses that contain the term 'قرية' and selecting those where the term was pragmatically employed. A number of 15 verses that contain the term 'Qaryah' were chosen in this study. The research design for this study is primarily qualitative in nature as it conducts a detailed analysis of the pragmatic equivalence of the term 'Qaryah' in the Holy Qur'an. The analysis is grounded in a cross-cultural perspective. It looks at the potential variations in understanding and translation of the term across different cultures and languages. This methodology allows for an in-depth examination of the pragmatic equivalence in translating the term 'قرية'. The findings of this study aim to contribute to the understanding of the challenges and considerations in achieving pragmatic equivalence in the translation of Qur'anic texts .

The selected verses were analysed using a qualitative approach to explore the pragmatic usage of the term 'قرية' in a metaphorical context. The analysis involved a close examination of the linguistic and contextual factors surrounding the usage of 'قرية'. It explores the intended meaning of 'Qaryah' and the broader implications within the Qur'anic discourse. Comparative analysis was conducted to highlight potential cross-cultural variations in the translation of pragmatic meanings. A key aspect of this study is the consideration of cross-cultural perspectives in the translation of 'قرية'. The translations of Sahih International and Yusuf Ali of the Qur'an into English were consulted to identify potential differences in conveying the pragmatic nuances of the term. The study performs comparative analysis to explore the extent to which pragmatic equivalence is achieved in the two translations and to identify any cultural or linguistic factors influencing the translations. That said, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations in this research. The study primarily focuses on the term 'قرية' and its pragmatic usage in a metaphorical sense, which may restrict

the generalizability of the findings to other terms or contexts. Additionally, the interpretations and translations analyzed are subject to two translations and may not represent the entirety of potential translations.

Analysis and discussion

This section analyses and discusses the 15 verses of the term "قرية" (Qaryah) as it translated by Sahih International and Yusuf Ali. It presents the verses into three Tables. Table 1 shows the pragmatic use of the word "قرية" (Qaryah) and its translations into city and town. Table 2 shows the pragmatic use of the word "قرية" (Qaryah) and its translations into city and populations. Table 3 shows the pragmatic use of the word "قرية" (Qaryah) and its translations into city by both Sahih International and Yusuf Ali.

No.	Translators	Quranic verses and their translations
1	Sahih International	وَاسْأَلْهُمْ عَنِ الْقَرْيَةِ (163) الأعراف And ask them about the town
	Yusuf Ali	Ask them concerning the town
2	Sahih International	وَكَمْ مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ (4) الأعراف And how many cities
	Yusuf Ali	How many towns
3	Sahih International	وَاسْأَلِ الْقَرْيَةَ (82) يوسف And ask the city
	Yusuf Ali	Ask at the town
4	Sahih International	وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْقَرْيَةِ (74) الأنبياء and We saved him from the city
	Yusuf Ali	and We saved him from the town
5	Sahih International	فَلَوْلَا كَانَتْ قَرْيَةٌ آمَنَتْ (98) يونس Then has there not been a [single] city that believed
	Yusuf Ali	Why was there not a single township (among those We warned), which believed

Table 1 shows the pragmatic use of the word "قرية" (Qaryah) and its translations into city and town.

The translation of the word "قرية" (Qaryah) in these Quranic translations, specifically the choices made by Sahih International and Yusuf Ali, reflects interesting variations in conveying the intended meaning. Sahih International translates the term as "ask the city, ask them about the town, saved him from the city, etc." while Yusuf Ali renders it as "ask the town, ask them concerning the town, and We saved him from the town, etc." The discrepancy in translation can be attributed to several factors, including the pragmatic use of the term, and the cultural implications associated with the concept of a village. The term "قرية" (Qaryah) in Arabic generally refers to a small settlement or village rather than a larger urban entity like a city. However, when considering the pragmatic use within the context of the Quranic verse, it becomes apparent that the intention is to seek information from the inhabitants of the village rather than the city or town. This highlights the importance of consulting the people living in the specific village where the event being discussed took place.

