

ADDRESSING THE TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH OF
NEAR SYNONYMY IN THE HOLY QUR'AN

by

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Dedication

To my family
Your love guides my steps.

Abstract

It is now fairly well-established that complete synonymy is almost non-existent in any language, as it is not easy to find two words with the same denotations and/or connotations. On the other hand, near synonymy is plentiful in almost all types of lexis, in general, and the lexis of the Holy Qur'an, in particular. If the source text is rich in near synonyms, translators may face difficulty in rendering these items of lexis adequately into the target language, and this is the case with the Holy Qur'an in which the language is inimitable without the slightest doubt. This study aims to determine the accuracy of four translations of eight pairs of near synonyms drawn from around 80 verses from the Holy Qur'an. The four translations analyzed are by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (2004), Arthur Arberry (1955), Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1930) and Muhammad Shakir (1983). The accuracy of the translations of the near synonyms in question is judged according to their context as well as their interpretations by Arab and non-Arab linguists and exegetes. This study concludes that the translations examined have limitations in dealing with this area of synonymy accurately. Therefore, it is suggested that more precise renditions should be attempted to minimize distortion which is regrettably not uncommon in dealing with this kind of text.

Search Terms: Qur'an, Translation, Complete Synonyms, Near Synonyms, Accuracy.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The Holy Qur'an is distinguished from all other sacred books by a number of characteristics that make it unique. Most importantly, the book is believed to be the final eternal word of God that has been given to all humanity and is not restricted to Arabs. Moreover, the Qur'an incorporates unique expressions and distinct style. Therefore, translating the meanings of this most sensitive of books is not as easy a task as some might assume. Referring to the difficulty of translating holy books in general and the Holy Qur'an in particular, Ghali (2003) notes that "It is undoubtedly a huge task to try to translate the meanings of any religious text; and it seems a more perilous undertaking when the decision is to translate the words of the Ever-Glorious Qur'an" (p.5). The reason behind this is that the translator of the Qur'an is not required only to translate the words' general meaning but also the intended message behind the use of each word. In addition, some of the Qur'anic words have more than one meaning and some of these words are interpreted differently by Muslim exegetes. Elaborating on the different problems involved in the process of translation in general and the translation of religious books in particular, Rizk, 2003 (as cited in Hassan, 2014, p. 166) says:

Translation has always been considered one of the most intricate tasks that require knowledge in diverse disciplines: linguistic, cultural and pragmatic. It becomes more difficult when the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) differ in both structure and culture. The nature of text to be translated adds an extra effort particularly if it is religious such as the Glorious Qur'an. (p. 113)

One of the linguistic problems which frequently presents a real challenge in translation is synonymy, particularly near synonymy. As this study unfolds, it will be noted that some of the translators of the Holy Qur'an are simply unable to distinguish between the various near synonyms involved; therefore, there is general failure to translate the concepts in question accurately, "which makes their translations a faint echoing of the original and, more importantly, results in misunderstanding the meanings of the Qur'an" (Hassan, 2014, p.166).

The main problem that this study tackles can be summarized in the following research questions:

1. How far do Qur'anic translators pay attention to nuances of meaning associated with near synonyms in the Holy Qur'an?

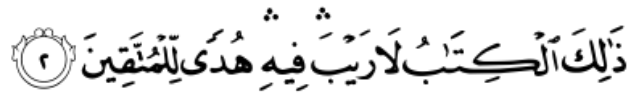
2. To what extent do translators pay attention to context when translating near synonyms in the Qur'anic text?
3. How far do translators consider the linguistic aspects of near synonyms in the Qur'an?

The purpose of the study is to examine the notion of synonymy in both Arabic and English. In this connection, the limitations of the translators in translating near synonyms in the Holy Qur'an will be highlighted. Moreover, the accuracy of the translations by various translators of a set of selected near synonyms will be evaluated. Finally, more precise renditions of the near synonyms under study will be suggested.

The notion of synonymy in the Holy Qur'an will be explored by investigating the translations of four translators, namely: Yusuf Ali (2004), Arthur Arberry (1955), Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1930) and Muhammad Shakir (1983). Specifically, the translations of the following near synonyms will be assessed:

1. الرجز والعذاب (generally meaning 'torment')
2. البحر واليم ('sea')
3. الحلف والقسم ('swear')
4. الشح والبخل ('miserliness')
5. الخوف والخشية ('fear')
6. الطريق والسبيل ('road')
7. نعم وبلَى ('yes')
8. أجر وثواب ('reward')

The precision of the translations of the near synonyms at issue will be evaluated in terms of their context as well as their interpretations by Arab and non-Arab linguists and exegete. For example, a pair like ريب and شك (that generally mean 'doubt') is commonly thought to be absolute synonyms. The term ريب as well as its derivatives occur in a number of verses in the holy Qur'an. For example:



1. This is the Scripture whereof there is no **doubt**, a guidance unto those who ward off (evil). (2:2) (Pickthall)

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ ۚ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ

مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

2. And if ye are in **doubt** concerning that which We reveal unto Our slave (Muhammad), then produce a surah of the like thereof, and call your witness beside Allah if ye are truthful. (2:23) (Pickthall)

إِنَّمَا يَسْتَأْذِنُكَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۖ وَارْتَابَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِي

رَيْبِهِمْ يَتَرَدَّدُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

3. They alone ask leave of thee who believe not in Allah and the Last Day, and whose hearts feel doubt, so in their **doubt** they waver. (9:45) (Pickthall)

On the other hand, the term شك is derived from شكك which is the opposite of ‘certainty’ (Ibn Manzour, 1999 , Vol 4, p. 2309). It occurs in a number of verses too, including:

وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَٰكِن شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ ۚ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا أَنْبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا

﴿١٥٧﴾

4. And because of their saying: We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, Allah's messenger- they slew him not nor crucified him, but it appeared so unto them; and lo! those who disagree concerning it are in **doubt** thereof; they have no knowledge thereof save pursuit of a conjecture; they slew him not for certain. (4:157) (Pickthall)

قُلْ يَأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِن كُنْتُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِّن دِينِي فَلَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِينَ تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَٰكِن

أَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ الَّذِي يَتَوَفَّاكُمْ وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠٤﴾

5. Say (O Muhammad): O mankind! If ye are in **doubt** of my religion, then (know that) I worship not those whom ye worship instead of Allah, but I worship Allah Who causeth you to die, and I have been commanded to be of the believers. (10:104) (Pickthall)

فَإِنْ كُنْتَ فِي شَكٍّ مِمَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ فَسْئَلِ الَّذِينَ يَقْرَأُونَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ لَقَدْ
جَاءَكَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ ﴿٩٤﴾

6. And if thou (Muhammad) art in **doubt** concerning that which We reveal unto thee, then question those who read the Scripture (that was) before thee. Verily the Truth from thy Lord hath come unto thee. So be not thou of the waverers. (10:94) (Pickthall)

Many Arabic linguists describe ريب as ‘doubt’, ‘apprehension’, ‘conjecture’ or ‘restlessness’ (Al-Gamal, 2003, p.232). In contrast, the word شك is regarded by Arabic linguists as the opposite of ‘certainty’ (Al-Razy, 1989, p. 145). However, the Qur’anic context distinguishes between the two words. By examining the Qur’anic contexts in which ريب and شك occur, it turns out that ريب is a peculiarity of the disbelievers, hypocrites and evil-doers, as demonstrated by verses 2 and 3 above. According to the Qur’anic context شك, on the other hand, is typical of people in general, as in verse 5, and it tends to be based on ‘conjecture’ and ‘uncertainty’, as evident in verse 6. By examining the translations of the words ريب and شك above, it is clear that the translator is unaware of the subtle differences between the two concepts which resulted in translating them both erroneously into “doubt”.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter One provides an introduction to the whole thesis, setting the scene and introducing the research questions. Chapter Two is a selective review of the literature on translation studies, where topics like equivalence, foreignization and domestication, as well as cultural studies are highlighted. Chapter Three is also theoretical in nature, where synonymy in both English and Arabic is the key element. The topics in this chapter include: the definition of synonymy in English and in Arabic according to a number of scholars. Then the focus is moved onto the different types of synonymy in the respective languages, and the debate around synonymy in English and in Arabic is reviewed. Finally, synonymy in the Holy Qur’an is discussed. Chapter Four provides an analysis

of the notion of near synonymy. The translations by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Arthur Arberry, Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, and Muhammad Shakir of the Holy Qur'an are examined carefully to assess their accuracy. The last chapter contains the conclusions, with the problem and solution briefly re-stated, and some recommendations are presented.

