



A Study of Nuances among Qur'ānic Near-synonyms and their Reflection in English and French translations

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Abstract

The current study investigated the nuances among Qur'ānic near-synonyms and the reflection of such semantic differences in English and French translations. Initially, it aimed to highlight the contextual meanings of the selected sets of Qur'ānic near-synonyms in the light of the exegeses of the Holy Qur'ān. Moreover, it explicated the nuances which exist in the selected sets of Qur'ānic near-synonyms in terms of denotative and connotative meanings and how these nuances are reflected in the selected English and French translations of the Holy Qur'ān. The present study adopted the Relation by Contrast Approach to Synonyms by Murphy (2003) as a theoretical framework for the analysis of the selected data. Moreover, it adopted the qualitative approach for selecting and analyzing the data of the study. The findings of the study revealed that there exist some nuances among the selected sets of Qur'ānic near-synonyms and that the nuances among some Qur'ānic near-synonyms are not reflected in the English and French translations. Based on the obtained findings, the study recommends that the translators of the Holy Qur'ān must pinpoint the nuances among the Qur'ānic near-synonyms and then reflect such nuances in their translation. The present study provides recommendations which could be useful for readers as well as translators of the Qur'ān.

Keywords: Denotation; connotation; nuances; translation; Qur'ānic near-synonyms

1. Introduction

It is commonly acknowledged that synonymy is a universal linguistic phenomenon which occurs in many languages. This concept has been viewed differently in the literature. For example, it is seen as a semantic relation among two or more lexical items which map to the same concept or meaning (Murphy, 2003) or a semantic relation among lexical items that share many semantic features (Cruse, 2000). Besides, Shiyab (2007) maintained that synonymy could be defined as a semantic relation that exists between two or more words that can be used interchangeably in any context without changing the denotative and connotative meaning. He also contended that *well* and *healthy*, *ill* and *sick*, *speedily* and *quickly*, *rapidly* and *quickly* are some instances of synonyms since they have most of the semantic features in common.

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Furthermore, Ishrateh (2006) and Hjørland (2007) applauded that there has been consensus among semanticists that the notion of synonymy is considered as a relation between two or more lexical items having the same or similar denotations; they added that the more similar denotations such words have in common, the higher the degree of synonymy that exists between them. Based on this claim, it seems that there are some degrees of synonymy among some lexical items and thus there exist various types of synonyms. In this connection, Taylor (2002) made a distinction between near-synonyms and absolute synonyms. Absolute synonyms are the ones which have precisely the same meaning in every context and thus are employed interchangeably in all contexts. However, near-synonyms are the synonyms which have the same meaning in some (but not all) contexts. Nevertheless, he stated that absolute synonyms rarely exist in languages. In a similar vein, Cruse (1986, p. 270) pointed out that there is “no obvious motivation for the existence of absolute synonyms in a language”.

Furthermore, Murphy (2003) categorized synonyms into two kinds, namely, context-dependent synonyms as well as logical synonyms. According to her, logical synonyms are, then, classified into two kinds: sense synonyms and full synonyms. However, all context-dependent synonyms are regarded to be near-synonyms. Full synonyms are those that are identical in each sense; such a kind of synonyms does not exist in languages at all (Murphy, 2003). Sense synonyms refer to lexical items that have one or more senses in common, but differ in others (ibid). This is the case when two words share one or more senses but diverge in others. Instances of this type are the words *daddy* and *father*; both of which refer to a biological father (Cruse, 1986). Nevertheless, *father* might have another sense which is a religious father while *daddy* does not have that sense (ibid).

On the other hand, near-synonyms have “no senses that are exactly the same (that is, their contributions to sentential truth-conditions differ), but each member of a near-synonymous pair has a sense that is much like a sense of its counterpart, such that something described by one of the pair can often (or at least sometimes) be described by the other” (Murphy 2003, p. 147). Examples of near-synonyms include the words *big: large*, *mature: ripe*, *roast: bake* and *mob: crowd*. It is worth noting that near-synonyms are believed to be more common than other types and are usually what is meant when the term synonym is utilized (ibid).

2. Qur’ānic Synonymy

Researchers (e.g. Issa (2011), Al-Sowaidi (2011), Abdellah (2003), Omar (2001) and Bint Al-Shāṭi’ (1971) discussed Qur’ānic synonymy and proposed the term “near-synonyms” to be employed in studies which investigate the synonyms of the Qur’ān. The Qur’ānic synonyms are considered to be near-synonyms in that there exist preferences for employing a particular word in a particular context (Abdellah, 2003). In this respect, Abdul-Raof (2018, p. 109) contended that “each lexical item in the Holy Qur’ān has its own inherent semantic componential features which can be slightly distinct from another lexical item that has its own innate semantic componential features, claiming that the context and semantic componential features are the major factors in the selection of one word rather than the other”. In terms of Qur’ānic synonyms, Abdul-Raof (2018, p. 97) also argued that:

A word which is employed in a certain verse occurs in a context where another word which is semantically similar to it cannot be employed because the alternative word has different semantic componential features from the first word. A word contrasts with another word on a single or a number of componential features. This leads to semantic contrastiveness between two verbs, nouns, adjectives or adverbs. However, semantic contrastiveness should not be confused with antonymy (a word of opposite meaning to another word).

In addition, Al-^cUwa (1998) claimed that although synonymy exists in Arabic language, the Qur'ānic synonymy should be dealt with in a different way and semantic differences among the Qur'ānic synonyms must be considered in order to understand the meanings of the Qur'ānic verses appropriately. In fact, the failure to understand the nuances among the Qur'ānic near-synonyms alters the Qur'ānic message. These semantic differences are even difficult to understand in Modern Standard Arabic as some of Qur'ānic near-synonyms are used interchangeably. An instance of this case is the pair *مطر maṭar* and *غيث ghayth* which share the core meaning “rain” in Modern Standard Arabic. Yet, when employed in the Holy Qur'ān, *غيث ghayth* is always linked with welfare, mercy and compassion whilst *مطر maṭar* is connected with punishment, destruction, torment and Godly wrath (Al-Sha^crāwī, 1991; Al-Sowaidi, 2011). Consequently, the nuances among the Qur'ānic synonyms would be more difficult and hardly bridgeable when translated into other languages. More seriously, if a translator fails to realize the semantic differences among Qur'ānic near-synonyms, the near-synonyms will be unfaithfully translated.