In terms of the translation choices, Sahih International opts for "ask the city," possibly to emphasize the significance and gravity of the location. The term "city" conveys a sense of importance and prominence. It suggests that seeking information from the city dwellers would yield valuable insights. On the other hand, Yusuf Ali chooses "ask the town," which may be an attempt to strike a balance between the notion of a small settlement and the general understanding of a town as a relatively smaller entity compared to a city. The choice of translation between "city" and "town" reflects the complexities of conveying the pragmatic nuances of the original Arabic term in English. The English language lacks a direct equivalent for "قرية" (Qaryah), and both "city" and "town" are approximate translations that attempt to capture the essence of the concept. The decision to use one term over the other can be influenced by the translator's interpretation, cultural background, and the target audience's linguistic and cultural expectations.

This pragmatic use of the term "قرية" (Qaryah) and the subsequent translation choices carry cultural implications as well. In Arabic-speaking societies, villages often hold a distinctive place in social and cultural contexts. They are viewed as close-knit communities with their own unique characteristics and values. By emphasizing the village setting, the translations acknowledge the importance of localized knowledge and the credibility of the people living in that specific village. Thus, the translation

of the word "قرية" (Qaryah) in these Quranic translations demonstrates the challenges of capturing the precise meaning and pragmatic implications in English. The choice between "city" and "town" reflects variations in interpretation and attempts to convey the concept of a small settlement. The pragmatic use of the term highlights the significance of seeking information from the inhabitants of the village. The translations also carry cultural implications, acknowledging the importance of localized knowledge and the credibility of the people living in the village.

No.	Translators	Quranic verses and their translations
1		فَكَأَيِّن مِّن قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا (45) الحج
	Sahih International	And how many a city did We destroy
	Yusuf Ali	How many populations have We destroyed
2		وَكَمْ قَصَمْنَا مِن قَرْيَةٍ (11) الأنبياء
	Sahih International	And how many a city
	Yusuf Ali	How many were the populations
3		وَحَرَامٌ عَلَى قَرْيَةٍ (95) الأنبياء
	Sahih International	And there is prohibition upon [the people of] a city
	Yusuf Ali	But there is a ban on any population
4		مَا أَمْنَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ مِّن قَرْيَةٍ (6) الأنبياء
	Sahih International	Not a [single] city which We destroyed believed before them
	Yusuf Ali	(As to those) before them, not one of the populations which We destroyed believed
5		وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِن قَرْيَةٍ بَطَرَتْ مَعِيشَتَهَا
	Sahih International	And how many a city have We destroyed
	Yusuf Ali	And how many populations We destroyed
6		وَكَأَيِّن مِّن قَرْيَةٍ (48) الحج
	Sahih International	And for how many a city
	Yusuf Ali	And to how many populations
7		وَكَأَيِّن مِّن قَرْيَةٍ (8) الطلاق
	Sahih International	And how many a city
	Yusuf Ali	How many populations
8		وَإِن مِّن قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا (58) الإسراء

	Sahih International	And there is no city but
	Yusuf Ali	There is not a population but

Table 2 shows the pragmatic use of the word "قرية" (Qaryah) and its translations into city and populations.