Chapter Two: A Selective Review of the Literature on Translation Studies

This chapter reviews some relevant issues in translation theory. It focuses on the concept of 'equivalence' in translation studies. First of all, it talks briefly about equivalence, then it moves to reviewing the theory of equivalence as interpreted by some of the most innovative theorists in this field. Among these theorists are: Catford, who deals with Formal Equivalence; Nida, who introduces us to the notion of Dynamic Equivalence; Koller, who focuses on Pragmatic Equivalence. Finally, the Chapter deals with Venuti who discusses Foreignization vs. Domestication with Cultural Studies.

2.1 Equivalence

Translation is "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)" (Catford, 1965, p. 20). Thus equivalence indicates some kind of "sameness" between the (SL) and the (TL). The kind and the degree of "sameness" result in different kinds of equivalence (e.g. Formal Equivalence). Since the term 'equivalence' is a key term in defining translation, it is worthy to be discussed in some details in this chapter.

Equivalence is a controversial concept in linguistics-oriented Translation Studies. It is supported by some translation theorists, and denied by others. The concept continues to cause heated debates in the study of translation. Some theorists such as Catford, Nida and Koller consider the concept of equivalence the core of translation theory, and that translation can only be viewed through its inextricable relation with equivalence. Catford, for example, describes equivalence as a 'key term' and claims that "The central problem of translation practice is that of finding TL [target-language] translation equivalents. A central problem of translation theory is that of defining the nature and conditions of translation equivalence" (1965:21, cited in Fawcett, 1997, p.54). Other translation scholars, such as Snell Hornby and Gentzler argue against such a theoretical relation which they consider damaging to Translation Studies. (Kenny 1998, cited in Soliman, 2006).

The term "equivalence" has been analyzed, discussed and evaluated from different angles and points of view. According to Baker (2001), proponents of equivalence theories of translation usually define the concept as "the relationship between a source text (ST) and a target text (TT) that allows the (TT) to be considered

a translation of the (ST) in the first place” (p. 77). In his textual approach to equivalence, Hatim (2001, p.28) summarizes approaches to Pragmatic Equivalence (see Koller below) and suggests that translation equivalence might be achieved at any or all of the following levels:

- (SL) and (TL) words having similar orthographic or phonological features (formal equivalence);
- (SL) and (TL) words referring to the same thing in the real world (referential or denotative equivalence);
- (SL) and (TL) words triggering the same or similar association in the minds of the speakers of two languages (connotative equivalence);
- (SL) and (TL) words being used in the same or similar contexts in their respective languages (text-normative equivalence);
- (SL) and (TL) words having the same effect on their respective readers (pragmatic or dynamic equivalence).

In the past fifty years many different theories of the concept of equivalence have been elaborated within this field. The above mentioned theorists have studied equivalence by using different approaches to the translation process and have provided useful ideas for further study on this topic. The most important scholars are Catford, Nida, Koller and Venuti, who will occupy us in the remainder of this chapter.

2.2 Catford’s Formal Equivalence

Catford’s approach to translation equivalence is informed by a linguistic perspective. In his book *Translation and Language* (1997), Peter Fawcett argues that Catford’s work on equivalence 'deserves a mention' despite the belief of some recent theorists that Catford's work is outdated (Soliman, 2006, p. 9).

As suggested by the brief overview above, Catford describes equivalence as a key term in translation and that the main task of the translator is to find proper equivalence in the target language (TL). He makes a distinction between two types of equivalence: textual equivalence and formal correspondence. At the moment, formal correspondence is our concern and, according to Catford (1965), it is the kind of equivalence that may be defined as “any target language category (unit, class, structure, element of structure, etc.) which can be said to occupy, as nearly as possible, the ‘same’ place in the ‘economy’ of the target language as the given source language category occupies in the source language” (p.27). In Catford’s theory of

translation this type of formal equivalence involves adhering as much as possible to the linguistic form of the source text, e.g. translating an adjective for an adjective.

Hatim (2013) suggests that any theory of translation needs to draw upon a theory of language and, for Catford, this prerequisite theory is “envisioned specifically in terms of early Hallidayan ‘scale and category grammar’ (or what is better known nowadays as Hallidayan Systemic Functional Grammar). Four ‘levels’ or ‘planes’ of language are recognized: the phonological, graphological, grammatical and lexical” (p.18).

Catford (1965) asserts that formal equivalence can be only approximate, and that it can be most easily established at higher levels of abstraction. Therefore, if we find that the two languages operate each with grammatical units at five ranks (an example might be English and French as each language appear to have five ranks: sentence, clause, group, word, morpheme), then we can reasonably say that there is formal correspondence between the two hierarchies of units (p.32).

One of the problems with Catford’s formal correspondence is that, despite its being a useful tool for comparative linguistics, it is at one and the same time not really relevant in terms of assessing ultimate translation equivalence between ST and TT or in specifically dealing with the theme of synonymy. The process involved in these domains must be ‘textual’ as we shall explain. In fact, it is this kind of limitation that pushed theorists to turn to Catford’s other dimension of ‘correspondence’, namely textual equivalence, which he defines as “any (TL) text or portion of the text which is observed to be the equivalent of a given SL text or portion of text” (Catford, 1965, p. 27).

2.3 Nida’s Dynamic Equivalence

Eugene A. Nida, an American scholar who worked in bible translation, adopts a more systematic and scientific approach to study translation. Nida introduces what he calls “dynamic equivalence” (DE) in which the focus of attention is directed, not so much toward the source message, but toward the receptor response. Nida defines the DE as the closest natural equivalence to the source language message. According to Nida, this definition subsumes three essential terms: 1) *equivalent* which reflects a source language orientation, 2) *natural* which reflects a target language orientation, and 3) *closest* which aims to attain the highest level of 'approximation'. However, the word 'natural' constitutes the core of Nida's theory about DE. In the course of

linguistic communication, the word 'natural' applies to three areas: the target language and its culture, the message context and the TL readership (Soliman, 2006, p. 11).

According to Munday, dynamic, or functional, equivalence is based on what Nida calls 'the principle of equivalent effect', where "the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message" (Nida 1964a: 159, cited in Munday, 2001). The message has to be adapted to the receptor's linguistic needs and cultural expectations and should aim 'at complete naturalness of expression'. 'Naturalness' is a key requirement for Nida. In fact, he defines the goal of dynamic equivalence as seeking "the closest natural equivalent to the source-language message" (Nida 1964a: 166, Nida & Taber 1969: 12, cited in Munday, 2008). He claims that the main aim of "equivalent effect" is to achieve the closest natural equivalent to the source language. The well-known example of dynamic equivalence is the commonly-cited translation of the Biblical phrase "Lamb of God" into "Seal of God"; this is due to the fact that lambs are nonexistent in Polar Regions and in Eskimo language. In this case, the culturally meaningful item 'seal', which shares at least some of the important features of the SL expression 'lamb', has been chosen as an alternative for it.

Munday (2008, p. 42) states that, according to Nida, the success of a translation depends above all on achieving equivalent response. It is one of the 'four basic requirements of a translation', which are (p. 164):

- (1) Making sense;
- (2) Conveying the spirit and manner of the original;
- (3) Having a natural and easy form of expression;
- (4) Producing a similar response.

Despite the fact that dynamic equivalence aims to meet all these requirements, it is also a graded concept, since Nida accepts that the 'conflict' between the traditional notions of content and form cannot always be easily resolved. As a general rule for such conflicts, Nida affirms that that 'correspondence in meaning must have priority over correspondence in style' if equivalent effect is to be achieved (cited in Munday, 2008, p. 43). Nida's great achievement has thus moved translation theory away from the stagnant 'literal vs. free' debate into the modern era. His concepts of formal and dynamic equivalence place the receiver at the center of the equation and have exerted a huge influence over subsequent theoreticians, especially in Germany.