The present study will, therefore, investigate the nuances among some sets of Qur'ānic near-synonyms and how such semantic differences are reflected into English and French while translating such near-synonyms. Investigating the meaning of Qur'ānic near-synonyms and their English and French translations might provide insight into the Qur'ānic texts as well as an illustration to the reader and specifically to the translator that the differences in meaning among Qur'ānic near-synonyms need careful consideration during the process of translation.

3. Problem Statement

It is widely accepted that Qur'ānic near-synonyms seem to have similar meanings but upon a deeper analysis of the semantic elements of such words, slightly different meanings could be identified. Moreover, Qur'ānic near-synonyms have certain features that make their translation into other languages extremely challenging (Al-Sowaidi, 2011). More importantly, Ali (1938, p. xvi) pointed out that “the Classical Arabic, the language of the Qur'ān, has a vocabulary in which the meaning of each root word is so comprehensive that it is difficult to interpret it in a modern analytical language, word for word, or by the use of the same word in all places where the original word occurs in the Qur'ānic text”. He also claims that the Qur'ānic vocabulary is so rich that it provides special words for similar things and ideas that have just a general English word.

Furthermore, it is argued that although some words are interchangeably utilized in Modern Standard Arabic, they are employed in a different way in the Holy Qur'ān (Al-Sowaidi, 2011). An instance of the Qur'ānic near-synonyms is the lexical items *ريب rayb* (doubt) and *شك shakk* which is thought to be full synonyms (i.e. words with identical meanings) in Modern Standard Arabic. While explaining the semantic differences between these two words, Hassan (2014) asserted that *ريب rayb* denotes doubt, apprehension, restlessness and conjecture; besides, it refers to a feeling of self-anxiety, unease, disturbance and bewilderment. However, *شك shak* is considered as the opposite of certainty (ibid). According to him, if *شك shak* denotes doubt, *ريب rayb* most likely implies intense or extreme doubt. In this regard, Al-Sowaidi (2011) argued that if the nuances among these Qur'ānic near-synonyms are not taken into account while translating the Qur'ānic texts, the original meaning of such near-synonyms is not transferred to the target language. In other words, both near-synonyms are usually dealt with as absolute synonyms (i.e. words with identical meanings) in the translation of the Holy Qur'ān.

Based on the above arguments, researchers (e.g. Bint Al-Shāṭī', 1971; Al-^cUwa, 1998; Al-Sowaidi, 2011; Issa, 2011) pointed out that although there is synonymy in Arabic, the Qur'ānic synonyms should be predominantly dealt with differently and the semantic differences between near-synonyms

should be considered while translating. The present study is, thus, an endeavor to examine the nuances among the selected sets of Qur'ānic near-synonyms and how they are reflected in the English and French translations of the Holy Qur'ān. It might provide the translators and readers a deeper look into the nuances among the Qur'ānic near-synonyms on the basis of context and how such nuances must be considered when translating the Holy Qur'ān.

4. Objectives of the Study

This current study aimed to achieve these objectives:

- 1) To investigate the contextual meanings of the selected Qur'ānic near-synonyms.
- 2) To highlight the nuances among the selected Qur'ānic near-synonyms in respect of denotative and connotative meaning.
- 3) To examine how the nuances among the selected Qur'ānic near-synonyms are reflected in the English and French translations.

5. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the Relation by Contrast Approach to Synonyms (RC-S) approach by Murphy (2003). Such a method describes synonymy in respect of the minor semantic differences among the synonymous pairs. In this connection, Murphy contended that there is a slight difference in expressive and/or denotative meaning in any different forms of lexical items that have similar denotations. Therefore, the semantic differences among synonymous pairs can be highlighted based on the following offered parameters:

5.1. Denotative Meaning

Denotation refers to “the relationship between sense and reference, and the sense of a word is the set of conditions on the word's reference” (Murphy, 2003, p.148).

5.2. Expressive Elements of Meaning

Expressive meaning covers different types of meaning including connotative meaning, affective meaning and other social information which provides denotatively similar lexical items with different significance without having any effect on their contributions to the truth-conditions of sentences (Murphy, 2003).

a) Connotation is defined as “the additional meanings that a word or phrase has beyond its central meaning” (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 108). This type of meaning “involves associations that do not directly have any effect on the conditions on reference, but which might give some slant to the description” (Murphy, 2003, p.149).

b) Affect is considered to be a non-denotative meaning associated with the attitude of speakers towards the subject at hand (Murphy, 2003).

c) Social information: Other aspects of social meaning comprise register, jargon, dialect, and other sub-varieties of vocabulary or a language (Murphy, 2003). Murphy's (2003) method could contribute to highlighting the nuances among the chosen synonymous words. Based on the RC-S approach, the expressive and denotative meanings of the selected Qur'ānic near synonyms and the reflection of the semantic differences among the selected sets of Qur'ānic near-synonyms in the English and French translations could be highlighted and discussed.