Table 2 presents the translation of the word "قرية" (Qaryah) in these Quranic translations, Sahih International employs the term "city," while Yusuf Ali uses the word "populations." The choice of translation reflects distinct approaches to conveying the intended meaning and capturing the pragmatic implications of the term. It is important to highlight that the focus is on asking the people living in the village, rather than in a city, town or village. Sahih International's choice of "city" may be motivated by the desire to emphasize the significance and prominence of the location. The term "city" conveys a sense of importance and urbanity. This translation choice aligns with the notion of seeking knowledge and guidance from a more established community. On the other hand, Yusuf Ali's translation of "populations" reflects a broader perspective that encompasses the inhabitants of various settlements. This choice may aim to capture the diversity and inclusiveness of the term "قرية" (Qaryah), as it refers to smaller communities or populations residing in different locations. By using "populations," Yusuf Ali's translation suggests the act of dealing with collective inhabitants of multiple villages or settlements. The disparity in translation can be attributed to the complexities of conveying the pragmatic nuances of the original Arabic term in English. The English language lacks a direct equivalent for "قرية" (Qaryah), and translators must consider the contextual implications and cultural associations of the term. The choice between "city" and "populations" reflects different interpretations and attempts to capture the essence of the concept in English. Furthermore, the pragmatic use of the term "قرية" (Qaryah) in the Quranic verse underscores the importance of conveying the idea of targeting the people residing in the specific village where the event occurred. This emphasis on the village setting aligns with the cultural and social significance attributed to villages in Arabic-speaking societies. Villages are often seen as close-knit communities with a distinct identity and close relationships among residents. Thus, the translation choices of "city" and "populations" for the word "قرية" (Qaryah) in these Quranic

translations demonstrate the challenges of conveying the precise meaning and pragmatic implications in English. Sahih International's use of "city" highlights the significance of a larger urban community, while Yusuf Ali's use of "populations" encompasses the inhabitants of various settlements. Both translations aim to capture the essence of targeting the people living in the village.

No.	Translators	Quranic verses and their translations
1		وَكَايْنٍ مِّن قَرْيَةٍ (13) محمد
	Sahih International	And how many a city
	Yusuf Ali	And how many cities
2		وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا قَرْيَةً (112) النحل
	Sahih International	And Allah presents an example: a city which
	Yusuf Ali	Allah sets forth a Parable: a city enjoying

Table 3 shows the pragmatic use of the word "قَرْيَةٍ" (Qaryah) and its translations into city

In the translation of the word "قَرْيَةٍ" (Qaryah) in these Quranic translations, Sahih International predominantly use the term "city,". However, Yusuf Ali offers multiple translations for the word in different verses, including "town," "city," and "populations." This variation in translation choices by Yusuf Ali suggests a nuanced approach to capturing the intended meaning and pragmatic implications of the term. It is important to emphasize that the focus is on asking the people living in the village, rather than in a city or town. The consistent use of "city" by Sahih International may be attributed to the desire to convey the sense of a settled and relatively larger community. The term "city" in English carries connotations of a developed infrastructure, and a higher population density. However, Yusuf Ali's decision to provide three different translations for "قَرْيَةٍ" (Qaryah) in various verses, including "town," "city," and "populations," suggests a more nuanced understanding of the term's implications. This approach acknowledges that the term "قَرْيَةٍ" (Qaryah) can encompass a range of settlements, varying in size, development, and population. By using different translations, Yusuf Ali aims to capture the diversity and contextualities associated with different instances of the term's usage within the Quran.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research examined the pragmatics accompanied the term 'Qaryah' as used in the Holy Qur'an. The study analyzed the implications of achieving pragmatic equivalence while translating the concept of 'Qaryah', as used in the Holy Qu'ran, in two renown English translations. It aimed to explore the cross-cultural variations in the translation of 'Qaryah' and the influence on effectively conveying its pragmatic meaning with a specific focus on its metaphorical sense. Through a comprehensive analysis, the study shed light on the contextual significance and communicative intentions associated with the term to uncover the variations in understanding and conveying the term's pragmatic connotations. Through an examination of the two chosen translations and a consideration of linguistic and cultural factors, the study has contributed to the development of guidelines for optimal pragmatic equivalence.

Overall, this research has deepened our understanding of the pragmatic equivalence of 'Qaryah' in the Holy Qur'an and its translation across diverse cultures. The findings of this study hold significant potential for enhancing cross-cultural communication and making valuable contributions to the field of translation studies. The findings can inform translators in their efforts to navigate the intricacies of translating religious terms and foster cross-cultural understanding. Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader goal of promoting intercultural dialogue among diverse linguistic and cultural communities.

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