We find these processes crucial to dealing with the concept of near-synonymy, our main concern in this thesis.

2.4 Koller's Pragmatic Equivalence

Nida's move towards a science of translation proved to be especially influential in Germany. One of the most prominent German scholars in the field of translation studies is Werner Koller. His work, *Einführung in die Übersetzungswissenschaft* ("An Introduction to the Science of Translation"), deals thoroughly with the idea of equivalence and also with correspondence (Munday, 2008, p. 46). To reiterate, Koller describes five types of equivalence (summarized in Hatim 2001, & Munday 2008):

1. Denotative equivalence which is related to equivalence of the extra linguistic content transmitted by a text.
2. Connotative equivalence which is related to the lexical choices, especially between near-synonyms. Koller sees this type of equivalence as elsewhere being referred to as 'stylistic equivalence'.
3. Text-normative equivalence which is related to text types, with different kinds of texts behaving in different ways.
4. Pragmatic equivalence, or 'communicative equivalence', which is oriented towards the receiver of the text or message. This is Nida's 'dynamic equivalence'.
5. Formal equivalence, which is related to the form and aesthetics of the text that includes wordplays and the individual stylistic features of the ST. It is elsewhere referred to as 'expressive equivalence' and is not to be confused with Nida's term.

Sometimes translators are compelled to use all five kinds of equivalence because they would be translating a particular text for a range of different purposes and for different audiences.

In connection with this, Hatim, then, puts forward his argument that "form is no longer so highly rated over meaning, nor language system over communicative context". Therefore, translation studies now seems to strive for a 'text oriented' language description (Hatim, 2013, p. 35), yielding a set of principles which we have found particularly illuminating in our work on the issue of synonymy in Qur'anic translation.

2.5 Venuti's Cultural Studies

2.5.1 Translator invisibility. Hatim (2013) argues that the key issue in recent work on translation within Cultural Studies simply relates to whether the

translator should remain invisible or not: “The term invisibility describes the extent to which certain translation traditions do not tolerate the often intrusive presence of the translator in the translation” (p.50). Lawrence Venuti, an American translation and cultural theorist claims that ‘invisibility’ has thus come to involve two distinct yet related phenomena:

- The ‘effect of discourse’, that is, the translator’s use of language.
- A ‘practice of reading’, or the way source texts and their translations are received and evaluated.

In this way, positions that support that translators should remain invisible are criticized for promoting values such as “easy readability and a perception that the translation is not in fact a translation but an/the original”(Hatim, 2013 p. 50).

2.5.2 Domestication vs foreignization. Culture plays a vital role in translators’ act of decision making. Said Faiq (2004) argues that when it comes to culture and ideology, translation becomes 'volatile' and sensitive as both elements i.e. culture and ideology, are governed by different linguistic variables in their 'respective cultures'. Therefore, it is inescapable for translators to avoid such cultural 'loads' while translating. Faiq asserts that many theorists have adopted their theories based on culture and ideology. He discusses Venuti as one prominent figure among such theorists (as cited in Soliman, 2006).

Venuti discusses invisibility hand in hand with two types of translating strategies: Domestication and Foreignization. These strategies concern both the choice of text to translate and the translation method. The two terms can be traced back to the German theologian and philosopher Schleiermacher who argues that “either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him” (Venuti, 1995, p. 20).

Venuti (1995) describes Domestication as translating in a transparent, fluent, invisible style in order to minimize the foreignness of the TT (cited in Munday, 2008). Venuti (1998) also asserts that Domestication further covers adherence to domestic literary canons by carefully selecting the texts that are likely to lend themselves to such a translation strategy (cited in Munday, 2008). Foreignization, on the other hand, “entails choosing a foreign text and developing a translation method along lines which are excluded by dominant cultural values in the target language” (Venuti 1998, cited in Mundy, 2008). It implies a clear influence of the source language on the target

language. According to Venuti (1998), this style of translation involves choosing a foreign text and developing a translation method which ensures that dominant cultural values in the target language are excluded (cited in Munday, 2008). We find both methods (Domestication and Foreignization) highly relevant in conducting the present research into Qur'anic Near-Synonymy.

Thus, having selectively reviewed the literature on Translation Studies, another literature review could now need to be carried out regarding the main theme of this study which is synonymy. Therefore, the next chapter will cover the concept of synonymy, its definitions and different types in both English and Arabic.

Chapter Three: Synonymy

3.1 Overview

Synonymy is one of the fundamental linguistic phenomena in the field of semantics. It is a part of the science of semantics which is the study of meaning of linguistic expressions. The purpose of this chapter is to shed light on the concept of synonymy in English and Arabic. To begin with, a definition of synonymy is provided according to a number of scholars. Then the different types of synonymy in the respective languages are discussed. Moreover, the chapter reviews the debate around synonymy in English and Arabic. Finally, we specifically deal with synonymy in the Holy Qur'an.

3.2 Synonymy in English

3.2.1 Definition. Synonymy is a kind of semantic relation. Basically, two words that are different in spelling but similar in meaning are called “synonyms”. English linguistic scholars provide different definitions of the term “synonymy”. According to Palmer (1976, pp. 59-60), synonymy is the “sameness of meaning.” Thus, for the dictionary-maker, many sets of words are synonymous. For example, it is possible to define '*gala*' as '*festivity*' or '*mavis*' as '*thrush*'. Palmer adds that the English language is rich in synonyms for the historical reason that its vocabulary has come from two different sources, from the Anglo-Saxon, on one hand, and from French, Latin and Greek, on the other hand. However, Palmer argues that there are no real synonyms, and that it seems unlikely that two words that have exactly the same meaning would both survive or exist in a language.

From a similar perspective, Cruse (1986, p. 267) asserts that synonyms are “lexical items whose senses are identical in respect of 'central' semantic traits, but differ, if at all, only in respect of what we may provisionally describe as 'minors' or 'peripheral' traits.” He adds that “synonyms also characteristically occur together in certain types of expressions. For instance, a synonym is often employed as an explanation or a clarification of the meaning of another word.”

A simpler approach to synonymy is put forward by Kreidler (1998, pp. 96-97) who defines synonymy as a relation that obtains among nouns such as “seaman” and “sailor,” verbs such as “left” and “departed,” adjectives such as “large” and “big” or adverbs like “fast” and “rapidly.” Thus synonymy is an instance of mutual

entailment, and synonyms are instances of mutual hyponymy. *Large* is a hyponym of *big*, for example, and *big* is a hyponym of *large*.

Within applied linguistics, Crystal in his dictionary (2008, p. 470) defines synonymy as a semantic phenomenon by which two terms have a major type of sense relation: lexical items which have the same meanings are synonyms. For two items to be synonyms, it does not mean that they should be identical in meaning, i.e. interchangeable in all contexts, and with identical connotations – this unlikely possibility is sometimes referred to as total synonymy.

From the above definitions it is clear that all scholars seem to agree on the idea of having meaning similarity between the words, and not meaning identity, since the former will lead to absolute synonymy which is extremely rare in any language. As has always been maintained in the literature on synonymy, absolute or total synonyms are rare due to the non-necessity of the presence of two lexical units whose uses and contexts are exactly the same. However, one can come across total synonyms in different dialects of the same language (e.g. *postman/ mailman*).

3.2.2 Different types. In English, synonymy is divided into different types. According to Murphy and Cruse (as cited in Al Omari & Abu Melhim, 2014), three types of synonymy are identified in English. First of all, absolute or full synonymy which occurs between the words that are exactly the same in all aspects and can be interchanged in all contexts, such as “kill” and “murder”. It is worth noting here that absolute synonymy is a rare phenomenon in any language and possibly nonexistent, as it is rare to find two words that can replace each other in all contexts. For example we can say “deep rivers” and “deep thinking”; however, it is impossible to say “profound river” while you can say “profound thinking”.

