

The Translation of Near-Synonymous Names of Allah in the Holy Qur'an: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the lexical choices of the near-synonymous names of Allah in the Holy Quran, namely, (الوَهَّابُ ، الرَّزَّاقُ) (البارئُ ، المصوِّرُ ، الخالقُ) ، (الرَّعُوفُ ، الودودُ ، اللطيفُ) in five English translations which include Muhammad Sarwar's (2011), Pickthall's (1930), Yusuf Ali's (1982), Arberry's (1955), Al-Hilali and Khan's (2018). The meanings of the names of Allah were checked based on the Qur'anic exegeses and the English equivalents selected by the five translators were looked up in Cambridge and Merriam-Webster's Dictionary in order to determine the translation that best provided the closest meanings to the Qur'anic interpretations. The study found that the slight differences in the meanings of the names of Allah were not reflected in the English lexical choices of some translators. The study recommends that translators of religious books should take into account the minor differences between words of similar meaning which are intended for specific purposes.

Keywords: Near-Synonymy, Names of Allah, Translation, Holy Qur'an

1. Introduction

Communication and the spread of knowledge and cultures between societies are accomplished effectively through translation. Larson (1998) defined translation as the process of transferring the meanings of the source language (SL) into the target language (TL). During the translation process, the translator deals with two different language systems, requiring that they be knowledgeable of both cultures and as accurate as possible in finding a TL equivalents to the SL terms (Al-Khalafat & Haider, 2022; Al Saideen, Haider, & Al-Abbas, 2022).

The transfer of religious texts from one language to another has been a core element in disseminating the divine messages and teachings throughout history. However, this area poses challenges for translators since it often involves specific language uncommon in daily use and religious expressions that are loaded with sacred meanings (Weld-Ali, Obeidat, & Haider, 2023).

Among the religious books that received great attention in translation studies is the Holy Qur'an which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) over a period of 23 years. In order to spread the message of Islam to Muslims and non-Muslims who don't know Arabic, it is important that the Holy Qur'an be translated into other languages (Balla & Siddiek, 2017). According to Elmarsafy (2011), Muslims are attempting to translate the Qur'an into languages used in the West in order to protect Islam from invading forces and convince readers of Islam's beauty and morality. Similarly, Kidwai (1987) reported that the Muslims' determination to oppose the efforts of the missionaries was the primary driving force behind the translation of the Qur'an into English. In the 18th century, Christian missionaries launched their assault on a politically degraded Islam by promoting their own translations of the Qur'an, continuing a long argumentation tradition that targeted the creation of a typically incorrect and confusing European rendition of the Muslim scripture.

The Holy Qur'an is one of the most complicated texts to translate due to the lack of equivalents, inaccuracy owing to cultural variations, misunderstandings of meanings, and the difficulty of expressing the faithful interpretations of the holy verses, among others (Balla & Siddiek, 2017; Al-Abbas & Haider, 2020). One of the areas that poses difficulties for translators when rendering the Holy Qur'an is near-synonymy which refers to words that have extremely similar meanings but not exactly the same ones. It involves words that are almost interchangeable but differ in their denotation, connotation, implicature, emphasis, or register (DiMarco, Hirst & Stede, 1993). Many studies focused on near-synonymous words and expressions in the Holy Qur'an but little attention has been devoted to near-synonymous names of Allah. These names describe the attributes of His Almighty and therefore, Muslims are encouraged to learn them and understand their meanings. Some of these meanings may exhibit great similarity and translators need to exert much effort to be able to deliver the proper equivalents that reflect the slight differences between the near-synonymous names. Hence, this study investigates the translation of a few near-synonymous names of Allah in five well-known English translations. It mainly answers the following questions:

1. How do the lexical choices of the near-synonymous names of Allah, (الوَهَّابُ ، الرَّزَّاقُ) (الرَّعُوفُ ، الودودُ ، اللطيفُ) (البارئُ ، المصوِّرُ ، الخالقُ) differ in the five English translations, namely, Muhammad Sarwar (2011), Pickthall (1930), Yusuf Ali (1982), Arberry (1955), Al-Hilali

and Khan (2018)?

2. Based on the Qur'anic exegeses, which translation provided the closest English equivalent to the names of Allah under study?

2. Review of Theoretical Literature

This section provides the theoretical framework of the study. It presents a brief account of the translation of the Holy Quran, in addition to the names of Allah. It further reviews previous studies on near-synonymy in the Quran.

2.1 Translating the Holy Qur'an

Due to the numerous distinctions between Arabic and English, translating the Holy Qur'an into English is indeed a challenging process. The general consensus is that there are two reasons why Qur'anic lexemes are not equivalent. To begin with, the Qur'an is not human speech; rather, it is Allah the Almighty's voice. Second, everyone agrees that the Qur'an is a miracle, and no one can replicate it (Bint al-Shati, 1971).

According to Brakhw & Ismail (2014), the Qur'an translator must rely on both his deep knowledge of and familiarity with Islam and seek suggestions from the commentators before starting his translation journey. The translator may not be able to provide a translation that accurately captures all complexities, quirks, and subtleties of the original Arabic text.

In the same vein, Peachy (2013) notes that the efforts of former scholars cannot be totally ignored, even though a Qur'anic translator may believe that theirs were insufficient. All recently published translations owe a lot to earlier ones. A translator can be aware of his calculations and believe he has a unique, useful strategy or method for the task. The translators put a lot of effort into conveying both the precise interpretation of the verses and the depth of meaning that had been perceived by Muslim scholars in a different way.