6. Previous Works

The Qur'ānic synonyms and their English translation have been investigated in some studies. For instance, Al-Sowaidi (2011) examined the challenges encountered by the translators while translating the Qur'ānic near-synonyms from Arabic to English. The corpus of her study was comprised of four pairs of near-synonyms, namely, عقيم [°]*aqīm* and عاقر [°]*āqīr* (barren), بخل *bakhil* and شحيح *shahīḥ* (mean), الحلف *al-ḥilf* and القسم *al-qasam* (swear) and المطر *al-matar* and الغيث *al-ghayth* (rain)" in their Qur'ānic context. The study scrutinized the extent to which the referential and the expressive meaning of the original Qur'ānic synonyms are preserved in the English translation and the textuality standards are retained in the target language as well. The findings of the study revealed that the translators faced a number of challenges when translating the selected Qur'ānic near-synonyms and thus they could not convey the Qur'ānic message. Besides, it was shown that the connotative and denotative meanings of the Qur'ānic near-synonyms are not reflected in the English translation. Al-Sowaidi (2011, p. iv) concluded that "the reliance on dictionary meaning rather than the meaning of the lexical item in context, the negligence of context culture as well as the context of situation (the reason for the revelation of the verses) affect the periodicity of the text, that is, the information flow of the whole text".

Furthermore, Al-Azzam (2005) studied the notion of synonymy in translation, giving some instances of Hadith and the Holy Qur'ān. The study examined three translations of the Holy Qur'ān as well as a translation of Hadith. Moreover, Al-Azzam shed light on the difficulties encountered by translators while transferring the meanings of some Islamic terms related to observations. The results of that study showed that translators faced some difficulties while translating the Qur'ānic near-synonymous words. Moreover, Issa (2011) examined synonymy (Arabic-English) at two levels. The first level was concerned with context-related synonymy with some instances from the Qur'ān. However, the second one was mainly concerned with text type-related synonymy grounded on the argumentative text type. The study also showed that translators could not reflect the semantic differences among the Qur'ānic near-synonyms in translation and thus they rendered them inaccurate in English i.e. their meaning is not comparable to the original.

A close look at the literature shows that little attention has been given to the meaning of near-synonyms, specifically their translation in the Holy Qur'ān. In fact, Al-Omari & Abu-Melhim (2014) carried out a review of relevant literature and maintained that the notion of Qur'ānic synonymy in both English and Arabic has been given less attention from researchers and linguists and this stresses the need for much research in this study domain. A big number of Qur'ānic near-synonyms still need to be studied either in respect of their meanings, the semantic differences which exist among them or the reflection of these semantic differences in the target language during the translation process. More significantly, it is noticed that the previous studies partially discussed the meaning and the translation of Qur'ānic near-synonyms (Issa, 2011) and were more related to the extent to which the textuality standards are retained in the translation of near-synonyms (Al-Sowaidi, 2011). Furthermore, AlQainai (2011) investigated the translations of Qur'ānic synonyms; his study was primarily related to the evaluation of the criteria and the strategies used by the translators.

Consequently, the researchers aim to do a thorough investigation into the semantics of the Qur'ānic near-synonyms as well as their English and French translations. The present study proposes that there are subtle nuances among Qur'ānic near-synonyms that cannot be understood easily; these differences in meaning require much attention. The present study may bring the meaning as well as the English and French translation of Qur'ānic near-synonyms into focus so that such semantic differences would be clear to the translator and the reader, and their English and French translation could, then, be more accurate in future translations.

7. Methodology

This section presents the methodology adopted in the current study; it provides the study design, the selected data, the selected translations and exegeses, the methods of analysis and so forth.

8. Study Design

The present study makes use of the qualitative method for gathering and analyzing the study data. The qualitative paradigm is adopted for the analysis of the nuances that exist among the Qur'ānic near-synonyms and their reflection in the English and French translations because it is more relevant and useful in highlighting such semantic differences among the selected Qur'ānic near-synonyms. This approach, as pointed out by Miles and Huberman (1994), allows the researchers to be the primary measurement device and thus it is more suitable for studying the Qur'ānic near-synonyms and their English and French translations. The current study adopts qualitative content analysis as it is a flexible technique for the analysis of the data of the study. Such a technique is described by Krippendorff (2004, p. 18) as “making replicable and valid inferences for texts (or other meaningful matters) to the context of their use. It provides new insights, increases a researcher understanding of particular phenomena, or informs practical actions”.

9. Selected Data

Three sets of Qur'ānic near-synonyms (Table 1) are selected for the present study; they are particularly selected because they have not been studied yet, according to the best knowledge of the researchers and most importantly they occur frequently in the Holy Qur'ān.

Table 1. The selected Qur'ānic near-synonyms

Qur'ānic near-synonyms	English translation	French translation
اثم - خطيئة - حوب - ذنب - جناح	sin	péché
ضرر - ضراء - ضر - اذى	harm	préjudice
فرح - بهجة - سرور - مرح - سعادة - حبور	joy	joie

10. Selected Translations and Exegeses of the Qur'ān

This study will be limited to analyzing two translations of Qur'ānic near-synonyms, namely, Irving's translation and the French translation of the Holy Qur'ān by Michon (2013). The Irving's translation is selected because the translation was addressed to the readers born and living in the West; his translation was also written in modern English so that it is easy to understand for a large number of people. However, the French translation was selected because it is the most current translation of the Qur'ān and is also common in the academic setting. In terms of the exegeses of the Holy Qur'ān, the study relies on the exegeses of Ibn 'Ashūr (1984) and Al-Sha'rawī (1991) in that these exegetes explained the nuances which exist among the Qur'ānic near-synonyms in several Qur'ānic verses. Other exegeses like Al-Maḥalī and Al-Suyūṭī (2003) are also consulted since they are the most dependable exegeses as maintained by (Abdul-Raof, 2001). These exegeses are available on the same website www.altfasir.com. In fact, this website was established by the Royal Al-Abayt Institute for Islamic Thought in Jordan. It went through a rigorous validation process to guarantee the originality as

well as authenticity of the translations of the Holy Qur'ān and its exegeses. This website offers access to a big number of online collections of Qur'ān translations in different languages among which English and French as well as various Qur'ānic exegeses.