The second type is cognitive synonymy or sense synonymy. These are pairs of words that have one similar sense but differ in the other senses that they express. An example is the pair “father” and “daddy” as both of them refer to “a biological father” while “father” only has religious connotations and “daddy” does not.

The third type of synonymy is near synonyms or plesionymy. Near-synonyms have no senses which are exactly the same. Each word of a near-synonym pair has a sense that is similar to a sense of its counterpart. An example is “foggy” and “misty”.

It is worth pointing out that not all linguists adopt the above typology of synonyms. For example, Cruse (1986, p. 268) avers that some words are more synonymous than others, thus we have a scale of synonymity. One end of the scale

will be absolute synonymy, and the other non synonymy. The higher the degree of synonymy the lexical item has, the closer it is to absolute synonymy and vice versa. Cruse adds that in many cases the dividing line between synonymy and non synonymy is vague.

3.2.3 Opponents and proponents. Synonymy is a controversial issue in English which has been addressed differently by many different linguists and scholars. In the main, however, there are two points of view regarding the concept of synonymy. There is the strict perspective which denies the existence of synonymy, and a more flexible perspective which supports it (Hassan, 2014). Some of the scholars that support synonymy in English are Sturtevant, Brodda, Suarez, Schneidmesser, and Thrane, who by and large assert the existence of synonymy in natural languages. According to Sturtevant, for example, the notion of synonymy occurs in Old Norse, and synonyms prevail due to the historical developments that have occurred in the language. Similarly, Brodda suggests the occurrence and the need for synonymy in natural languages, as well as in computer languages. Yule (1998) deals with synonymy in terms of context. For Yule, while one word is fitting in a sentence, its synonym would be inappropriate. He explains that the two words ‘answer’ and ‘reply’ are synonymous, yet ‘answer’ is proper in a context, whereas ‘reply’ would appear unusual (cited in Hassan, 2014)

On the other hand, there are some scholars who deny synonymy in the English language. For example, Bloomfield (as cited in Hassan, 2014) rejects the idea of sameness in meaning between words in a given language and points out that each linguistic form has a specific meaning and that phonemically different forms have different meanings. Most of the English scholars deny the notion of absolute synonymy and affirm that, unlike near synonymy, absolute synonymy hardly exists in any language.

3.3 Synonymy in Arabic

3.3.1 Definition. Arabic linguistics scholars also provide different definitions for the term synonymy. For example, Al-Shaye (1993, pp. 30-32) points out that according to a number of recent Arabic scholars like Anis and Bishr: to have complete synonymy, two words must have the same meaning, exist in the same language, and belong to the same era and age.

Moreover, Ramadan (1999, pp. 309-310) maintains that synonymy is a term used to refer to utterances that convey the same meaning and are mutually

interchangeable in all contexts. He adds that absolute synonymy is extremely rare but not impossible, and represents extra fillers that language cannot provide easily. When we have this type of synonymy, it stays for a very brief and limited duration.

Al-Zyadi (1980, p. 48) claims that throughout history the definition of synonymy has changed as a result of scholars who pondered over it due to clear differences in their beliefs and approaches. The phenomenon of synonymy initially represented the use of different vocabulary items to refer to the same object. This situation remained the same until modern linguistic scholars studied the concept of synonymy and placed limitations on absolute synonymy and its uses.

Again, Al-Munjed (1997, p. 30) claims that former and modern Arabic scholars do not agree on a specific definition for the term synonymy because of significant differences of approach regarding this phenomenon. He adds that Sebawaih was the first Arab linguist who to identify and draw attention to this phenomenon when he divided semantic relationships among words into three categories: 1. Two separate words convey two different meanings. 2. Two separate words convey the same meaning. 3. Two separate words with the same pronunciation conveying two different meanings. This classification has been influential as evidenced by the number of classical Arab scholars who were influenced by the classification proposed, and who wrote extensively explaining different aspects of the phenomenon.

3.3.2 Different types. Similarly, in Arabic, there are different types for synonyms, although there is no clear distinction between them as different scholars used different approaches to refer to the various types. For example, Ghazala (2008, p. 89), one of the contemporary Arab linguists supporting synonymy, claims that sameness or similarity in meaning between two words is described as synonymy. Thus “big”, “large” and “huge” are synonyms. He adds that synonyms are usually divided into two groups:

1. Absolute synonymy which occurs between the words that are perfectly identical in meaning.
2. Near synonymy which occurs between words that are similar in meaning.

Moreover, Ghazala asserts that it is a universal fact in the study of meaning that absolute synonyms are rare in any language because there is no need for more than one word to describe the same thing. In fact, when two or more words are used to describe the same thing, there must be some kind of difference between them.

In a refreshing departure from classical models, Issa (2011, pp. 26-27) points out that through her readings of different views she found three types of synonymy in Arabic scholarly discussions:

1. Complete synonymy (الترادف التام): which is rare in any language and for this type to occur in a certain language two conditions must be fulfilled:
 - Each of the two words must substitute the other in all contexts (الاستبدالية)
 - Each of the two words must share exactly the same characteristics at all levels (التطابق في المضمون الادراكي والعاطفي)
2. Lexical synonymy (الترادف اللفظي): this type of synonymy deals with words that share the basic elements of conceptualization but differ in subtle shades of meaning, such as: عنق ورقبة “neck”. What signals distinction in this kind of synonymy is the different ways two or more words are used in the language, or in different contexts, although they represent the same object in all cases.
3. Nominal synonymy (الترادف الإشاري): the Arabic language is rich in this type of synonymy. An example of this type of synonymy is the word “حصان” “horse” which can be referred to as “أدهم”, “جواد”, and “أغر”. Some scholars believe that those are different adjectives for the same word, but not different synonyms. It is therefore, the case that they do not always fit or fully substitute for each other in all contexts, as each one of these adjectives tends to shed light on one kind, or one peculiar characteristic, of the ‘horse’.

3.3.3 Opponents and proponents. In the Arabic language there is also a debate around the issue of synonymy. Some scholars support the notion, while others reject it. Among the opponents of synonymy in Arabic are Abu Hilal Al Askar, Al Aarabi and Ibn Faris. According to Ibn Faris, for example, having different names for the same thing in Arabic is counter-intuitive. Thus, ‘Al Saif’, “Al Muhannad” and “Al Husam” are adjectives of the word “sword” and each adjective has a meaning that is not found in the other (Al Shaye, 1993, pp. 88-89).

On the other hand there are Arabic scholars who support synonymy such as Abu Zaid Al Ansari, Al Asmaai and Sebawaih. Al Ansari, for example, suggests that it is common in the Arabic language to express one meaning by using more than one lexeme (Al Shaye, 1993, p. 46).

3.4 Synonymy in the Holy Qur'an (Proponents and Opponents)

The debate over synonymy in the Arabic language in general has expanded to cover the case of the Holy Qur'an. In this regard, there are two schools of thought vying with each other in their attempts to prove the strength of their theses.

