

## Pragmalinguistic Problems Encountered in Rendering some Qur'ānic Satirical Expressions into English, with Special Reference to Surrat Al-Masad: A Comparative Study

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history

Received: October 11, 2021

Accepted: January 08, 2022

Published: January 31, 2022

Volume: 11 Issue: 1

Advance access: January 2022

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: None

### ABSTRACT

The present study aims at investigating pragmalinguistic problems encountered in rendering Qur'ānic satirical expressions into English, with special reference to Surrat Al-Masad, that is in English translations of Abdel-Haleem, Khan, and Mohammed Taj Al-Din Al-Hilai and Pickthall. Also, the study aims at exploring how the three translators deal with these problems and constraints in their renderings. The three renditions of Qur'ānic satirical expressions from Surrat Al-Masad were purposively selected and analyzed. Various pragmalinguistic problems and pragmatics losses in the three translations explored by the two researchers were found. The study reveals that there are some pragmalinguistic problems in the translation of the meaning of Qur'ānic satirical expressions into English in Surrat Al-Masad rendered by Abdel-Haleem, Khan and Mohammed Taj Al-Din Al-Hilai and Pickthall. Moreover, the types of pragmalinguistic and pragmatics losses problems are attributed to lack of knowledge of contexts for example context of situation by some translators such as Pickthall. The study also aims at identifying the translation strategies adopted by the three translators in rendering Qur'ānic satirical expressions into English, in Surrat Al-Masad. The study also recommends that translators of the Holy Quran must adopt footnotes, transliteration, and other translation strategies to avoid a probable pragmatic loss and semantic loss of the intended meaning of the Holy Quran in general and rhetorical tropes such as satire in particular.

**Key words:** Pragmalinguistic, Qur'ānic, Problem, Satirical, Surrat Al-Masad

### INTRODUCTION

The current research paper is a linguistic study that intends at investigating the pragmalinguistic problems encountered in rendering some Qur'ānic satirical expressions into English in Surrat Al-Masad. Moreover, the study aims at exploring pragmatic loss in the translation of the Holy Quran into English in general and Quranic satirical expressions in Surrat Al-Masad in particular which may pervert the true meaning of these expressions into English.

In the context of the current study, the pragmatic loss is referred to the pragmalinguistic capability of translators of the Holy Quran for both the languages Arabic language as well as the English language. Therefore, the pragmatic losses in diverse rendered texts of a source text may vary from translator to translator.

The present research paper aims at identifying pragmalinguistic problems of translating the Qur'ānic satirical expressions into English in Surrat Al-Masad faced by three translators of the Holy Qur'an, namely: Abdel-Haleem, Pickthall, Khan, and Hilali.

The study also intends at discussing the degree of appropriacy in rendering Qur'ānic satirical expressions rendered into English in Surrat Al-Masad face drawn on the view of functional equivalence. This study derives its significance from the fact that both English and Arabic languages belong to two different settings and different language families. Arabic is a Semitic language whereas English is Indo-European. They are linguistically and culturally unrelated and alien. and remote languages (Al-Smadi, 2022, Oualif, (2017) remote languages. As Alhaj (2019) opines: "from linguistic factors Arabic language and the English language are different stylistically, pragmatically Morpho-Syntactically, Semotactically, and phonologically; whilst from non-linguistic factors, they are cultural, setting, language families differently as well".

There are few studies that addressed pragmalinguistic problems encountered in rendering Qur'ānic satirical expressions into English in Surrat Al-Masad and this study is among the first to discuss the degree of adequacy of rendering these expressions into English which were rendered by the three intended translators of the Holy Quran namely: Abdel-Haleem, Pickthall, Khan, and Hilali.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study intends at:

- a. Analyzing the pragmalinguistic problems, encountered by translators of the Holy Quran, namely: Abdel-Haleem, Pickthall, Khan, and Hilali, while translating Qur'ānic satirical expressions into English in *Surrat Al-Masad*.
- b. Identifying the main functions of the Quranic satirical expressions
- c. Exploring the possible linguistic token of pragmatic losses in rendering Qur'ānic satirical expressions into English in *Surrat Al-Masad* encountered by the three translators.
- d. Probing the apt translation strategies employed by the three translators, for rendering Qur'ānic satirical expressions into English in *Surrat Al-Masad*?