Likewise, Obaid (2011) states that the Holy Qur'an exhibits eloquent language and high rhetoric. Its phrases are also perfect, with wide-ranging meanings that are frequently incomprehensible to common people who lack the necessary exegetical and linguistic knowledge. The Holy Qur'an is completely eloquent in the best conceivable way. Therefore, it is difficult to fully grasp its astounding eloquence without having a firm knowledge of the syntax, semantics, and rhetorical techniques used in Arabic.

2.2 The Names of Allah

The translation of the names of Allah is one of the most difficult issues that every Qur'an translator faces. According to Ibn Uthaymeen (1994), these are proper nouns used to refer to God Himself, and they are also features in the sense that they have meaning. To put it another way, these names represent some of His powers. Since one of the tenets of Islam is the belief in God and the notion that He possesses the highest abilities, these names are of a sensitive nature. By and large, Rosmani & Zakaria (2018) state that the most widespread problem among Muslim community today is a lack of awareness of Allah's Names, particularly their meanings. It must be noted that no two Divine Names are absolute synonyms, even if they have the same linguistic base (Ghazālī, 2007). Each name has a meaning that reflects its own notion, even if each pair of near-synonymous names revolves around one divine essence and describes the actions of one divine being. Ghazali's claim appears to be founded on the notion that even though two or more divine names indicate or confirm the same divine attribute, such as mercy or forgiveness, they do not always have to be absolute synonyms or have the same linguistic basis (ibid.).

2.3 Review of Previous Studies

Translators and linguists have focused on various aspects of translating the Holy Qur'an into English.

By comparing the two translations—Yusuf Ali's and T.B. Irving's—to each other, Al-Sowaidi (2011) analyzed the challenges that Holy Qur'an translators encounter while rendering almost synonyms from Arabic into English. The study concentrated on four near-synonymous pairings, namely, sterile “عقيم and عاقر” stingy “بخيل and شحيح”, swearing “الحلف and القسم”, rain “مطر and غيث” in their context. These pairings in the two chosen translations were compared in order to ascertain how accurately the referential and connotative meaning of the original Qur'anic text were represented in the English translations, as well as to what degree these translations maintained textual standards such cohesion, coherence, informativity, situationally and acceptability, intentionality, and intertextuality. According to the study's findings, the chosen translations lacked both the connotative nuance of the original expression's meanings and the depth of the Qur'anic message.

Moreover, Amjad & Farahani (2013) compared the English translations of three expert translators' renderings of the Qur'an's Divine Names. The translations were by Sayyed Ali Quli Qarai (2003), Fazlollah Nikayin (2006), and Muhammad H. Shakir (1985). The study's findings revealed that the lexical compression of the original Divine Names, as well as their emotive overtones, are difficulties for translators. It was discovered that Shakir, Nikayin, and Qarai used “near-synonymy” and “expansion” strategies.

Also, Al-Omari and Abu-Melhim (2014) studied the phenomena of synonymy in both English and Arabic, with a focus on the Holy Qur'an. The study's objective was to compare and contrast how synonyms are used in the two languages by highlighting many theories and viewpoints given forth by academics and linguists. The investigation found that the Holy Qur'an has no absolute synonyms at all. Simply said, there are terms that, at first look, seem to be equivalent but that, upon closer examination, very semantically. Additionally, these terms are employed to emphasize, replace, and clarify the Qur'anic meaning, among other functions.

Furthermore, Al-Abbas and Al-Khanji (2019) examined the translation of two root-shared synonymous Arabic terms: “استطاع” and “اسطاع” in five well-known English translations: Pickthall (1930), Ali (1982), Arberry (1996), Abdel Haleem (2004), and Al-Hilali & Khan (2018).

The results demonstrated that the translators failed to express the slight differences among these terms and rendered them similarly.

Although many studies investigated the translation of near-synonymy in the Holy Qur'an, little attention has been paid to the near-synonymous names of Allah. Therefore, this study fills this gap and adds to the existing body of literature in this field.

3. Methodology

The primary focus of this study is the translation of the selected near-synonymous names of Allah in the Holy Qur'an into English. The researcher consulted specialists and individuals interested in Qur'anic sciences to confirm that the data obtained represented near-synonymous names of Allah and to provide accurate interpretations of the synonymous names under study. The collected data were classified according to the meanings they signal into three categories that included the themes of giving, kindness, and creation. The translations of the verses under study were selected from five popular English translations by Pickthall, Yusuf Ali, Sarwar, Arberry, and Al-Hilali & Khan and were retrieved from the website of the Qur'anic Arabic Corpus. These translations are well-known in the Arab world and have proven effective at conveying the significance of the messages found in the Qur'an. After reviewing some Quranic exegeses and attempting to make some judgments about these translations, the English equivalents in the chosen translations were examined to determine which translation was the most successful in terms of accuracy and faithfulness to the meaning.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Near-synonymous Names of Allah Referring to Giving (الوهاب، الرزاق)

The name of Allah الوهاب was mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in three verses that were collected from the Qur'an encyclopedia (see appendix for full verses). The translators under investigation rendered them as follows:

Table 1. All occurrences of الوهاب in the Holy Qur'an with their translations

الوهاب						
No.	(Chapter: verse)	Sarwar	Pickthall	Ali	Arberry	Al-Hilali & Khan
1	(2:8)	the Most Awarding One	the Bestower	the Grantor of bounties without measure	the Giver	the Bestower
2	(38:9)	Munificent	the Bestower	the Grantor of Bounties without measure	the All-giving	the Real Bestower
3	(38:35)	All-munificent	the Bestower	the Grantor of Bounties (without measure)	All-giver	the Bestower

Table (1) shows that the translators rendered the name of Allah الوهاب differently depending on the context of each verse. Sarwar used "the most awarding one" in addition to different derivations of "munificent". Pickthall and Al-Hilali & Khan used "bestower". Ali used "the Grantor of bounties without measure". Arberry used different derivations of the word "give".