Those believing in the prevalence of absolute synonymy in the Qur'anic text include Ibn Al- Athir, Ibn Al-Arabi, and in more recent times, Al-Husseiny, Al-Salih, and Anis (Al-Shaye, 1993, p. 163). Some Arabic scholars, especially those with training in linguistics, assert that there is synonymy in the Qur'an. This point is argued through on the grounds that, since the revealed message was expressed in the Arabic language, the Holy Qur'an must therefore follow the rules and characteristics of Arabic, with plenty of synonymous words being one of the main characteristics. From this stand-point, these scholars reject attempts, especially by some exegetes, to identify and spell out differences between words that seem to be synonyms (Al-Shaye, 1993, p. 164). Prominent among these rejectionist linguists is Ibn Al-Athir who simply claims that synonymy is common in Arabic and in the Holy Qur'an. He provides the following verse as an example:

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَشْكُوا بَنِي وَحُزْنِي إِلَى اللَّهِ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾

He said: I expose my **distress** and **anguish** only unto Allah, and I know from Allah that which ye know not. (12:86) (Pickthall)

Ibn Athir claims that **حزن** and **بث** as used in the above verse are absolute synonyms. He believes that the two words straightforwardly mean "sadness" and that they are used together for assertion or exaggeration (Al-Shaye, 1993, pp. 165-66). In modern writings on the subject, Al-Salih is another supporter of synonymy in the Qur'an who advocates that the Qur'an was revealed in the language of Quraysh tribe who, in their contact with other Arabic tribes, eventually brought into being a mixture of many Arabic dialects which made the language rich in synonyms. And, as noted, the Qur'an was imparted in Quraysh dialect which, by its own merit, was the most eloquent dialect in that period of time, with this eloquence accounting for a wealth of synonyms in the Qur'an. Al-Salih provides the following two verses as examples and claims that **نرسل** and **نبعث** are absolute synonyms:

مَنْ أَهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ ۗ وَمَنْ ضَلَّٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَلَا نُزِرُ وَأَزْرُهُ وَزْرُ آخَرِي ۚ
وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا ﴿١٥﴾

Whosoever goeth right, it is only for (the good of) his own soul that he goeth right, and whosoever erreth, erreth only to its hurt. No laden soul can bear another's load, We never punish until we have **sent** a messenger. (17:15) (Pickthall)

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

We **sent** thee not save as a mercy for the peoples. (21:107) (Pickthall)

Al-Salih claims that **نرسل** and **نبعث** are absolute synonyms, with one word known to be used by Quraysh tribe, while the other known to be more familiar in other tribes' dialects (Al-Shaye, 1993, pp. 168-69).

Anis, a contemporary linguist, is another scholar engaging in the debate as a proponent of synonymy in Qur'an. According to Anis, the Qur'an is rich of synonymy, in spite of some exegetes trying to find imaginary differences that are unsustainable. He includes the following verses in his discussion to support his claim:

وَلَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ
قَالَ إِنِّي تَبْتُ آلَتُنَّ وَلَا الَّذِينَ يَمُوتُونَ وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ أُولَٰئِكَ أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا
أَلِيمًا ﴿١٨﴾

The forgiveness is not for those who do ill-deeds until, when death **attendeth** upon one of them, he saith: Lo! I repent now; nor yet for those who die while they are disbelievers. For such We have prepared a painful doom. (4:18) (Pickthall)

وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ ۖ وَيُرْسِلُ عَلَيْكُمْ حَفَظَةً حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَكُمْ الْمَوْتُ تَوَفَّتْهُ
رُسُلُنَا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْرِطُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

He is the Omnipotent over His slaves. He sendeth guardians over you until, when death **cometh unto** one of you, Our messengers receive him, and they neglect not. (6:61) (Pickthall)

Anis affirms that *حضر* and *جاء* , as used in the above verses, are absolute synonyms and that they are interchangeable in all contexts (Al-Shaye, 1993, pp.170-72).

Perhaps those who support the prevalence of synonymy in the Qur’anic text see only the general sense that chosen words share, without looking at the subtle differences between them. Such scrutiny requires that we delve deeper into the Qur’anic context in which the words in question occur and into the way Allah intended them to mean throughout the Qur’an. Only through such a methodology can we see how Qur’anic words are chosen precisely carefully in a manner that is simply inimitable.

Thus, the view that absolute synonymy occurs plentifully in the Qur’anic text contradicts the fact that words of the Qur’an have been selected very carefully to express very precise meanings. It is interesting to note that, some scholars who assert the abundance of absolute synonymy in Arabic in general tend to deny its prevalence in the Qur’an since such attitudes are likely to undermine the excellence and uniqueness of the Holy Book. However, there are scholars who wholeheartedly reject the occurrence of absolute synonymy in the Qur’an. These include Ibn Taymiya, Al-Raghib Al-Asfahany, Al-Tabary, Ibn Attyah, Al-Zamakhshary, Ibn Kathir, Al-Qurtuby, Al-Khataby, Al-Siyouty, and Bint Al-Shati’ (Al-Shaye, 1993, p. 175). Ibn Taymiya for instance, sees that synonymy is scarce in the language and is rare or nonexistent in the Qur’an as each word in the Holy Book is chosen by Allah to deliver a special meaning, a miracle which lends the Qur’anic text its coherence and inimitability (Al-Shaye, 1993, p. 181). Like Ibn Taymiya, Al-Tabary refuses the notion of synonymy in the Qur’anic text. For him, *نجرى* and *سر* (generally meaning secret self-talk) which occur in the following verse are not the same:

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ سِرَّهُمْ وَنَجْوَاهُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ

Know they not that Allah knoweth both their **secret** and **the thought that they confide**, and that Allah is the Knower of Things Hidden? (9:78) (Pickthall)

They are two different lexemes, with each word delivering a subtly different meaning. According to Al-Tabary *سر* is what one unfolds to oneself while *نجرى* is what one discloses to others (Al-Shaye, 1993, p. 195).

Next, Khataby is in the camp of those who see that synonymy in Qur'an is nonexistent, distinguishing, for example, between السراء and الضراء which appear in the following verse:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَأَخَذْنَاهُم بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَضُرَّعُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

We have sent already unto peoples that were before thee, and We visited them with **tribulation** and **adversity**, in order that they might grow humble. (6:42) (Pickthall)

For Khataby, السراء is calamity in money terms while الضراء is calamity in body terms (Al-Shaye, 1993, p. 201).

Finally, Bint Al-Shati' is a well-known and highly reputable contemporary scholar who dismisses the idea of absolute synonymy in the Qur'an. She asserts that there are no two words in Qur'an that are interchangeable (Al-Shaye, 1993, p. 209).

Having defined synonymy, having given a general idea about the different types of synonymy, and having identified a number of opponents and proponents of synonymy in English and Arabic, this specific review of the literature comes to an end. The next chapter will provide analysis and discussion: a thorough examination is presented of eight pairs of concepts as rendered in four translations by Ali, Arberry, Pickthall and Shakir.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis

This chapter presents the data analysis and discussion. It answers the following three research questions:

1. How far do Qur'anic translators pay attention to nuances of meaning associated with near synonyms in the Holy Qur'an?
2. To what extent do translators pay attention to context when translating near synonyms in the Qur'anic text?
3. How far do translators consider linguistic or exegetical aspects related to near synonyms in the Qur'an?

In this chapter each pair of selected synonyms is analyzed separately. First of all, the pair is presented in the Qur'anic verses within which it occurs, then the pair is analyzed in terms of language, as well as context. Finally, the four translations of the pair in question are examined carefully to determine their accuracy and to suggest new translations if needed.

4.1 Assessing the Adequacy of the Translation of Selected Near Synonyms

As we may recall, eight pairs of near synonyms are selected for assessment. These are: البحر and العذاب (generally yielding the semantic value 'torment'), اليم and القسم ('swear'), البخل and الشح ('miserliness'), الخوف and اليم ('sea'), الحلف and القسم ('fear'), الطريق and السبيل ('road'), بلى and نعم ('yes'), ثواب and أجر ('reward'). As indicated above, the Qur'an translations attempting to render these near synonyms into English are by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (2004), Arthur Arberry (1955), Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1930), and Muhammad Shakir (1983).

4.1.1 العذاب and الرجز ('torment'). The first pair of lexical items thought to be 'absolutely synonymous' is الرجز and العذاب that generally mean 'torment'.