## Questions of the Study

To meet the stated objectives of the study, the following study questions were raised

1. What are the main functions of the Quranic satirical expressions in *Surrat Al-Masad*?
2. What are the pragmalinguistic problems of rendering Qur'ānic satirical expressions into English in *Surrat Al-Masad* that Abdel Haleem, Khan, Al-Hilali, and Pickthall, encountered?
3. What may be the possible linguistic token of pragmatic losses in rendering Qur'ānic satirical expressions into English in *Surrat Al-Masad* encountered by the three translators?
3. What are the apt translation strategies adopted by the three translators, for rendering Qur'ānic satirical expressions into English in *Surrat Al-Masad*?

## RELATED LITERATURE

### Standpoints of Equivalence

Translation is essentially a complex discipline. Several translation scholars have growingly recognized this complexity (Marais 2014); Faithfulness in translation has always been a concern that obsessed and filled the minds of translators and readers of translation continually (Diniz, 2003, Abdelaal,2019) and to a concerning extent. Attaining faithfulness in rendition is not an easy task for translators in general and the translators of the Holy Quran in particular. Zhongying (1990), for example, believes that attaining such a kind of faithful rendition to the source text seems to be demanding.

Baker (2004) believes that faithfulness to the original is connected to the appeal of equivalence. Baker deduces that the notion of equivalence is so prime because other theoretical notions of translation are intertwined. with it, and that is why the notion of equivalence should not be thrown away or brought into disrepute. (Abdelaal,2019). Baker (2004) argues that "equivalence, however, defined, means 'sameness'.

There are many standpoints of equivalence. Equivalence can be considered either as a semantic category, (Gil,

2001) in terms of equivalence effect or in terms of functional equivalence.

Several translation scholars amongst them Pym (2018, p.37) who observes that "equivalence has been extensively used to define translation, but few writers have been prepared to define equivalence itself". Moreover, Pym (2018) makes a difference between two types of equivalence: natural equivalence and direction which has been criticized by Wendland (2012) who sees that there is no interaction between the two categories of translation suggested by Pym (2018), as natural equivalence includes directional equivalence. According to House (2015, p.7):" equivalence has to be recognized; as an approximative concept. In this regard, House (2015) believes that the concept of equivalence has fallen out of favor because of misunderstanding what the term means. In his turn, to achieve equivalence, Koller (1995) raised up particular requirements. These requirements are historical-cultural requirements, linguistic- textual, and extra-linguistic factors, including the language of the ST and stylistic and aesthetic contextual properties (Al-Smadi, 2022).

### The Concept of Religious Satire

Satire is originally a literary device derived from the Latin term *satura*. i.e., "full" and appears to be related to the gastronomical term *satura lanx*, a stuffed dish of uncertain identification (Ugolini,2019). It was used in literary work, such as the poems of Horace and Juvenal (Azeez,2019). According to Bal et al(2012)," Satire is the use of ridicule, irony, sarcasm to lampoon something or someone"(p.235). In this context, Elliot (2004) defines satire as:

...a rhetorical strategy in which human or individual vices, follies, abuses, or shortcomings are held up to censure by means of ridicule, derision, burlesque, irony, or other methods, ideally with an intent to bring about improvement.

According to Draitser (1994, p. xxi), satire is being viewed within a literary-critical dimension through which he defines it as a genre of literature whose goal is not only to point out a social vice but to make it clear that this vice is intolerable.

Religious satire is one of four types of satire, namely: personal satire, social satire, political satire. The Holy Quran has several ayahs of satirical expressions that are considered typical forms of religious satire.

### The Concept of Pragmalinguistics and Pragmatic Loss

Pragmalinguistics appertains to the linguistic asset or resources available in a language for making a deal of communicative/expressive acts as well as social, interpersonal, or collective meanings. These resources contain pragmatic strategies applicable to directness, indirectness, routines, and an enormous collection of linguistic structures or exposition, these linguistic forms and indications own the scope of causing boosting or devitalizing escalation (taking the edge off) of communicative acts. (Abdullah, 2017).