11. Data Analysis

The present study scrutinizes the nuances that exist among the selected sets of Qur'ānic near-synonyms and how such semantic differences are reflected in the English and French translations. It adopts the qualitative content analysis for analyzing the data of the study. One Qur'ānic verse will be selected for each Qur'ānic near-synonym and the English and French translations are presented next to the Qur'ānic verse. The nuances among the selected Qur'ānic near-synonyms are presented based on the selected Qur'ānic exegeses. Then, the researchers explained how the nuances that exist among Qur'ānic near-synonymous words are reflected in the English and French translations. The findings of the study are presented and analyzed in the next section.

12. Findings

This section presents the findings of the study; it provides the contextual meanings of the selected Qur'ānic near-synonyms on the basis of the Qur'ānic exegeses, the nuances among the selected near-synonyms and the extent to which these nuances are reflected in the English and French translations.

12.1. Analysis of *ithm* (sin) and its Qur'ānic near-synonyms

This subsection presents the contextual meanings of *ithm* (sin) and its Qur'ānic near-synonyms, namely, *khati'ah* خطيئة, *hawb* حوب, *thanb* ذنب and *junah* جناح (sin).

Table 2. The translation of *ithm* (sin)

The Qur'ānic verse	English translation by Irving (2002)	French translation by Michon (2013)
قال تعالى: "اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ" (الحجرات: 12)	"Refrain from conjecturing too much: even a little suspicion forms a vice" (Al-Hujurāt: 12)	"Évitez de trop conjecturer sur autrui: il y a des conjectures qui sont des péchés" (Al-Hujurāt: 12)

This verse (Table 2) is interpreted by Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūṭī (2003), Al-Sha'rawī (1991) and Ibn 'Āshūr (1984) as follows: the verse conveys a message to all Muslims to avoid much suspicion in that some suspicions are considered to be sins; in other words, such suspicion make people fall into sin. The next verse will show the contextual meaning of *khati'ah* خطيئة (sin).

Table 3. The translation of *khati'ah* خطيئة (sin)

The Qur'ānic verse	English translation by Irving (2002)	French translation by Michon (2013)
قال تعالى: "وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا نَّغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطِيئَاتِكُمْ" (الاعراف: 161)	"Enter the gate [walking] on your knees and say: Relieve us! We will forgive your mistakes" (Al-Araf 161)	"Entrez dans cette cité et mangez à satiété de ce qui s'y trouve" (Al-Araf 161)

Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūṭī (2003), Al-Sha^crāwī (1991) and Ibn ^cĀshūr (1984) interpreted this verse (Table 3) as a call from Allah to the people of the Prophet Moses ‘enter the gate of the Jerusalem prostrating (i.e. with a bow). We (referring to Allah) shall forgive your transgressions. The next verse will reveal the contextual meaning of حوب *hawb* (sin).

Table 4. The translation of حوب *hawb* (sin)

The Qur'ānic verse	English translation by Irving (2002)	French translation by Michon (2013)
قال تعالى: "وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَهُمْ إِلَىٰ أَمْوَالِكُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حُوبًا كَبِيرًا" (النساء: 2)	“And do not substitute something bad for something good nor swallow up their wealth along with your own wealth. It would be a great outrage” (Al-Nisa: 2)	“Ne mangez pas leurs biens en les incorporant aux vôtres: ce serait vraiment là un grand péché” (Al-Nisa: 2)

Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūṭī (2003), Al-Sha^crāwī (1991) and Ibn ^cĀshūr (1984) stated that this verse (Table 4) was revealed when an orphan who requested his property from his guardian but his request was rejected; this verse is instruction from Allah to all orphans’ guardians that they must not add the orphans’ properties to their properties as this is considered a serious sin and a great crime. The next verse will reveal the contextual meaning of ذنب *dhanb* (sin).

Table 5. The translation of ذنب *dhanb* (sin)

The Qur'ānic verse	English translation by Irving (2002)	French translation by Michon (2013)
قال تعالى: “فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ” (آل عمران)	”so God seized them because of their offences” (Al-Imran: 11)	“Dieu les a punis pour leurs péchés. Dieu est rigoureux dans le châtement” (Al-Imran: 11)

This verse (Table 5) is interpreted by Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūṭī (2003) Al-Sha^crāwī (1991) and Ibn ^cĀshūr (1984) as the folk of Pharaoh and other societies who denied Allah’s signs and disbelieved Allah’s revelations and Scripture were thus seized and destroyed due to their sins. Allah is severe in punishment when He does punish. The next verse will reveal the contextual meaning of جناح *junah* (sin).

Table 6. The translation of جناح *junah* (sin)

The Qur'ānic verse	English translation by Irving (2002)	French translation by Michon (2013)
قال تعالى: “فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يَتَرَاجَعَا إِنْ ظَنَّا أَنْ يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ” (البقرة: 230)	“If [the latter later] divorces her, there is no blame on either of them if they return to one another, provided they both think they can keep within God's limits” (Al-Baqarah: 230)	“Mais si celui-ci la répudie, aucune faute ne sera imputée aux anciens époux s'ils reviennent l'un à l'autre avec l'intention d'observer les limites fixées par Dieu” (Al-Baqarah: 230)

This verse (Table 6) is interpreted by Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūfī (2003), Al-Shaʿrāwī (1991) and Ibn ʿĀshūr (1984) as follows: if a husband divorces a wife after the two divorce utterances; she shall not be lawful to him. However, if he divorces her for the third time, she will not be lawful for him until she marries another husband. If he the new husband divorces her, the first husband and the wife would be at fault to return to each other in wedlock after completing the waiting period if they believe that they will preserve the limits of God.