• (الرجز)

The word الرجز, as well as its derivatives, occurs in a number of verses in the Qur'an. The verses involving the word and its derivatives include:

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِجْزًا
مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَظْلِمُونَ

1. But those of them who did wrong changed the word which had been told them for another saying, and We sent down upon them **wrath** from heaven for their wrongdoing. (7:162) (Pickthall)

إِنَّا مُنْزِلُونَ عَلَىٰ أَهْلِ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

2. Lo! We are about to bring down upon the folk of this township a **fury** from the sky because they are evil-livers. (29:34) (Pickthall)

وَلَمَّا وَقَعَ عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّجْزُ قَالُوا يَا مُوسَىٰ ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ عِنْدَكَ لَئِن كَشَفْتَ عَنَّا الرِّجْزَ لَنُؤْمِنَنَّ لَكَ وَلَنُرْسِلَنَّ مَعَكَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ﴿١٣٤﴾

3. And when the **terror** fell on them they cried: O Moses! Pray for us unto thy Lord, because He hath a covenant with thee. If thou removest the **terror** from us we verily will trust thee and will let the Children of Israel go with thee. (7:134) (Pickthall)

إِنَّا مُنْزِلُونَ عَلَىٰ أَهْلِ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

4. Lo! We are about to bring down upon the folk of this township a **fury** from the sky because they are evil-livers. (29:34) (Pickthall)

فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ الرِّجْزَ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ هُمْ بَلَغُوهُ إِذَا هُم يَنْكُثُونَ ﴿١٣٥﴾

5. But when We did remove from them the **terror** for a term which they must reach, behold! they broke their covenant. (7:135) (Pickthall)

- (العذاب)

As far as the word (العذاب) is concerned, on the other hand, this occurs along with its derivatives in many verses in the Qur'an, including:

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشْوَةً وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٧﴾

6. Allah hath sealed their hearing and their hearts, and on their eyes there is a covering. Theirs will be an awful **doom**. (2:7) (Pickthall)

فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

7. In their hearts is a disease, and Allah in creaseth their disease. A painful **doom** is theirs because they lie. (2:10) (Pickthall)

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلَدًا آمِنًا وَارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ مَنْ آمَنَ مِنْهُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ قَالَ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَأُمَتِّعُهُ قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ أَضْطَرُّهُ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٢٦﴾

8. And when Abraham prayed: My Lord! Make this a region of security and bestow upon its people fruits, such of them as believe in Allah and the Last Day, He answered: As for him who disbelieveth, I shall leave him in contentment for a while, then I shall compel him to the **doom** of Fire - a hapless journey's end! (2:126) (Pickthall)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِصَاصُ فِي الْقَتْلِ الْحُرُّ بِالْحُرِّ وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ وَالْأُنثَىٰ
بِالْأُنثَىٰ فَمَنْ عَفِيَ لَهُ مِنْ أُخِيهِ شَيْءٌ فَأْتِبَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَدَاءٌ إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَانٍ ذَلِكَ تَخْفِيفٌ
مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ مِّنْ أَعْتَدَىٰ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَهُوَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧٨﴾

9. O ye who believe! Retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the murdered; the freeman for the freeman, and the slave for the slave, and the female for the female. And for him who is forgiven somewhat by his (injured) brother, prosecution according to usage and payment unto him in kindness. This is an alleviation and a mercy from your Lord. He who transgresseth after this will have a painful **doom**. (2:178) (Pickthall)

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا
عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿٢٠١﴾

10. And of them (also) is he who saith: "Our Lord! Give unto us in the world that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good, and guard us from the **doom** of Fire." (2:201) (Pickthall)

Many Arabic linguists describe الرجز as 'extreme torment', 'worst punishment' or 'wrath' that is performed by Allah (Al Razy, 1989 p. 99; Ibn Manzour, 1999, Vol 3, 1589). The word العذاب, however, is taken by many Arabic

linguists to mean ‘punishment and torment of the kind that is only caused by people or things’ (Ibn Manzour, 1999, Vol 4, 2853).

Thus, it is clear that الرجز والعذاب are not synonyms, as some people may think. This is a text-semantic fact indicated above all by the Qur’anic context surrounding the use of the two words in question.

Examining the Qur’anic text in which الرجز and العذاب occur, it turns out that الرجز is a ‘peculiarity of the disbelievers, hypocrites and evil-doers such as the Children of Israel’, as demonstrated by verses 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 above. It also refers to the ‘torment that occurs in this world, not in hereafter’. According to the Qur’anic context, العذاب on the contrary, is ‘typical of people in general’, as in verse 6, 8 and 10. It also refers to the ‘torment that occurs in the hereafter’, i.e. the doom of hell-fire.

The role of context in identifying the differences in meaning between الرجز and العذاب figures most conspicuously in the following verse:

هَذَا هُدًى وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مِّن رَّجْزٍ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾

This is guidance. And those who disbelieve the revelations of their Lord, for them there is a painful **doom** of **wrath**. (45:11) (Pickthall)

As the above verse indicates, الرجز and العذاب occur in the same context in which الرجز is used to describe العذاب, but not vice versa. This suggests that the two words have been selected very carefully to serve different functions, and that they differ in a highly intricate and subtle ways. It also indicates that الرجز and العذاب cannot be interchangeable in all contexts. Consequently, the two words cannot be ‘absolute synonyms’, simply on the grounds that they do not meet the criteria mentioned above. This view complies, as one may recall, with the definitions of ‘complete synonymy’ given by classical and contemporary Arab and non-Arab linguists, who hold that absolutely synonymous words must be identical in meaning and must be capable of replacing each other in all contexts. Furthermore, what backs up the view of the impossibility of complete synonymy of الرجز and العذاب is that رجز is used in several verses to describe عذاب as mentioned above. The notion that a word cannot be used to describe itself asserts the distinction between الرجز والعذاب and refutes their absolute synonymy (Al-Shaye, 1993, p. 230). The two words, therefore, are near synonyms sharing one or more of their sense components, e.g. the sense of tormenting.

It is thus inferred from the preceding analysis that, if عذاب means torment, رجز most likely implies intense or extreme torment. The aforementioned critique is

necessary for assessing the aptness of the translations by Ali, Arberry, Pickthall and Shakir of الرجز and العذاب often thought to be absolutely synonymous. As indicated above, الرجز and العذاب occur frequently in the Qur'an. The following table features the translations of الرجز and العذاب by Ali, Arberry, Pickthall and Shakir:

Table 1: Verses including the terms: الرجز and العذاب

Verses	(A) الرجز	(B) العذاب
		إِنَّا مُنْزِلُونَ عَلَىٰ أَهْلِ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ (29:34)
Translator	Translations Offered	Translations Offered
Ali	"For we are going to bring down on the people of this township a Punishment from heaven, because they have been wickedly rebellious."	And there are men who say: "Our Lord! Give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and defend us from the torment of the Fire!"
Arberry	We shall send down upon the people of this city wrath out of heaven for their ungodliness.'	And others there are who say, 'Our Lord, give to us in this world good, and good in the world to come, and guard us against the chastisement of the fire';
Pickthall	Lo! We are about to bring down upon the folk of this township a fury from the sky because they are evil-livers.	And of them (also) is he who saith: "Our Lord! Give unto us in the world that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good, and guard us from the doom of Fire."
Shakir	Surely We will cause to come down upon the people of this town a punishment from heaven, because they transgressed.	And there are some among them who say: Our Lord! grant us good in this world and good in the hereafter, and save us from the chastisement of the fire.

As the table above indicates, the word 'punishment' is used by Ali and Shakir as an equivalent for the word رجز. According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 'punishment' is derived from 'punish' which means 'to make somebody suffer because they have broken the law or done something wrong'. On the other hand, Arberry translates رجز into 'wrath' which, according to Oxford Learner's Dictionary,

means ‘extreme anger by God’. Pickthall, however, renders the concept as ‘fury’ which, according to Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, means ‘extreme anger that often includes violent behavior’. As mentioned above, Arab linguists tend to refer to رجز as ‘wrath’. This is, therefore, the most adequate translation of the word رجز and it is the one given by Arberry. The translations of رجز as ‘wrath’ comply with the definition and interpretation of the word generally given by English lexicographers and Arab linguists.

On the other hand, Arberry and Shakir render العذاب as ‘chastisement’ which, according to the Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, means ‘physical punishment or criticism of somebody for doing something wrong’. In addition, Ali uses ‘torment’ as an equivalent for the word عذاب which, according to the Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, means ‘extreme suffering, caused by a person or thing’. On the contrary, Pickthall refers to العذاب as ‘doom’ which, according to the Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, means ‘death or destruction; any terrible event that you cannot avoid’. Arab linguists generally refer to العذاب as ‘torment’. This is, therefore, the most adequate translation of the word العذاب in my opinion, and it is the one given by Ali. The translation of العذاب as ‘torment’ complies with the definition and interpretation of the word given by English lexicographers and Arab linguists. (See Koller in section 2.4 on Pragmatic Equivalence).

