

**THE TRANSLATION OF
QUR'ANIC
RHETORICAL QUESTIONS
INTO ENGLISH**

A THESIS

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Abstract

The field of rhetoric in language is a thorny area of investigation; Arabic is no exception. Rhetorical devices require special attention during the process of translation because they mostly encapsulate pragmatic implications. One of these rhetorical devices is the rhetorical question. In Arabic, a rhetorical question is a term used to refer to any interrogative sentence that is used not to seek information but to fulfill other rhetorical functions.

Since languages exhibit variation as far as the forms and functions of rhetorical questions are concerned, translating a rhetorical question from one language into another is faced with problems due to the language variation in this linguistic area. Translating rhetorical questions into interrogative forms may not convey the illocutionary forces of the source text and hence bring about misunderstanding. As rhetorical questions may look like real questions in their form and are used for purposes other than seeking information, there is a sort of an extensive skewing between their illocutionary force (intended meaning) and grammatical form. This in turn may lead to a pragmatic difficulty in translation.

The present study aims at providing an appropriate way of translating Arabic rhetorical questions into English.

It is hypothesized that:

- 1- Although Arabic and English seem to have the same or similar forms of rhetorical questions, they may serve different functions in both languages.
- 2- Some Arabic rhetorical questions may better be translated into declaratives or exclamatives in order to preserve their illocutionary forces which may be lost if translated into interrogatives.
- 3- Some Arabic rhetorical questions seem to be rendered into English rhetorical questions but with different illocutionary forces and this leads to misunderstanding on the part of the TL reader.

The present study endeavours to explore the concept and uses of the rhetorical question in Arabic and English in order to probe into its linguistic functions to arrive at an equivalent function and illocutionary force for the source language. For this purpose, fifty Qur'anic rhetorical questions translated into English by seven translators were reviewed, analyzed and assessed.

After reviewing, analyzing and assessing the translations, the first hypothesis was partially proved because it became clear that rhetorical questions can also perform similar functions in both languages. The second hypothesis was also partially proved because despite the fact that the illocutionary forces of the rhetorical questions are preserved, translating them into other forms entails a loss of the force and characteristics of interrogation. The third hypothesis was fully proved. The present study also concludes that the functional equivalence method in translating rhetorical questions is preferred in rendering the illocutionary force of the source text but with the attempt to render the same grammatical form of the source text whenever possible in order to preserve the characteristics of interrogation.