The current study intends to explore the pragmalinguistic problems, encountered by translators of the Holy Quran, namely: Abdel-Haleem, Pickthall, Khan, and Hilali, while

translating Qur'ānic satirical expressions into English in Surrat Al-Masad. This investigation includes the study of elements of pragmatic loss in the target text and their respective linguistic manifestation in, literal translation with lexical and morphosyntactic development.

### Previous Studies

Al-Shaikhli, et al (2001) conducted a study aimed at investigating Arabic satire with special Reference to translating satirical expressions in the Glorious Quran. The study revealed that the literal translation was the favorable approach in rendering Qur'ānic satirical expressions usually accompanied by paraphrasing, extension, and commentary.

Ghazala, (2007) conducted a study that aims at exploring satire and irony from Arabic into English. The paper is concluded with a framework of translation procedures and steps suggested to help translators overcome the problems of translating the English style of irony or satire into Arabic.

Alhaj, (2020) conducted a study that intends to explore the translatability of some Qur'ānic verbal irony (satire) into English. The study revealed that the Qur'ānic verbal irony is a conspicuous occurrence in the Holy Quran and that the process of rendering them into English is generally problematic for the reasons such as linguistic and cultural divergences and discrepancies.

Fowler et al (2006) states "in their book entitled "The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms" state that writers may use a variety of devices: caricature, exaggeration, parallelism or parody, to achieve a similar satire.

Al-Azab and al-Misned (2012) carried out a study that aimed to explore pragmatic losses of Qur'an translation. The study revealed that pragmatic losses in Qur'ānic translations may evaporate the pleasure of the sacred text. Also, the study categorized the pragmatic losses in the English translation of the Holy Qur'an in the perspective of overall morphosyntactic structure. To conclude, all these studies may provide a lead for the present research paper.

### METHODOLOGY

This part of the study intends at describing the research method that is utilized by the two researchers in collecting data

### RESEARCH DESIGN

In the current study, the two researchers adopted the analytical descriptive qualitative method, which aimed at exploring pragmalinguistic problems encountered in rendering Qur'ānic satirical expressions into English in Surrat Al-Masad that is English translation of the meaning of the Holy Quran of Mohammed, A,S,Abdel Hakeem, Mohammed M.Khan and Mohamed Taj Al-Din Al-Hilali and Pickthall. Furthermore, the two researchers will analyze the Arabic verses containing Quranic satirical expressions to Surrat Al-Masad.

Finally, the two researchers will examine, analyze and compare the selected Arabic ayahs (verses) of the English

translation of the Holy Quran containing pragmalinguistic problems based on pragmalinguistics and pragmatics theories.

### Data Analysis

The data of the present paper consist of Quranic ayahs containing the pragmalinguistic problems to Surrat Al-Masad.

### Procedure

The most central, and significant research tool is reading, analyzing, and comparing the rendered text of selected Qur'ānic Ayahs (Ayahs were translated by the three translators, namely: Mohammed, A,S, Abdel Hakeem, Mohammed M.Khan and Mohammed Taj Al-Din Al-Hilali, and Pickthall. This study is eclectic. Three translations of the meaning of the selected Qur'ānic Ayahs have been analyzed and identified to probe the pragmalinguistic problems encountered by the three translators. When analyzing, identifying, and exploring the pragmalinguistic problems in the three translations, the two researchers followed the following procedures:

- The two researchers obtained the three translations of the meaning of The Holy Quran of Mohammed, A,S,Abdel Hakeem, Mohammed M.Khan and Mohammed Taj Al-Din Al-Hilali and Pickthall to Surrat Al-Masad.
- Studying each Qur'ānic ayah (verse) containing the pragmalinguistic problems encountered by the three translators in rendering Quranic satirical expressions into English to Surrat Al-Masad.
- Analyzing Mohammed, A,S,Abdel Hakeem, Mohammed M.Khan and Mohammed Taj Al-Din Al-Hilali and Pickthall 's translation and identifying their adequacy, appropriates in rendering Quranic satirical expressions into English and then giving comments and corrections on the three renderings to Surrat Al-Masad.