From the above analysis it is obvious that the four translators are aware of the fact that الرجز and العذاب are not absolute synonyms. This is clear from the different words chosen. The translators, however, seem to have missed the point when it comes to diction or the choice of which appropriate word to choose.

4.1.2 اليم and البحر (‘sea’). The second pair of lexical items thought to be absolute synonyms is البحر and اليم which generally mean ‘sea’.

• البحر

As far as the lexical item البحر is concerned, it is derived from the stem بحر and it is the opposite of land. It is called بحر for its depth and width (Al-Razy, 1989 , p. 17). Verses involving بحر include:

أَوْ كَظُلُمَاتٍ فِي بَحْرِ لَيْلِي يَغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ، مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ، سَحَابٌ مُّظْلِمَاتٌ
بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ إِذَا أَخْرَجَ يَكْدُهُ، لَمْ يَكْدِ بِرَبِّهَا وَمَنْ لَمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِن نُّورٍ ﴿٤٠﴾

1. Or as darkness on a vast, abysmal **sea**. There covereth him a wave, above which is a wave, above which is a cloud. Layer upon layer of darkness. When he holdeth out his hand he scarce can see it. And he for whom Allah hath not appointed light, for him there is no light. (24:40) (Pickthall)

وَإِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمْ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَأَنْتُمْ نَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

2. And when We brought you through the **sea** and rescued you, and drowned the folk of Pharaoh in your sight. (2:50) (Pickthall)

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَّاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيْحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٦٤﴾

3. Lo! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of night and day, and the ships which run upon the **sea** with that which is of use to men, and the water which Allah sendeth down from the sky, thereby reviving the earth after its death, and dispersing all kinds of beasts therein, and (in) the ordinance of the winds, and the clouds obedient between heaven and earth: are signs (of Allah's Sovereignty) for people who have sense. (2:164) (Pickthall)

أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَحْرِ وَطَعَامُهُ، مَتَاعًا لَكُمْ وَلِلسَّيَّارَةِ وَحُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَرِّ مَا دُمْتُمْ حُرْمًا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

4. To hunt and to eat the fish of the **sea** is made lawful for you, a provision for you and for seafarers; but to hunt on land is forbidden you so long as ye are on the pilgrimage. Be mindful of your duty to Allah, unto Whom ye will be gathered. (5:96) (Pickthall)

﴿٥٩﴾ وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنَ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٌ فِي ظِلْمَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا رَطْبٌ وَلَا يَابِسٌ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٥٩﴾

5. And with Him are the keys of the Invisible. None but He knoweth them. And He knoweth what is in the land and the **sea**. Not a leaf falleth but He knoweth it, not a grain amid the darkness of the earth, naught of wet or dry but (it is noted) in a clear record. (6:59) (Pickthall)

• اليم

The term اليم occurs in many verses in the Qur'an, including:

فَأَنْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

6. Therefore We took retribution from them; therefore We drowned them in the **sea**: because they denied Our revelations and were heedless of them. (7:136) (Pickthall)

أَنْ أَقْدِفِيهِ فِي التَّابُوتِ فَأَقْدِفِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ فَلْيَلْقِهِ الْيَمُّ بِالسَّاحِلِ يَأْخُذْهُ عَدُوِّي وَعَدُوْلَهُ،
وَأَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِّنِّي وَلِنُصْنَعَ عَلَىٰ عَيْنِي ﴿٣٩﴾

7. Saying: Throw him into the ark, and throw it into the **river**, then the **river** shall throw it on to the bank, and there an enemy to Me and an enemy to him shall take him. And I endued thee with love from Me that thou mightest be trained according to My will, (20:39) (Pickthall)

فَاتَّبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ بِجُنُودِهِ فَغَشِيَهُمْ مِنَ الْيَمِّ مَا غَشِيَهُمْ ﴿٧٨﴾

8. Then Pharaoh followed them with his hosts and there covered them that which did cover them of the **sea**. (20:78) (Pickthall)

قَالَ فَاذْهَبْ فَإِنَّ لَكَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ أَنْ تَقُولَ لَا مِسَاسَ وَإِنَّ لَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَنْ يُخْلَفَهُ،
وَأَنْظُرِ إِلَىٰ إِلَهِكَ الَّذِي ظَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفًا لَنُْحَرِّقَنَّهُ ثُمَّ لَنَنْسِفَنَّهُ فِي الْيَمِّ نَسْفًا

﴿٩٧﴾

9. (Moses) said: Then go! and lo! in this life it is for thee to say: Touch me not! and lo! there is for thee a tryst thou canst not break. Now look upon thy god of which thou hast remained a votary. Verily we will burn it and will scatter its dust over the **sea**. (20:97) (Pickthall)

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَرْضِعِيهِ ۖ فإِذَا خِفْتِ عَلَيْهِ فَأَلْقِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ وَلَا تَخَافِي وَلَا تَحْزَنِي ۗ إِنَّا رَادُّوهُ إِلَيْكِ وَجَاعِلُوهُ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٧﴾

10. And We inspired the mother of Moses, saying: Suckle him and, when thou fearest for him, then cast him into the **river** and fear not nor grieve. Lo! We shall bring him back unto thee and shall make him (one) of Our messengers. (28:7) (Pickthall)

Most Arabic lexicographers make no distinction between البحر and اليم, and use them interchangeably (Al-Asfahany, n.d, p. 893; Al-Razy1989, p. 310; Al Jamal, 2003, pp. 208-209; Ibn Manzour, 1999, Vol 1, p. 216). From the above Qur’anic verses, however, it is clear that the word البحر is used in general to refer to a ‘large amount of water while talking about people in general and while talking about blessings’ but the word اليم is used ‘only while talking about Moses story in the Qur’an and in the context of torment, punishment and curses’. Therefore, البحر and اليم in the Qur’an are not absolute synonyms, a fact often overlooked by translators.

The aforementioned argument about البحر و اليم is indispensable to assessing the appropriateness of the translations of the two words by Ali, Arberry, Pickthall, and Shakir that appear in columns (A) and (B) respectively:

Table 2: Verses including the terms: البحر and اليم

Verses	(A) البحر	(B) اليم
	<p>إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَّاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ (2:164)</p>	<p>فَاتَّبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ بِجُنُودِهِ فَغَشِيَهُمْ مِنَ الْيَمِّ مَا غَشِيَهُمْ (20:78)</p>
Translator	Translations Offered	Translations Offered
Ali	Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which Allah Sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the change	Then Pharaoh pursued them with his forces, but the waters completely overwhelmed them and covered them up.(Taha 20:78)

	of the winds, and the clouds which they Trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth;- (Here) indeed are Signs for a people that are wise.	
Arberry	Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day and the ship that runs in the sea with profit to men, and the water God sends down from heaven therewith reviving the earth after it is dead and His scattering abroad in it all manner of crawling thing, and the turning about of the winds and the clouds compelled between heaven and earth -- surely there are signs for a people having understanding.	Pharaoh followed them with his hosts, but they were overwhelmed by the sea ;
Pickthall	Lo! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of night and day, and the ships which run upon the sea with that which is of use to men, and the water which Allah sendeth down from the sky, thereby reviving the earth after its death, and dispersing all kinds of beasts therein, and (in) the ordinance of the winds, and the clouds obedient between heaven and earth: are signs (of Allah's Sovereignty) for people who have sense	Then Pharaoh followed them with his hosts and there covered them that which did cover them of the sea
Shakir	Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day, and the ships that run in the sea with that which profits men, and the water that Allah sends down from the cloud, then gives life with it to the earth after its death and spreads in it all (kinds of) animals, and the changing of the winds and the clouds made subservient between the heaven and the earth, there are signs for a people who understand.	And Firon followed them with his armies, so there came upon them of the sea that which came upon them.