According to the Qur'anic exegeses, including Ibn Kathir (2009) and Al-Saadi (2002), the word الوهاب is interpreted as 'the one who gives a lot to whoever he wants'. The name الوهاب is derived from the word هبة, which means 'the gift or donation void of compensation or purpose'. To ensure that the English translation of the words under investigation is accurate, Table (7) lists the lexical choices of the five translators based on Cambridge English Dictionary and Merriam-Webster dictionary.

Table 2. The definition of the English equivalents selected by the five translators for the word الوهاب

الوهاب			
No.	Word	Definitions in Cambridge Dictionary	Definition in Merriam-Webster Dictionary
1	Bestow	"To give something as an honour or present"	"To make a present of"
2	Giver	"a person who gives something to someone"	"Someone who gives something to another person"
3	Munificent	"Very generous with money"	"Giving or sharing in abundance and without hesitation"
4	Grantor	"a person or organization that gives grants (= money for a particular purpose)"	"To give the ownership or benefit of (something) formally or publicly"
5	The most awarding one	Award= "To give money or a prize following an official decision"	Award= "To give something as a token of gratitude or admiration for a service or achievement"

The table of definitions illustrates the distinctions between the words which clarify that there are differences in terms of the kind of giving and the purpose for giving. In other words, giving may be material or moral. In light of the interpretation of the word الوهاب in the Qur'anic exegeses and the definitions of its English equivalents in the translations under study, "Giver" and "Bestower" seem to be the best renditions as they are not limited to materialistic objects such as prizes or money and include the meaning of unconditional giving that is not granted as a reward for an achievement.

In order to identify the translation that achieved the highest accuracy in rendering the word الوهاب after discussing the definitions and interpretations, the number of occurrences of the word is provided with their percentages for each translator after lemmatizing the words as indicated in Table (3).

Table 3. Percentages of all occurrences of the different equivalents of الوهاب in the Holy Qur'an

الوهاب											
No.	Word	Sarwar		Pickthall		Ali		Arberry		Al-Hilali & Khan	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Bestow	0	0%	3	100%	0	0%	0	0%	3	100%
2	Give	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	3	100%	0	0%
3	Munificent	2	67%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
4	the Most Awarding One	1	33%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
5	the Grantor of Bounties without measure	0	0%	0	0%	3	100%	0	0%	0	0%
Total		3	100%	3	100%	3	100%	3	100%	3	100%

It is clear that Pickthall and Al-Hilali & Khan used the same equivalent of الوهاب in the three verses, namely, "Bestower". Arberry also used the same lemma (give) in three different verses. Ali was also consistent in his lexical choice using the word "Grantor" in all three occurrences. Sarwar was the least consistent as he used different terms, namely, "munificent" in two verses and "the most awarding one" in the third verse. Therefore, it can be said that Ali's and Sarwar's choices may not indicate all connotations of the interpretation of the word الوهاب since Allah is the One who provides his servants generously and without awaiting anything in return.

The name of Allah الرزاق is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in one verse (see Appendix for the full verse). The translators rendered it as follows:

Table 4. The occurrence of الرزاق in the Holy Qur'an with its translations

الرزاق						
No.	(Chapter: verse)	Sarwar	Pickthall	Ali	Arberry	Al-Hilali & Khan
1	(51:58)	the Sustainer	giveth livelihood	Who gives (all) Sustenance	the All-provider	the All-Provider

Table (4) shows that the translators opted to vary the lexical choice in rendering the name of Allah الرزاق. Sarwar used "the sustainer". Pickthall used "giveth livelihood". Ali used "who gives (all) sustenance". Arberry and Al-Hilali & Khan both used "the all-provider" to convey the meaning.

By checking the Qur'anic exegeses, including Al-Tabari (1994) and Al-Saadi (2002), the word الرزاق is interpreted as 'the one who provides a means of Livelihood'. The name الرزاق is derived from the word رزق, which means 'something beneficial like the necessities of life'. To ensure that the English translation of the words under investigation is accurate, Table (5) lists the lexical choices of the five translators based on Cambridge Dictionary and Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

Table 5. The definition of the English equivalents selected by the five translators for the word الرزاق

الرزاق			
No.	Word	Definition in Cambridge Dictionary	Definition in Merriam-Webster Dictionary
1	Provider	"Someone who provides something"	"One that provides"
2	Sustainer/Give sustenance	"Someone who allows something to continue for a period of time"	"Someone who supplies with sustenance" Sustenance= "means of support, maintenance, or subsistence"
3	Give livelihood	Provide "the money people need to pay for food, a place to live, clothing, etc."	Provide "means of support or subsistence"

The definitions demonstrate that all English equivalents selected by the translators are consistent with the interpretations provided by the Qur'anic exegeses. However, "Sustainer/Give sustenance" and "give livelihood" are more specific and may indicate better all connotations involved in the name. Hence, it can be said that Sarwar, Pickthall, and Ali were more successful in rendering the name into English. Since the word الرزاق occurred only once in the Qur'an, it was not necessary to include the percentages of the terms used to render it.