### The Instrument of the Study

In actual fact, a tool of the study is very influential in collecting the data. In the present study, the two researchers are the main tool of the study. Cresswell (1994, p.145) states that qualitative research is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis. Besides that, the two researchers spent a great deal of time reading and exploring the pragmalinguistic problems encountered by the three translators in rendering Qur'ānic satirical expressions into English to Surrat Al-Masad. Then the data was analyzed by the two researchers following the objectives and the questions of the study. (Alhaj, 2019, Cresswell, 1994).

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Examples of problems in some selected Ayahs (Verses) containing pragmalinguistic problems encountered by the three translators in rendering Qur'ānic satirical expressions into English in Surrat Al-Masad.

**Example 1:** "Qur'ānic satirical lexeme تَبَّتْ tabbat".

**Source Surrah:** The Palm Fiber, The flame", ayah, verse 1 (Part One)

ST: (تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ وَتَبَّ)

**Transliteration:** Tabbat yadaa abee Lahabinw-wa tabb

**Target Text:**

- (1) **Abdelhaleem:** May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined! May he be ruined too!
- (2) **Khan and Al-Hilali:** Perish the two hands of Abu Lahab, and perish he!
- (3) **Pickthall:** The power of Abu Lahab will perish, and he will perish.

## EVALUATION OF THE TRANSLATION

### The Meaning of the Ayah: (Part One)

Al-Bukari recorded that Ibn Abbas said:” The Prophet (PBUH) went out to the valley of Al-Batha and he ascended the mountain and then cried out ‘O people! Come at once!’” So, when the Quraysh gathered, he said: “if I told you that the enemy was going to attack you in the morning, or in the evening, would you all believe me?” They replied:” Yes,” He then said: Verily, I am a warner sent to all of you before the coming of a severe torment.” Abu Lahab said: Have gathered us for this? May you!”. At this, Allah revealed “:” Perish the two hands of Abu Lahab, and perish he!” to the end of the Surah Allah mentioned the two hands in this ayah because they are the organs with which the majority of one’s deeds are performed (Al-Jalalayn,2010). That is, may he be a loser, disappointed, deteriorated, and in vain to his deed be. (Ibn Kathir, 2007).

### Comparative Pragmalinguistic Analysis (ayah 1” Qur’anic satirical lexeme تَبَّتْ tabbat ”)

To approach the meaning of the Quranic satirical lexeme تَبَّتْ tabbat Abdelhaleem used literal translation “ruined”(May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined! May he be ruined too!.” which is pragmalinguistically out of context. Hence, his rendition is weak and seems inappropriate and it is translationese and there is a pragmatic loss in it as well. Khan and Al-Hilali’s Pickthall’s rendering seem the best because they render the Quranic satirical lexeme تَبَّتْ tabbat into” perish” which seems accurate and appropriate renderings in the linguistic context, and seem to be the appropriate equivalent since they match the interpretation of تَبَّتْ tabbat given by Ibn Kathir in his Exegesis of the ayah.

The literal translation which is used by Abdelhaleem seems contextually inappropriate as it contains the unsuitable verb”ruined”. The other two translations seem contextually suitable because they conveyed the real meaning of the Quranic satirical lexeme تَبَّتْ tabbat into English. Moreover, the variation of morphological choice in Abdelhaleem’s rendering’ ‘ruined” and Khan and Al-Hilali’s Pickthall’s renderings “perish” suggest that their meanings may be different in different cultures. However, rendition of Abdelhaleem for the Quranic satirical lexeme تَبَّتْ tabbat may result into the pragmatic loss of culture-specific terms as well.

Khan and Al-Hilali’s Pickthall’s are adequate in rendering the intended connotative meaning of the Quranic satirical lexeme تَبَّتْ tabbat) which seems accurate and appropriate

rendering in the linguistic context, Hence, their translation has strong connotation (See the table). The proper procedure here would be to give a close TL equivalent because there is a TL word that matches the SL denotation and connotation. Abdelhaleem renders the same the Quranic satirical lexeme تَبَّتْ tabbat into” ruined”, which has denotative meaning. Hence, their translation is a literal translation and has a weak connotation.