The contextual analysis of اثم *ithm* (sin) revealed that this word has some Qurʾānic near-synonyms such as خطيئة *khatiʿah* (mistake), حوب *hawb* (outrage), ذنب *dhanb* (offence) and جناح *junah* (blame). However, there are some nuances among these Qurʾānic near-synonyms. For example, اثم *ithm* (sin) is committed intentionally while خطيئة *khatiʿah* (mistake) is unintentionally committed (Al-Shaʿrāwī, 1991). Moreover, both حوب *hawb* (outrage) and ذنب *dhanb* (sin) denote اثم *ithm* (sin) and crime (Ibn Manzur, 2012). In terms of جناح *junah* (blame) denotes ‘tendency to commit اثم *ithm* (sin) (Anees et al, 2004).

It is revealed that these Qurʾānic near-synonyms are rendered into English as follows: اثم *ithm* (vice), خطيئة *khatiʿah* (mistake), حوب *hawb* (outrage), ذنب *dhanb* (offence) and جناح *junah* (blame). Nevertheless, these Qurʾānic near-synonyms are translated in French as اثم *ithm* (péchés= sin), خطيئة *khatiʿah* (torts= wrongdoing), حوب *hawb* (péché=sin), ذنب *dhanb* (péché=sin) and جناح *junah* (faute=fault). As noticed, اثم *ithm* is translated in English as ‘vice’ and as ‘sin’ in French. In fact, the lexical item ‘vice’ refers to a criminal activity or bad habit while ‘sin’ denotes an action that is against religious rules and is considered to be offence against God (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2007). Therefore, the French rendition of اثم *ithm* as ‘sin’ is more appropriate than the English translation of this word i.e. vice.

In terms of the translation of خطيئة *khatiʿah* as ‘mistake’ in English and ‘wrongdoing’ in French, it can be said that translating this word as ‘mistake’ (i.e. the English translation) is more accurate than the French translation (i.e. wrongdoing). This is due to the fact that the word ‘wrongdoing’ denotes ‘illegal or immoral behaviour’ (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2007). However, خطيئة *khatiʿah* ‘mistake’ denotes a minor sin which is unintentionally committed (Al-Shaʿrāwī, 1991; Al-Askarī, 1997; Dawūd, 2008; Al-Asfahānī, 2009) and thus the English rendering of this word as ‘mistake’ reflects the meaning of خطيئة *khatiʿah* (mistake) in this Qurʾānic verse. It is also noticed that the Qurʾānic word حوب *hawb* is translated as ‘outrage’ in English and ‘sin’ in French. Since this word حوب *hawb* is interpreted as ‘sin and crime’ by Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūfī (2003) Al-Shaʿrāwī (1991) and Ibn ʿĀshūr (1984), it can be stated that the French rendition of this word as ‘sin’ is more appropriate than the English translation of this word as ‘outrage’. In fact, the word ‘outrage’ denotes “a feeling of great anger and shock or an event which produces a great anger or shock” (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2007) which does not convey the same meaning of حوب *hawb* (sin).

Moreover, the word ذنب *dhanb* is translated as ‘offence’ in English and as ‘sin’ in French. In fact, the lexical item ‘offence’ denotes ‘illegal action or crime’. However, the meaning of ‘sin’ has been already offered in the preceding paragraph. Therefore, it can be said that the French rendition is more accurate than the English translation of this lexical item. Finally, the Qurʾānic word جناح *junah* is translated as ‘blame’ in English and ‘fault’ in French. The lexical item ‘blame’ denotes ‘the responsibility for a mistake or for something bad’ while the word ‘fault’ denotes ‘an intentional act forbidden by law (Merriam-Webster online). Therefore, the English translation of this word (i.e. جناح *junah*) as ‘blame’ is more congruent with the meaning of the original word than the French translation.

12.2. Analysis of *dhur* (harm) and its Qur'ānic near-synonyms

This subsection presents the contextual meanings of *dhurar* (harm) and its Qur'ānic near-synonyms, namely, *dharra* ضراء, *dhur* ضرر and *adha* اذى (harm).

Table 7. The translation of *dhurar* (physical disability)

The Qur'ānic verse	English translation by Irving (2002)	French translation by Michon (2013)
قال تعالى: "لَا يَسْتَوِي الْقَاعِدُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ غَيْرُ أُولِي الضَّرَرِ" (النساء 95)	"Those believers who sit around and yet have no physical disability" (Al-Nisa: 95)	"Ne sont pas sur un pied d'égalité les croyants, à l'exception des infirmes, qui restent tranquillement chez eux" (Al-Nisa: 95)

Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūṭī (2003), Al-Sha^crāwī (1991) and Ibn ^cĀshūr (1984) interpreted the Qur'ānic word (Table 7) *al-dharar* الضرر (disabling hurt) in this verse as those who have an injury such a chronic illness or blindness or the like. The next verse will show the contextual meaning of *dharra* ضراء (adversity).

Table 8. The translation of *dhara'a* ضراء (adversity)

The Qur'ānic verse	English translation by Irving (2002)	French translation by Michon (2013)
قال تعالى: "وَإِذَا أَذَقْنَا النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً مِنْ بَعْدِ ضَرَاءٍ مَسَّتْهُمْ إِذَا لَهُمْ مَكْرٌ فِي آيَاتِنَا" (يونس ٢١)	"Whenever We let mankind taste mercy after some adversity has afflicted them, why they cook up some scheme about Our signs" (Yunus: 21)	"Quand Nous faisons goûter aux hommes une miséricorde après qu'un malheur les a touchés, voilà qu'ils usent de stratagèmes pour déjouer Nos signes" (Yunus: 21)

This verse (Table 8) is interpreted by Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūṭī (2003), Al-Sha^crāwī (1991) and Ibn ^cĀshūr (1984) as follows: Allah made the people of Mecca taste of mercy referring to rain, blessing and fertility after hardship, drought and adversity misery that had afflicted them behold! The next verse will show the contextual meaning of *dhur* (harm).