By referring to the exegeses and checking the English dictionaries, it is clear that there are obvious differences between the near-synonymous names of Allah that indicates Giving. The name الوهاب means that Allah gives human beings for nothing, without labour or making any effort for this giving. However, the name الرزاق means that Allah gives you based on your work, your endeavor, and your effort. So, the livelihood and giving are dependent on one's work. Sustenance is everything as material as money, food, and drink, all of which are necessary for human survival. By contrast, the bounty is anything given willingly without payment. Children, for instance, are a godsend, and according to the interpretation of the selected verses, prophecy, mercy, and the sultan are also a godsend.

By considering the definitions of each lexical choice of both names, Pickthall, Al-Hilali & Khan, and Arberry were successful in rendering the name of Allah الوهاب using the words "give" and "bestow". According to the definitions of "sustainer" and "give livelihood/Sustenance", Sarwar, Pickthall, and Ali seemed to be more accurate in interpreting الرزاق. They delivered the meaning of Allah giving all the necessities of human life, unlike the other translators who used certain equivalents which may affect the meaning of giving in relation to Allah.

4.2 Near-synonymous Names of Allah Referring to Kindness (اللطيف ، الرعوف ، الودود)

The name of Allah اللطيف was mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in seven verses that were collected from the Qur'an encyclopedia (see appendix for full verses). Table (6) shows how the translators under investigation rendered it.

Table 6. All occurrences of اللطيف in the Holy Qur'an with their translations

اللطيف						
No.	(Chapter: verse)	Sarwar	Pickthall	Ali	Arberry	Al-Hilali & Khan
1	(6:103)	All-kind	The Subtle	above all comprehension	The All-subtle	The Most Subtle and Courteous
2	(12:100)	kind	tender	understandeth best the mysteries	gentle	the Most Courteous and Kind
3	(22:63)	Kind	Subtle	understands the finest mysteries	All-subtle	The Most Kind and Courteous
4	(31:16)	Subtle	Subtle	Understands the finest mysteries	All-subtle	Subtle
5	(33:34)	Most Kind	Subtile	understands the finest mysteries	All-subtle	Most Courteous
6	(42:19)	Kind	gracious	Gracious	All-gentle	Gracious
7	(67:14)	Subtle	The Subtle	understands the finest mysteries	All-subtle	The Most Kind and Courteous

Table (6) shows that the translators rendered the name of Allah اللطيف differently. Sarwar used the terms “kind” and “subtle” to convey the meaning. Pickthall chose “subtle”, “tender” and “gracious”. Ali used “gracious”, “above all comprehension”, and “understands the best/finest mysteries”. Arberry used “subtle” and “gentle”. Al-Hilali & Khan used “subtle”, “gracious”, and “the most kind/subtle and courteous”.

According to the Qur'anic exegeses, including Ibn Kathir (2009) and Al-Baghawi (2007), the word اللطيف is interpreted as 'the one who is kind to his servants, and knows the smallest and finest things'. The name اللطيف is derived from the word لطف, which means 'tenderness, gentleness, and kindness'. To ensure that the English translation of the words under investigation is accurate, Table (7) lists the lexical choices of the five translators based on Cambridge Dictionary and Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

Table 7. The definition of the English equivalents selected by the five translators for the word اللطيف

اللطيف			
No.	Word	Definitions in Cambridge Dictionary	Definition in Merriam-Webster Dictionary
1	Kind	“Generous, helpful, and thinking about other people's feelings”	“Someone showing or growing out of gentleness or goodness of heart”
2	Tender	“Gentle, loving, or kind”	“Marked by, responding to, or expressing the softer emotions”
3	Gracious	“Someone who behaves in a pleasant, polite, calm way”	“Marked by kindness and courtesy”
4	Gentle	“Someone who is kind and careful not to hurt or upset anyone or anything”	free from harshness, sternness, or violence
5	Subtle	“Not loud, bright, noticeable, or obvious in any way”	“Made or done with extreme care and accuracy”
6	Courteous	“Someone who is polite and showing respect”	“Marked by respect for and consideration of others”
7	Understands the finest/best mysteries	Mystery= “something strange or not known that has not yet been explained or understood”	Mystery= “something hard to understand or explain”
8	above all comprehension	Comprehension= “the ability to understand completely and be familiar with a situation, facts, etc.”	Comprehension= “the capacity for understanding fully”
9	The Most Kind and Courteous	Kind= “Generous, helpful, and thinking about other people's feelings” Courteous= “Someone who is polite and showing respect”	Kind= “Someone showing or growing out of gentleness or goodness of heart” Courteous= “Marked by respect for and consideration of others”
10	The Most Subtle and Courteous	Subtle= “Not loud, bright, noticeable, or obvious in any way” Courteous= “Someone who is polite and showing respect”	Subtle= “Made or done with extreme care and accuracy” Courteous= “Marked by respect for and consideration of others”

Based on the interpretation of the word اللطيف in the Qur'anic exegeses, “Understands the finest/best mysteries” seems to be the closest rendition. However, the meaning of kindness and gentleness needs to be included as well along with the meaning of Allah's understanding of the smallest things. The English language does not have a single-word equivalent that indicates both meanings, Hence, the most suitable translation of the اللطيف may be a combination of any word showing the meaning of kindness in addition to knowing the tiniest details. By

looking at the translators' choices, no one could deliver a complete sense of Allah's name اللطيف.