Type of translation	Strong connotation	Mild connotation	Weak connotation
Tr (1) literal translation			+
Tr (2) semantic l translation	+		
Tr semantic translation	+		

### Example 2

**Source Surrah:** The Palm Fiber, The flame”, ayah, verse 1(Part Two)

ST: (تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ وَتَبَّ)

**Transliteration:** Tabbat yadaa abee Lahabinw-wa tabb

**Target Text:**

- (1) **Abdelhaleem:** May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined! May he be ruined too!
- (2) **Khan and Al-Hilali:** Perish the two hands of Abu Lahab, and perish he!
- (3) **Pickthall:** The power of Abu Lahab will perish, and he will perish.

## EVALUATION OF THE TRANSLATION

### The Meaning of the Ayah: (Part Two)

Allah mentioned the two hands in this Ayah because they are the organs with which the majority of one’s deeds are performed.

### Comparative Pragmalinguistic Analysis (ayah 1, part two)

Abdelhaleem and) Khan and Al-Hilali resort to semantic translation to render the Qur’anic satirical lexemes تَبَّتْ يَدَا Tabbat yadaa Also, the two translators opt for semantic translation as a strategy for rendering it, a choice which seems to be very suitable because it conveys the intended meaning to the receptors. Abdel-Haleem rendered it into “May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined! May he be ruined too! “Khan and Hilali rendered it into “Perish the two hands of Abu Lahab,”

Pickthall’s renditions for the Qur’anic lexeme يَدَا yadā which is a part of the Qur’anic satirical lexeme expression (تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ وَتَبَّ) Tabbat yadaa abee Lahabinw-wa tabb “is not ‘adequate in conveying the intended meaning and producing the same equivalent in the TT(target text). Pickthall rendered the Qur’anic lexeme yadā into “power” (The power of Abu Lahab will perish, and he will perish) which affects the intensity of the Message and causes confusion in

its pragmalinguistic context and leads to pragmatics loss. Moreover, Pickthall seems that he has not an idea about the context of situation in which *Surrat Al-Masad* was revealed, and that is why he failed to translate it adequately and out of context.

Abdel-Haleem as well as Khan and Hilali resort to strong connotation in their renditions of the Qur'anic lexeme *yadā* يَدَا which are the best in comparison with Pickthall's renditions, which resort to weak connotation.

Type of translation	Strong connotation	Mild connotation	Weak connotation
Tr (1) semantic translation	+		
Tr (2) semantic translation	+		
Tr literal translation			+

The semantic translation strategy used by Abdel-Haleem as well as Khan and Hilali for rendering the Qur'anic lexeme *yadā* يَدَا seems suitable grammatically, semantically, and contextually. However, the literal translation strategy used by Pickthall for rendering the same Qur'anic lexeme *yadā* يَدَا may result into the pragmatic loss of texture and textual meanings.

To conclude, there is unique contextuality in Khan and Hilali's rendering for the Qur'anic lexeme *yadā* يَدَا because of the additional use of (number)"(two hands)" Perish the two hands of Abu Lahab, and perish he!" which is relevant to the syntactic and lexical context.

### Example 3

**Source Surrat:** The Palm Fiber, The flame. Al-Lahab", ayah, verse 2

**ST:** (مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُ وَمَا كَسَبَ)

**Transliteration:** Maa aghnaa 'anhu maaluhoo wa ma kasab

### Target Text:

- (1) **Abdelhaleem:** "Neither his wealth nor his gains will help him"
- (2) **Khan and Al-Hilali:** "His wealth and children will not benefit him!"
- (3) **Pickthall:** "His wealth and cains will not exempt him"

## EVALUATION OF THE TRANSLATION

### The Meaning of the Ayah

"His wealth and children will not benefit him!" meaning, it is blazing flames which are radiant and red in color as his face which is radiant and red; the reason it is for which he was called Abu-Lahab (Tafsir, Al-Jalalayn 2010). i.e., which will excruciatingly burn him (up to his heart while a life) with its bursting flames. (Ibn Kathir, (2007).