Table 9. The translation of *dhur* (harm)

The Qur'ānic verse	English translation by Irving (2002)	French translation by Michon (2013)
قال تعالى: "وَإِذَا مَسَّ النَّاسَ ضُرٌّ دَعَوْا رَبَّهُمْ مُنِيبِينَ إِلَيْهِ" (الروم 33)	"Whenever some trouble afflicts mankind, they appeal to their Lord, turning towards Him" (Al-Room:33)	"Quand un malheur atteint les hommes, ils implorent leur Seigneur et reviennent vers Lui repentants" (Al-Room:33)

This verse (Table 9) is interpreted Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūṭī (2003), Al-Sha^crāwī (1991) and Ibn ^cĀshūr (1984) as follows: when harm and hardship afflict the people of Mecca i.e. the Meccan

disbelievers, those people cry unto their God to relieve them from the distress. The next verse will reveal the contextual meaning of اذى *adha* (scolding).

Table 10. The translation of اذى *adha* (scolding)

The Qur'ānic verse	English translation by Irving (2002)	French translation by Michon (2013)
قال تعالى: "قَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوفٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ يَتْبَعُهَا أَذَى" (البقرة 263)	"Polite conversation and forgiveness are better than any act of charity followed by a scolding" (Al-Baqarah: 263)	"Une bonne parole et un pardon valent mieux qu'une aumône suivie d'un mauvais traitement. Dieu est riche, plein de mansuétude" (Al-Baqarah: 263)

This verse (Table 10) is interpreted Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūṭī (2003), Al-Shaʿrāwī (1991) and Ibn ʿĀshūr (1984) as follows: A generous reply, kind talk and honourable words to any person including the beggar and forgiveness towards that person for any misdeed are better than an almsgiving followed by injury through blaming the person who did misdeed or reminding him for the favor you did for him or ridiculing a beggar for his begging and so on.

The contextual analysis of ضرر *dharar* (harm) revealed that this word has some Qur'ānic near-synonyms such as اذى *adha* (harm), ضرر *dharra*, ضرر *dhur* and اذى *adha* (harm). However, there are some nuances among these Qur'ānic near-synonyms. For example, ضرر *dharar* (harm) in the selected verse refers to (disabling hurt) such as a chronic illness or blindness or the like based on Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūṭī (2003), Al-Shaʿrāwī (1991) and Ibn ʿĀshūr (1984). Yet, its Qur'ānic near-synonyms اذى *adha* (adversity) denotes adversity or misery according to the previously mentioned exegeses of the Holy Qur'ān. Moreover, ضرر *dhur* (harm) is also another Qur'ānic near-synonyms to ضرر *dharar* and denotes 'harm or hardship' based on the exegesis of (Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūṭī, 2003). Unlike ضرر *dharar* and ضرر *dhur* (harm), the Qur'ānic near-synonym اذى *adha* (scolding) refers to 'injury through blaming others' as discussed in the contextual meaning of this word in the selected Qur'ānic verse (Table 10).

It is noticed that the Qur'ānic word ضرر *dharar* is rendered into English as 'physical disability' and as 'des infirmes= weak and ill for a long time' in French. Both renditions of the Qur'ānic word ضرر *dharar* are acceptable. In terms of the other Qur'ānic near-synonym, ضرر *dharra* is translated as 'adversity' in English and as 'malheur=misfortune' in French. Both English and French translations are also faithful and reflect the denotative meaning of the Qur'ānic word. Finally, the Qur'ānic synonym اذى *adha* is rendered into English as 'scolding' and as 'malheur= misfortune' in French. It is noticed that translating اذى *adha* in the selected verse as 'scolding' is acceptable. In fact, the word 'scolding' denotes 'criticizing someone angrily about something they have done' (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2007). However, the French rendition of this word as 'malheur= misfortune' is inappropriate in that it does not reflect the intended meaning of this lexical item in the Qur'ānic verse as explained in the exegeses of the Holy Qur'ān. It is noticed that the French translations do not differentiate between ضرر *dharra* (adversity/misfortune) and اذى *adha* (scolding). Consequently, it would have been better had the word اذى *adha* in this Qur'ānic verse be translated in French as 'scolding or injury'. Such translations are faithful and reflect the intended meaning in this Qur'ānic verse.

12.3. Analysis of farah (joy) and its Qur'ānic near-synonyms

This subsection presents the contextual meanings of فرح *farah* (happiness) and its Qur'ānic near-synonyms, namely, بهجة *bahjah*, سرور *surur*, مراح *marah*, سعادة *sa'adah* and حبور *hubur*.

Table 11. The translation of فرح *farah* (joy)

The Qur'ānic verse	English translation by Irving (2002)	French translation by Michon (2013)
قال تعالى: "وَإِنَّا إِذَا أَذَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً فَرَحَّ بِهَا" (الشورى 48)	"Whenever We let man taste some mercy from Ourselves, he acts overjoyed by it" (Al-Shura: 48)	"Mankind Lorsque Nous faisons goûter à l'homme une miséricorde venant de Nous, il s'en réjouit" (Al-Shura: 48)

This verse (Table 11) is interpreted Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūfī (2003), Al-Sha'rawī (1991) and Ibn 'Āshūr (1984) as follows: And indeed when We cause man taste of mercy from Us like a blessing, good health and wealth he exults in it. The next verse will reveal the contextual meaning of بهجة *bahjah* (delight).

Table 12. The translation of بهجة *bahjah* (joyous gardens)

The Qur'ānic verse	English translation by Irving (2002)	French translation by Michon (2013)
قال تعالى: "فَأَنْبَتْنَا بِهِ حَدَائِقَ ذَاتَ بَهْجَةٍ" (النمل ٦٠)	"so We have caused lovely gardens to grow by means of it?" (Al-Naml: 60)	"Nous faisons croître des jardins pleins de charme" (Al-Naml: 60)

This verse (Table 12) is interpreted Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūfī (2003), Al-Sha'rawī (1991) and Ibn 'Āshūr (1984) as follows: We cause to grow splendid and joyous gardens or orchards which are an enclosed garden whose trees and plantations you can never cause to grow! because you do not have the power to grow like them. The next verse will show the contextual meaning of سرور *surur* (happiness).