After discussing the definitions and interpretations, Table (8) lists the number of times the word occurs along with its percentage for each translator after lemmatizing the words in order to determine which translation achieved the highest accuracy in rendering the word اللطيف.

Table 8. Percentages of all occurrences of the different equivalents of اللطيف in the Holy Qur'an

اللطيف											
No.	Word	Sarwar		Pickthall		Ali		Arberry		Al-Hilali & Khan	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Subtle	2	28.6%	5	71.4%	0	0%	5	71.4%	1	14.3%
2	Tender	0	0%	1	14.3%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
3	Gracious	0	0%	1	14.3%	1	14.3%	0	0%	1	14.3%
4	Gentle	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	28.6%	0	0%
5	Kind	5	71.4%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
6	The Most Kind and Courteous	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	3	42.9%
7	The Most Subtle and Courteous	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	14.3%
8	Understand the finest/best mysteries	0	0%	0	0%	5	71.4%	0	0%	0	0%
9	above all comprehension	0	0%	0	0%	1	14.3%	0	0%	0	0%
10	Courteous	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	14.3%
Total		7	100%	7	100%	7	100%	7	100%	7	100%

Obviously, there is a diversity in the choice of words among translators as they used several words and expressions to convey the obvious meaning of the name of Allah اللطيف without reflecting all its connotations. Al-Hilali & Khan used the most different equivalents of اللطيف in the seven verses, namely, "subtle", "gracious", "courteous", "the most subtle and courteous", and "the most kind and courteous" in three verses. Although the word "subtle" is repeated by four translators, it does not give the intended meaning according to its definitions in the dictionaries. Therefore, it can be said that none of the translators could reflect all the shades of meaning of the name اللطيف. However, Ali was the closest as he did not look at the surface meaning as the others did. He included a meaning that is not directly indicated by the name.

The name of Allah الرعوف was mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in 11 verses that were collected from the Qur'an encyclopedia (see appendix for full verses). The translators under investigation rendered them differently as Table (9) demonstrates.

Table 9. All occurrences of الرعوف in the Holy Qur'an with their translations

الرعوف						
No.	(Chapter: verse)	Sarwar	Pickthall	Ali	Arberry	Al-Hilali & Khan
1	(2:143)	Compassionate	Full of Pity	full of kindness	All-gentle	full of kindness
2	(2:207)	Affectionate	hath compassion	full of kindness	gentle	full of Kindness
3	(3:30)	Compassionate	Full of Pity	full of kindness	gentle	full of kindness
4	(9:117)	His Compassion	Full of Pity	Most Kind	Gentle	full of Kindness
5	(9:128)	very compassionate	full of pity	most kind	gentle	full of pity, kind
6	(16:7)	Compassionate	Full of Pity	Most Kind	All-clement	full of Kindness
7	(16:47)	Compassionate	Full of Pity	full of kindness	All-clement	full of Kindness
8	(22:65)	Compassionate	Full of Pity	Most Kind	All-gentle	full of Kindness
9	(24:20)	Compassionate	Clement	full of kindness	All-gentle	full of kindness
10	(57:9)	Compassionate	Full of Pity	most kind	All-gentle	full of kindness
11	(59:10)	Compassionate	Full of Pity	Full of Kindness	the All-gentle	full of kindness

Table (9) shows that the translators rendered the name of Allah الرعوف differently depending on the context of each verse. Sarwar used the terms "compassion" and "affectionate". Pickthall also used "compassion", "clement", and "full of pity". Ali opted for "most kind" and "full of kindness". Arberry used "clement" and "gentle". Al-Hilali & Khan used "full of pity/kindness".

According to the Qur'anic exegeses, including Ibn Kathir (2009) and Al-Tabari (1994), the word الرعوف is interpreted as 'the one who is very kind and compassionate to his servants'. The name الرعوف is derived from the word رَأْف, which means 'compassion and mercy'. To ensure that the English translation of the words under investigation is accurate, Table (10) lists the lexical choices of the five translators based on Cambridge Dictionary and Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

Table 10. The definition of the English equivalents selected by the five translators for the word **الرءوف**

الرءوف			
No.	Word	Definitions in Cambridge Dictionary	Definition in Merriam-Webster Dictionary
1	Gentle	“Someone who is kind and careful not to hurt or upset anyone or anything”	“Free from harshness, sternness, or violence”
2	Clement	“Clement weather is pleasant or not severe”	“Inclined to be merciful”
3	Compassion	“a strong feeling of sympathy and sadness for other people’s suffering or bad luck and a desire to help”	“The capacity for feeling for another’s unhappiness or misfortune”
4	Affectionate	“Showing feelings of liking or love”	“Having or displaying tenderness, affection, or warmth”
5	Kind	“Generous, helpful, and thinking about other people’s feelings”	“Someone showing or growing out of gentleness or goodness of heart”
6	full of kindness	Kindness= “The quality of being kind”	Kindness= “The quality or state of being kind”
7	Full of Pity	Pity= “to feel sorry for someone”	Pity= “Sympathetic sorrow for one suffering, distressed, or unhappy”

The definitions show the slight differences between the terms, even though they seem to be synonymous. Some of the words are used in specific contexts such as “clement” which is commonly used to describe the weather. So, by referring to the exegeses to understand and know the exact differences, the word reflecting the connotations of the name **الرءوف** should include the meaning of compassion which is ‘an exaggeration of mercy’. In other words, compassion is the highest level of mercy; a meaning that cannot be fully described by the words “kind” and “kindness”.