### Comparative Pragmalinguistic Analysis (ayah 2)

Abdelhaleem's rendition for the Quranic satirical expression (بِسْكَ أَمْوَالِهِمْ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدًا فِيهَا) Maa aghnaa 'anhu maaluhoo wa ma kasab is inadequate in conveying the intended meaning

and producing the same equivalent in the TL (Target Language) because the use of the adverb "neither" at the beginning of the Ayah is really confusing which results in misinterpretation for the TL receptor.

To approach the meaning of the Quranic satirical expression مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُ وَمَا كَسَبَ Maa aghnaa 'anhu maaluhoo wa ma kasab Khan and Al-Hilali used translation addition strategy which hits a low degree of translational coincidences with the interpretations instead of communicative translation strategy in rendering the Ayah. hence, their renderings are pragmalinguistically inaccurate, and inadequate. The use of the noun "children" in addition translation strategy which is not appreciated here in the theory of appropriacy. The two translators also did not use translation footnote strategy to clarify the context of using "children in their renderings they did not even hint in a footnote or a commentary that it may stand for 'the sons', or the 'offspring' of Abu Lahab (Al-Shaikhli, 2011).

To approach the meaning of the Quranic satirical expression مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُ وَمَا كَسَبَ Maa aghnaa 'anhu maaluhoo wa ma kasab) Pickthall used communicative translation strategy which hits a high degree of translational coincidences with the interpretations in rendering the Ayah. hence, his rendering pragmalinguistically seems accurate and adequate. Pickthall used archaic lexis in rendering the Quranic satirical expression مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُ وَمَا كَسَبَ Maa aghnaa 'anhu maaluhoo wa ma kasab, for example, the lexeme, "cains" as in "His wealth and cains will not exempt him".

Pickthall's rendering as "His wealth and cains will not exempt him" bears more communication load as compared to other translations of Abdelhaleem, Khan, and Al-Hilali. However, the two latter translations seem to result in the pragmatic loss of texture and textual meaning with respect to the source text. The two words are the adverb, "neither" in Abdelhaleem's rendering "Neither his wealth nor his gains will help him" and the noun, children, in Khan, and Al-Hilali's rendering "His wealth and children will not benefit him!". Therefore, Abdelhaleem's translations may result into the pragmatic loss of grammatical category, but Khan and Al-Hilali may result into the pragmatic loss of morphological category.

Pickthall resorts to strong connotation in his renditions for the Quranic satirical expression مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُ وَمَا كَسَبَ Maa aghnaa 'anhu maaluhoo wa ma kasab which ranks the best in comparison with renditions of Abdelhaleem, Khan and Al-Hilali, which resort to weak connotation.

Type of translation	Strong connotation	Mild connotation	Weak connotation
Tr (1) literal translation			+
Tr (2) addition translation			+
Tr (3) Semantic translation	+		

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine pragmalinguistic problems encountered by the three translators of the Holy Quran, name-

ly: Mohammed, A.S., Abdel Hakeem, Mohammed M.Khan and Mohamed Taj Al-Din Al-Hilali and Pickthall. in rendering Qur'anic satirical expressions into English in Surrat Al-Masad: and the translation strategies employed by the three translators in rendering these expressions. The three renditions of Qur'anic satirical expressions from Surrat Al-Masad were purposively selected and analyzed. Various pragmalinguistic problems and pragmatics losses in the three translations explored by the two researchers were found. All the three translators of Surrat Al-Masad employed several translation strategies such as literal translation strategy, addition translation strategy, semantic translation strategy to render the Qur'anic satirical expressions into English in Surrat Al-Masad. In this study, the two researchers also found differences among the three translations of Qur'anic satirical expressions in Surrat Al-Masad. The equivalence in rendition in terms of textual meaning is considered out of the reach of three translators. The two researchers found in this study when the Qur'anic satirical expressions in Surrat Al-Masad were rendered into the English language by the three translators, textual meanings are not perfectly embodied the rendered text, which may result in pragmatic loss in terms of textual meaning. The two researchers conclude that a lot of the Qur'an translator's problems and constraints while rendering Qur'anic satirical expressions in Surrat Al-Masad, are **ascribed** to the inadequate background of the contextual and socio-cultural factors., for example, context of situation led to pragmatics loss in Pickthall's rendering for the lexeme *yadā* يَدًا when he misinterpreted it into power.

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