Table 13. The translation of سرور *surur* (happiness)

The Qur'ānic verse	English translation by Irving (2002)	French translation by Michon (2013)
قال تعالى: "فَوَقَاهُمُ اللَّهُ شَرَّ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمِ وَلَقَّاهُمْ نَضْرَةً وَسُرُورًا" (الانسان 11)	"God will shield them from that day's evil, and procure them splendor and happiness" (Al-Insan: 11)	"Mais Dieu les a protégés du malheur de ce jour, et Il les a baignés de clarté et de joie" (Al-Insan: 11)

Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūfī (2003), Al-Sha'rawī (1991) and Ibn 'Āshūr (1984) interpreted this verse (Table 13) as follows: Allah has thus shielded them from the evil or torment of that day and has given

them radiance fairness, brightness and resplendence and beauty in their faces and joy in their hearts. The next verse will reveal the contextual meaning of *مرح marah* (delight).

Table 14. The translation of *مرح marah* (exult)

The Qur'ānic verse	English translation by Irving (2002)	French translation by Michon (2013)
قال تعالى: "وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا" (١٨ لقمان)	"Do not sneer down your cheek at other men nor walk brashly around the earth" (Luqman: 18)	"Ne fais pas aux hommes une moue dédaigneuse et ne marche pas sur la terre avec arrogance" (Luqman: 18)

Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūfī (2003), Al-Sha^ḥrāwī (1991) and Ibn ^ḥĀshūr (1984) interpreted this verse (Table 14) as follows: And do not turn your face or cheek disdainfully from people and do not belittle the poor among Muslims, and do not walk upon the earth exultantly displaying hubris, arrogance, pretentiousness and haughtiness. The next verse will reveal the contextual meaning of *سعادة sa'adah* (happiness).

Table 15. The translation of *سعيد sa'eed* (happy)

The Qur'ānic verse	English translation by Irving (2002)	French translation by Michon (2013)
قال تعالى: "يَوْمَ يَأْتِ لَا تَكَلِّمُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ فَمِنْهُمْ شَقِيٌّ وَسَعِيدٌ" (هود 105)	"The day it comes, no soul will speak up except with His permission. Some of them will feel miserable while [others] will be happy" (Hud: 105)	"Le Jour viendra où nulle âme ne parlera, sinon avec la permission de Dieu. Il y aura des réprouvés et des bienheureux" (Hud: 105)

This verse (Table 15) is interpreted by Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūfī (2003), Al-Sha^ḥrāwī (1991) and Ibn ^ḥĀshūr (1984) as follows: In that day, no soul shall speak except by His command and permission exalted be He. Some of people will be wretched while others will be glad and joyous. The next verse will reveal the contextual meaning of *حُبور hubur* (happiness).

Table 16. The translation of *تُحِبْرُونَ tuhbarun* (rejoicing)

The Qur'ānic verse	English translation by Irving (2002)	French translation by Michon (2013)
ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ "قال تعالى: أَنْتُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ تُحْبَرُونَ" (الزخرف ٧٠)	"Enter the Garden rejoicing, both you and your spouses!" (Al-Zukhruf: 70)	"Entrez au Paradis, vous et vos épouses, pour être rendus heureux!" (Al-Zukhruf: 70)

This verse (Table 16) is interpreted by Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūfī (2003), Al-Sha^ḥrāwī (1991) and Ibn ^ḥĀshūr (1984) as follows: Enter the Garden i.e. Paradise where you and your wives shall be honoured

with delight and gifts. The contextual analysis of فرح *farah* (happiness) revealed that this word has some Qur'ānic near-synonyms such as بهجة *bahjah*, سرور *surur*, مرح *marah*, سعادة *sa'adah* and حبور *hubur* (happiness). However, there are some nuances among these Qur'ānic near-synonyms. For instance, the lexical word فرح *farah* (acts overjoyed) in Table (11) denotes 'exult' as explained in the exegeses of the Holy Qur'ān, namely, Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūfī (2003) and Al-Sha'rāwī (1991). However, the other synonym بهجة *bahjah* (lovely) is used to describe gardens or orchards in the selected Qur'ānic verse; حدائق ذات بهجة *hada'iq dhat bahajah* in this verse (Table 12) could be explained as 'well-planted gardens' which are full of beauty of delight. In terms of the other near-synonym, سرور *surur* (happiness), the selected exegeses reveal that it means 'happiness or joy' in the selected Qur'ānic verse (Table 13). Ibn 'Āshūr (1984) also made a distinction between الفرحة *alfarah* and السرور *alsurur* in Arabic claiming that الفرحة *alfarah* denotes شدة السرور *shidat alsurur* (great happiness). Moreover, the Qur'ānic word مرحا *marahan* as an adverb denotes 'exultantly displaying hubris, arrogance, pretentiousness and haughtiness' as explained by Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūfī (2003), Al-Sha'rāwī (1991) and Ibn 'Āshūr (1984). Besides, the Qur'ānic near-synonym سعيد *saeed* in Table (15) denotes 'glad and joyous' (ibid). Finally, the Qur'ānic near-synonym تحيرون *tuhbarun* in Table (16) is interpreted by Al-Maḥalī and Al-Suyūfī (2003) as 'be honoured with delight and gifts in the chosen Qur'ānic verse.