After discussing the definitions and interpretations, Table (11) lists the number of times the word occurs along with its percentage for each translator after lemmatizing the words in order to determine which translation achieved the highest accuracy in rendering the word **الرءوف**.

Table 11. Percentages of all occurrences of the different equivalents of **الرءوف** in the Holy Qur’an

رءوف											
No.	Word	Sarwar		Pickthall		Ali		Arberry		Al-Hilali & Khan	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Compassion	10	90.9%	1	9.1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
2	Affectionate	1	9.1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
3	Gentle	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	9	81.8%	0	0%
4	Clement	0	0%	1	9.1%	0	0%	2	18.2%	0	0%
5	Kind	0	0%	0	0%	11	100%	0	0%	0	0%
6	full of pity/kind	0	0%	9	81.8%	0	0%	0	0%	11	100%
Total		11	100%	11	100%	11	100%	11	100%	11	100%

The table of percentages shows that Ali used the same lemma “kind” in all 11 occurrences. Also, Al-Hilali & Khan used the same expressions “full of kindness or full of pity” in all verses. Pickthall was the least consistent as he used different terms, namely, “compassion”, “clement”, and “full of pity”. Arberry used only two equivalents namely, “gentle” and “clement”. Sarwar opted for “compassion” ten times but used “affectionate” in one verse. It may be said that the terms “compassion” and “gentle” are the best equivalents for **الرءوف**.

The name of Allah **الءودء** was mentioned in the Holy Qur’an in 2 verses that were collected from the Qur’an encyclopedia (see appendix for full verses). The translators under investigation were very similar in their renditions as can be seen in Table (12).

Table 12. All occurrences of **الءودء** in the Holy Qur’an with their translations

الءودء						
No.	(Chapter: verse)	Sarwar	Pickthall	Ali	Arberry	Al-Hilali & Khan
1	(11:90)	the Most Loving One	the Loving	loving-kindness	the All-loving	full of love
2	(85:14)	Loving	Loving	loving-kindness	All-loving	Most Loving

Table (12) shows the lexical choice of the translators in rendering the name of Allah **الءودء**. Sarwar used “the most loving one” and “loving”. Pickthall used “loving” as well as Arberry used “all-loving”. Yusuf Ali opted to use “loving-kindness” to convey the meaning. Therefore, Al-Hilali & Khan used “full of love” and “most loving”.

According to the Qur’anic exegeses, including Al-Qurtubi (1997) and Al-Saadi (2002), the word **الءودء** is interpreted as ‘Allah loves his faithful servants and they love him as well’. The name **الءودء** is derived from the word **ءودء**, which means ‘deep love and affection’. To ensure that the English translation of the words under investigation is accurate, the definitions of the selected English equivalents are provided in Table (13) based on Cambridge Dictionary and Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

Table 13. The definition of the English equivalents selected by the five translators for the word الودود

الودود			
No.	Word	Definitions in Cambridge Dictionary	Definition in Merriam-Webster Dictionary
1	Loving	“Feeling or showing love”	“Feeling or showing love”
2	loving-kindness	Kindness= “The quality of being kind”	Kindness= “The quality or state of being kind”

It is obvious that “love” is the only that the translators used to convey the meaning of love and affection related to the name of Allah الودود. Moreover, according to the exegeses, Allah's love for His worshippers is evident in his mercy to them, the forgiveness of their sins, and His sincerity toward them with His many blessings.

After discussing the definitions and interpretations, Table (14) lists the number of times the word occurs along with its percentage for each translator after lemmatizing the words in order to determine which translation achieved the highest accuracy in rendering the word الودود.

Table 14. Percentages of all occurrences of the different equivalents of الودود in the Holy Qur'an

الودود											
No.	Word	Sarwar		Pickthall		Ali		Arberry		Al-Hilali & Khan	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Love	2	100%	2	100%	0	0%	2	100%	2	100%
2	Loving-kindness	0	0%	0	0%	2	100%	0	0%	0	0%
Total		2	100%	2	100%	2	100%	2	100%	2	100%

The percentages show that Ali is the only translator who added another term “kindness” to express the meaning in both verses unlike the rest of the translators who only used the same lemma “love” with different derivations in their lexical choices such as “all-loving”, “most loving”, “full of love”, “the most loving one”, “loving”. So, it seems to be a good rendering by adding the word “kindness” to explain the meaning of the name الودود besides the word “loving” based on the interpretation provided by the exegeses.

To summarize the differences between the names of Allah depending on the exegeses, اللطيف means the one who knows the finest details and is kind to his servant. الرءوف means the one who is lenient, indulgent, and permissive toward his servants and who has great mercy and compassion. The last name of Allah is الودود which means Allah is a lover of his worshippers who blesses them by answering their prayers and forgiving their sins.

4.3 Near-synonymous Names of Allah Referring to Creation (البارئ ، الخالق ، المصوّر)

The names of Allah المصوّر ، الخالق ، البارئ were all mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in one verse that was collected from the Qur'an encyclopedia (see appendix for full verse). The translators rendered them as Table (15) demonstrates.

Table 15. The occurrence of المصوّر ، الخالق ، البارئ in the Holy Qur'an with their translations

No.	(Chapter: verse)	Sarwar	Pickthall	Ali	Arberry	Al-Hilali & Khan
البارئ						
1	(59:24)	the Designer	the Shaper out of naught	the Evolver	the Maker	the Inventor of all things
الخالق						
2	(59:24)	the Creator	the Creator	the Creator	the Creator	the Creator
المصوّر						
3	(59:24)	the Modeler	the Fashioner	the Bestower of Forms	the Shaper	the Bestower of forms

Table (15) shows the lexical choice of the translators in rendering the names of Allah المصوّر ، الخالق ، البارئ. The name of Allah البارئ was rendered by Sarwar as “the designer”. Pickthall used “the Shaper out of naught”. Ali opted for “the Evolver”. Arberry used “the maker”. Al-Hilali & Khan used the Inventor of all things. Additionally, the name of Allah الخالق was translated by all translators as “the creator”. The name of Allah المصوّر was translated by Sarwar as “the modeler”. Pickthall opted for “the fashioner”. Both Ali and Al-Hilali & Khan rendered the name using “the bestower” while Arberry used “the shaper” to convey the meaning.

According to the Qur'anic exegeses, including Al-Tabari (1994), Al-Qurtubi (1997), and Al-Saadi (2002), the word البارئ is interpreted as 'the one who creates and invents from non-existence with unprecedented model'. The name البارئ is derived from the word بَرَأَ, which means 'being created and made'. The word المصوّر is interpreted as 'the one who gave each creature his own form or shape depending on the assigned purpose'. The name المصوّر is derived from the word صَوَّرَ, which means 'planned, shaped or formed'. The word الخالق is interpreted as 'the one who determines and estimates his creation corresponds to his accurate, specific will, and knowledge'. The name الخالق is derived from the word خَلَقَ, which means 'creating and making'.

To ensure that the English translation of the words under investigation is accurate, Table (16) lists the lexical choices of the five translators based on Cambridge Dictionary and Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

Table 16. The definition of the English equivalents selected by the five translators for the word الباري

الباري			
No.	Word	Definitions in Cambridge Dictionary	Definition in Merriam-Webster Dictionary
1	Designer	“a person who imagines how something could be made and draws plans for it”	“One who creates or introduces something new”
2	Shaper	Shape= “to give a certain form or shape to”	Shape= “to make something become a particular shape”
3	Evolver	Evolve= “To develop gradually, or to cause something or someone to develop gradually”	Evolve= “To develop or work out from something else”
4	Maker	“The person or company that makes a product”	“The being worshipped as the creator and ruler of the universe”
5	Inventor	“Someone who has invented something or whose job is to invent things”	“To create or produce for the first time”

By matching the interpretation of the name of Allah الباري with the definitions of the lexical choices, it can be said that the word “inventor” may reflect the intended meaning since Allah creates anything from nothingness and endows it with characteristics that differentiate it from other beings. For the word المصور, Table (17) includes the definitions given to its English equivalents.

Table 17. The definition of the English equivalents selected by the five translators for the word المصور

المصور			
No.	Word	Definitions in Cambridge Dictionary	Definition in Merriam-Webster Dictionary
1	Modeler	“Someone who makes models as a job or hobby”	Model= “a pattern or figure of something to be made”
2	Fashioner	Fashion= “to make something”	Fashion= “the make or form of something”
3	Bestower of Forms	Bestow= “to give something as an honour or present”	Bestow= “to present as a gift”
4	Shaper	Shape= “to give a certain form or shape to”	Shape= “to make something become a particular shape”

According to the interpretations of the name of Allah المصور, the words “shaper” and “fashioner” may be the best equivalents of the name based on the definitions. In other words, every created being has a certain shape and a distinctive appearance given by Allah, who fashions everything according to His will. Regarding the word الخالق, Table (18) includes the definition of the selected English equivalent.

Table 18. The definition of the English equivalents selected by the five translators for the word الخالق

الخالق			
No.	Word	Definitions in Cambridge Dictionary	Definition in Merriam-Webster Dictionary
1	Creator	God	“The being worshipped as the creator and ruler of the universe”

All translators opted for the phrase “the creator” as an equivalent to the name of Allah الخالق, which may reflect the intended meaning successfully since Allah is the one who plans and creates determining measurements for his creations. Since the three names occurred only once and in the same verse, it was not necessary to include the percentages of the terms used to render it.

Each name of (الباري ، المصور ، الخالق) has a unique meaning when the three names are compared since these names occurred in the same verse. However, each of these names may convey the same meaning when used separately. So, each creation was given its proper shape and form by Allah after He willed, planned for, and then created it.

5. Conclusion

It is obvious that the translators used various words in different derivations to render the same name in many cases; in contrast, they used the same equivalents for more than one name. This led to misinterpretation when comparing the names of Allah that were translated using the same equivalents, resulting in a misunderstanding of the slight differences between the near-synonymous names. This demonstrates the importance of referring to the Qur’anic exegeses before translation in order to understand and express the intended meaning. Regarding the names of Allah referring to Giving, Pickthall, Arberry, and Al-Hilali & Khan provided the best equivalents of the name of Allah “الوهاب”; also, Sarwar, Ali, and Pickthall rendered “الرزاق” accurately. Moreover, Ali was the most successful in translating the names of Allah “الرءوف” while Sarwar and Arberry used the closest equivalents to express the meaning of “اللطيف”. Furthermore, there was a consensus among the translators in rendering the names of Allah referring to Creation, namely, “الخالق”. Al-Hilali & Khan conveyed the meaning of the name of Allah “الباري” correctly, and Arberry succeeded in translating “المصور”. Indeed, some of the names of Allah were inaccurately translated or had more accurate translations than others as a result of the translators’ unfamiliarity with the slight differences among the near-synonymous names.