It is seen that the Qur'ānic word فرح *'farah'* in the selected Qur'ānic verse (Table 11) is rendered into English as 'acts overjoyed' and as 'réjouit=rejoice' in French. In fact, the English rendition of this word 'i.e. overjoyed' means 'extremely pleased and happy' while the French translation (i.e. rejoice) means 'to show that you are very happy' (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2007). Since the word فرح *farah* denotes 'extreme happiness' as claimed by Ibn 'Āshūr (1984), it can be said that both English and French renditions of the Qur'ānic word in this verse (Table 11) is appropriate. Moreover, the other Qur'ānic near-synonym of فرح *farah* (joy) is the word بهجة *bahjah* which is translated as 'lovely' in English and as 'pleins de charme =full of charm' in French. Based on the contextual analysis of the meaning of this word in the Qur'ānic verse (Table 12), it can be said that the French translation of this word (i.e. *bahjah*) as 'pleins de charme =full of charm' is more appropriate than the English rendition 'lovely'. Consequently, it would have been better had Irving (2002) translated this lexical item as 'full of charm' which is used in the French translation or 'full of beauty of delight' offered by Ali (2006). Such translations are more faithful than the one offered by Irving (2002).

It is also noticed that the word سرور *surur* presented in (Table 13) is rendered into English as 'happiness' and as 'joie= joy' in French. The nuances between سرور *surur* (happiness) and فرح *farah* (joy) have been already explained in the light of Ibn 'Āshūr's (1984) exegesis. Consequently, it can be said that the French translation does not show the semantic difference between فرح *farah* (joy) and سرور *surur* (happiness) in that the two Qur'ānic near-synonyms are dealt with as absolute near-synonyms (i.e. words with identical meaning). It could be, thus, concluded that the English translation of the Qur'ānic word سرور *surur* as happiness is more appropriate than the one in French.

Moreover, the Qur'ānic near-synonym مرح *marah* presented in Table (14) is translated as 'brashly' in English and as 'avec arrogance= with arrogance' in French. In fact, the lexical item 'brashly' means 'behaving too confidently and speaking too loudly' (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2007) which does not reflect the meaning of this Qur'ānic word. Based on the contextual analysis of the meaning of مرح *marah* in this Qur'ānic verse, the French rendition is more appropriate than the English translation. Consequently, it would have been better had Irving (2002) rendered this lexical item as 'with arrogance or in insolence'. Such renditions are more accurate and faithful. Finally, it is noticed that سعيد *saeed* is rendered accurate in English as 'happy' and as 'bienheureux=blessed' in

French. Finally, the translations of تحبون *tuhbarun* in English as ‘rejoicing’ and as ‘heureux= happy’ in French are faithful and accurate.

13. Discussion and conclusions

The analysis of data revealed that although the selected Qur’ānic near-synonyms seem to have identical meanings, they have slight semantic differences upon deeper analysis of their contextual meanings. The present study explained the contextual meanings among three sets of Qur’ānic near-synonyms, namely, اثم *ithm* (sin), ضرر *dharar* (harm) and فرح *farah* (joy) and their Qur’ānic near-synonyms. Such contextual analysis revealed that there are some nuances among the selected Qur’ānic near-synonyms. This conclusion goes in line with some other findings obtained in the literature such as Al-Sowaidi (2011), Al-Omari and Abu-Melhim (2014) and Abdul-Ghafour, et al (2017 & 2019). The importance of context in revealing the nuances among the Qur’ānic near-synonyms has been also emphasized by many scholars, for example, Al-Azzam (2005), Al-Sowaidi (2011), Abdul-Ghafour (2019). Based on the obtained findings, the study recommends that the translators of the Holy Qur’ān should pinpoint the nuances among the Qur’ānic near-synonyms that they intend to translate based on the context and then reflect such nuances in their translation. Besides, the findings of the present study showed that the exegeses of the Holy Qur’ān play a significant role in explicating the semantic differences among the Qur’ānic near-synonyms and thus are useful for the translators of the Holy Qur’ān. This conclusion is congruent with the findings of some previous studies such as Abdul-Raof (2001 & 2018). Consequently, the present study highly recommends that the translators of the Holy Qur’ān must rely on the exegeses of the Holy Qur’ān when they intend to translated Qur’ānic texts.

In terms of the translation of the Qur’ānic near-synonyms into English and French, the findings of the study showed that the translators of the Holy Qur’ān encountered some difficulties while reflecting the nuances among some Qur’ānic near-synonyms in their languages. For instance, both فرح *farah* (joy) and سرور *surur* (happiness) are dealt with as absolute synonyms and are rendered into French as ‘joy’ and thus the nuances between these two near-synonyms are not reflected in French translation. This finding is similar to some findings in the literature, for instance, Al-Azzam (2005), Al-Sowaidi (2011), Abdul-Ghafour (2017) and Abdul-Raof (2018). Such challenges could be attributed to several factors, for example, ignoring the contextual meanings of the Qur’ānic near-synonyms as well as the exegeses of the translated Qur’ānic texts and the lack of English and French equivalents. These results are congruent with those found in some studies such as (Issa, 2011). Therefore, the translators of the Holy Qur’ān are advised to take into account the contextual meaning found in the exegeses of the Holy Qur’ān while translating the Holy Qur’ān.

To conclude, literature (e.g. Al-Omari & Abu-Melhim, 2014; Abdul-Ghafour et al, 2019) shows that a few studies have examined the nuances among the Qur’ānic near-synonyms and thier translations. More studies should be, therefore, conducted to examine the meanings of Qur’ānic near-synonyms and their translation. The present study is limited to the investigation of the nuances among three sets of Qur’ānic near-synonyms and their translations in English and French. Consequently, future studies should examine the extent of reflecting the nuances among other Qur’ānic near-synonyms in other widely spoken languages such as Spanish, Mandarin, Russian and so forth. In conclusion, the researchers emaphasize the well-known fact that the Holy Qur’ān is a literary masterpiece of surpassing excellence which cannot be fully translatable into another langauge and thus the translation of the Holy Qur’ān should be called ‘the translation of the meanings of the Qur’ānic texts rather than the actual translation of the Holy Qur’ān.

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