Translators may face many difficulties in translating the Holy Qur’an because of the eloquent language, which requires good knowledge and competence in Standard Arabic. In most cases, some translators were unable to provide a suitable translation for the names of Allah in this study. To express the distinct differences and be able to choose the best equivalents that accurately reflect the intended meanings, the

translators must be aware of the meanings of the names of Allah. This can be accomplished by referring to different Arabic and English dictionaries to check the definitions and usage of certain terms in different contexts, as well as referring to multiple Qur'anic exegeses, which will help the translator comprehend the meaning accurately. Moreover, it is preferable if the translator uses parentheses to provide additional explanations to benefit the reader.

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Appendix

Full Verses of All Occurrences of الوهاب

الوهاب			
No.	Chapter	Verse No.	Verse
1	آل عمران The Family of Imrān	(2:8)	رَبَّنَا لَا تُرِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ
2	صاد ṣād	(38:9)	أَمْ عِنْدَهُمْ خَزَائِنُ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّكَ الْعَزِيزِ الْوَهَّابِ
3	صاد ṣād	(38:35)	قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَهَبْ لِي مُلْكًا لَا يَنْبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِّنْ بَعْدِي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ

Full Verse of the Occurrence of الرزاق

الرزاق			
No.	Chapter	Verse No.	Verse
1	الذاريات Adh-Dhāriyāt The Wind that Scatter	(51:58)	إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الرَّزَّاقُ ذُو الْقُوَّةِ الْمَتِينُ

Full Verses of All Occurrences of اللطيف

اللطيف			
No.	Chapter	Verse No.	Verse
1	الأنعام The Cattle	(6:103)	لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْأَبْصَارَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ
2	يوسف Yūsuf	(12:100)	وَرَفَعَ أَبَوَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَخَرُّوا لَهُ سُجَّدًا وَقَالَ يَا أَبَتِ هَذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُؤْيَايَ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّي حَقًّا وَقَدْ أَحْسَنَ بِي إِذْ أَخْرَجَنِي مِنَ السِّجْنِ وَجَاءَ بِكُم مِنَ الْبَنُو مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ نَزَغَ الشَّيْطَانُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ إِخْوَتِي إِنَّ رَبِّي لَطِيفٌ لِّمَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ
3	الحج The Pilgrimage	(22:63)	أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَتَصْبِحُ الْأَرْضُ مُخْضَرَّةً إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَطِيفٌ خَبِيرٌ
4	لقمان Luqmān	(31:16)	يُنَبِّئُ إِنَّهَا إِن تَكُ مَقَالًا حَبَّةٍ مِنْ خَرْدَلٍ فَتَكُنْ فِي صَخْرَةٍ أَوْ فِي السَّمُوتِ أَوْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَأْتِ بِهَا اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَطِيفٌ خَبِيرٌ
5	الأحزاب The Combined Forces	(33:34)	وَأَنْكُرْنَ مَا يُنْتَلَى فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَالْجُكْمَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ لَطِيفًا خَبِيرًا
6	الشورى Consultation	(42:19)	اللَّهُ لَطِيفٌ بِعِبَادِهِ يُرْزِقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ
7	المالك Al-Mulk Dominion	(67:14)	أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ

Full Verses of All Occurrences of الرعوف

الرعوف			
No.	Chapter	Verse No.	Verse
1	البقرة The cow	(2:143)	وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعِ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ
2	البقرة The cow	(2:207)	وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ
3	آل عمران The Family of Imrān	(3:30)	يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُّحْضَرًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهَا أَمَدًا بَعِيدًا وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ
4	التوبة The Repentance	(9:117)	لَقَدْ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ فِي سَاعَةِ الْعَسَفِ مَنْ بَعْدَ مَا كَادَ يَزِيغُ قُلُوبَ فَرِيقٍ مِّنْهُمْ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّهُ بِهِمْ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ
5	التوبة The Repentance	(9:128)	لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ
6	النحل The Bees	(16:7)	وَتَحْمِلْ أَنْفَالَكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَلَدٍ لَّمْ تَكُونُوا بَالِغِيهِ إِلَّا بِشِقِّ الْأَنْفُسِ إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ
7	النحل The Bees	(16:47)	أَوْ يَأْخُذْهُمْ عَلَىٰ تَخَوُّفٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ
8	الحج The Pilgrimage	(22:65)	أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالْفُلْكَ تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ وَيُمْسِكُ السَّمَاءَ أَنْ تَقَعَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ
9	النور The Light	(24:20)	وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ
10	الحديد The Iron	(57:9)	هُوَ الَّذِي يُنَزِّلُ عَلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ لِّيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُمْ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ
11	الحشر The Gathering	(59:10)	وَالَّذِينَ جَاءُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

Full Verses of All Occurrences of الودود

الودود			
No.	Chapter	Verse No.	Verse
1	البروج The big stars	(85:14)	وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الْوَدُودُ
2	هود Hūd	(11:90)	وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ ثُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ إِنَّ رَبِّي رَحِيمٌ وَدُودٌ

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الخالق ، البارئ ، المصور			
No.	Chapter	Verse No.	Verse
1	الحشر The Gathering	(59:24)	هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَلِيقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

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