The above table indicates that Arberry, Pickthall and Shakir make no distinction between البحر واليم rendering them into being absolute synonyms. On the other hand, the only translator who seems to have been aware of the difference between the two words is Ali who renders البحر into “ocean” and اليم into “water”. In my opinion rendering البحر into “ocean” in verse **A** is accurate. However, using “water” to refer to اليم is hardly appropriate since verse **B** is talking about the ‘water of the sea’ which covered the Pharaoh who drowned in the Mediterranean Sea. Therefore, by using ‘sea’ to refer to اليم and ‘ocean’ to refer البحر we can make the reader aware that the two words are not absolute synonyms, and that they are at best near synonyms sharing the sense of containing ‘salty water’.

4.1.3 الحلف and القسم (‘swear’). The third pair of lexical items thought to be absolute synonyms is الحلف and القسم which generally mean ‘swear’.

● الحلف

As far as the lexical item الحلف is concerned, it is derived from the stem حلف which means ‘to take an oath or to swear’ (Ibn Manzour, 1999, p. 963). Verses involving الحلف include:

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ جَاءَهُمْ وَكَّ يَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ
 إِنَّ أَرْدَنَّا إِلَّا إِحْسَنًا وَتَوْفِيقًا ﴿٦٢﴾

1. How would it be if a misfortune smote them because of that which their own hands have sent before (them)? Then would they come unto thee, **swearing** by Allah that they were seeking naught but harmony and kindness. (4:62) (Pickthall)

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا عَقَدْتُمُ الْأَيْمَانَ فَكَفَرْتُمْ
 إِطْعَامَ عَشْرَةِ مَسْكِينٍ مِنْ أَوْسَطِ مَا تَطْعَمُونَ أَهْلِيكُمْ أَوْ كِسْوَتُهُمْ أَوْ تَحْرِيرَ رَقَبَةٍ
 فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ ذَلِكَ كَفْرَةُ أَيْمَانِكُمْ إِذَا حَلَفْتُمْ وَاحْفَظُوا أَيْمَانَكُمْ
 كَذَلِكَ يبين الله لكم آياته لعلكم تشكرون ﴿٨٩﴾

2. Allah will not take you to task for that which is unintentional in your oaths, but He will take you to task for the oaths which ye swear in earnest. The expiation thereof is the feeding of ten of the needy with the average of that wherewith ye feed your own folk, or the clothing of them, or the liberation of a slave, and for him who findeth

not (the wherewithal to do so) then a three days' fast. This is the expiation of your oaths when ye have **sworn**; and keep your oaths. Thus Allah expoundeth unto you His revelations in order that ye may give thanks. (5:89) (Pickthall)

يَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ لَكُمْ لِيَرْضَوْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ يُرْضَوْهُ إِنْ كَانُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٢﴾

3. They **swear** by Allah to you (Muslims) to please you, but Allah, with His messenger, hath more right that they should please Him if they are believers. (9:62) (Pickthall)

يَوْمَ يَبْعَثُ اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا فَيَحْلِفُونَ لَهُ، كَمَا يَحْلِفُونَ لَكُمْ، وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ أَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

4. On the day when Allah will raise them all together, then will they **swear** unto Him as they (now) **swear** unto you, and they will fancy that they have some standing. Lo! is it not they who are the liars? (58:18) (Pickthall)

يَحْلِفُونَ لَكُمْ لِيَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ فَإِن تَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ فَإِن اللّٰهُ لَا يَرْضَىٰ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٩٦﴾

5. They **swear** unto you, that ye may accept them. Though ye accept them. Allah verily accepteth not wrongdoing folk. (9:96) (Pickthall)

• القسم

The term القسم is derived from the stem قسم which means 'to take an oath or to swear' (Ibn Manzour, 1999 , p. 3630). It occurs in a number of verses in Qur'an, including:

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أَلْمَيْتَةُ وَالِدَمُّ وَالْحَنْزِيرُ وَمَا أَهَلَ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ، وَالْمُنْخَنِقَةُ وَالْمَوْقُوذَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّبَةُ وَالنَّطِيحَةُ وَمَا أَكَلَ السَّعِيعُ إِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النَّصَبِ وَأَنْ تَسْتَفْسِمُوا بِأَلْأَزْلَمِ ذَلِكُمْ فَسَقُ الْيَوْمَ يَيْسَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ دِينِكُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَأَخْشَوْنَ الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمْ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا فَمَنْ أَضْطَرَّ فِي مَخْصَصَةٍ غَيْرِ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِإِثْمٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٣﴾

6. Forbidden unto you (for food) are carrion and blood and swineflesh, and that which hath been dedicated unto any other than Allah, and the strangled, and the dead through beating, and the dead through falling from a height, and that which hath been killed by (the goring of) horns, and the devoured of wild beasts, saving that which ye make lawful (by the death-stroke), and that which hath been immolated unto idols. And (forbidden is it) that ye **swear** by the divining arrows. This is an abomination. This day are those who disbelieve in despair of (ever harming) your religion; so fear them not, fear Me! This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you, and have chosen for you as religion al-Islam. Whoso is forced by hunger, not by will, to sin: (for him) lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (5:3) (Pickthall)

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَهْتُوا لِمَا أَقْسَمُوا بِاللّٰهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ أَنَّهُمْ لَكُمْ حِطَّتْ أَعْمَلُهُمْ
فَأَصْبَحُوا خَاسِرِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾

7. Then will the believers say (unto the people of the Scripture): are these they who **swore** by Allah their most binding oaths that they were surely with you? Their works have failed, and they have become the losers. (5:53) (Pickthall)

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا شَهَادَةٌ بَيْنَكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ حِينَ الْوَصِيَّةِ اثْنَانِ ذَوَا
عَدْلٍ مِّنكُمْ أَوْ ءَاخِرَانِ مِّنْ غَيْرِكُمْ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَأَصَابَتْكُمْ مُصِيبَةُ الْمَوْتِ
تَحْسِبُونَهُمَا مِنْ بَعْدِ الصَّلَاةِ فَيُقْسِمَانِ بِاللّٰهِ إِنِ ارْتَبْتُمْ لَا نَشْتَرِي بِهِ ثَمَنًا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا
قُرْبَىٰ وَلَا نَكْتُمُ شَهَادَةَ اللّٰهِ إِنَّا إِذًا لَّمِنَ الْآثِمِينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾

8. O ye who believe! Let there be witnesses between you when death draweth nigh unto one of you, at the time of bequest - two witnesses, just men from among you, or two others from another tribe, in case ye are campaigning in the land and the calamity of death befall you. Ye shall empanel them both after the prayer, and, if ye doubt, they shall be made to **swear** by Allah (saying): We will not take a bribe, even though it were (on behalf of) a near kinsman nor will we hide the testimony of Allah, for then indeed we should be of the sinful. (5:106) (Pickthall)

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِن جَاءَتْهُمْ آيَةٌ لِّيُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَمَا يُشْعِرُكُمْ أَنَّهَا إِذَا جَاءَتْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

9. And they **swear** a solemn oath by Allah that if there come unto them a portent they will believe therein. Say; Portents are with Allah and (so is) that which telleth you that if such came unto them they would not believe. (6:109) (Pickthall)

﴿٧٥﴾ فَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِمَوْقِعِ النُّجُومِ ﴿٧٥﴾

10. Nay, I **swear** by the places of the stars –(56:75) (Pickthall)

Although many Arabic lexicographers do not make a distinction between الحلف and القسم , the Qur’anic context differentiates between them, since it uses الحلف most of the time to refer to ‘false oath’ as in verse 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 above, while it uses القسم to refer to ‘true oath’ (Al-Doury, 2005, p. 220). الحلف is used with doubt and hesitation and it is based on conjecture rather than certainty (Al-Shaye, 1993, pp. 238-39), whereas الحلف is used in verses that talk about wrongdoers and hypocrites and is often associated with perjury. Finally, القسم seems to be frequently used by people in general (Al-Munjed, 1997, p. 174).

From the above analysis it is obvious that الحلف and القسم are not absolute synonyms as some people may think. Therefore, the translators must pay attention to ensure that the difference between them is highlighted.

The aforementioned argument about الحلف and القسم is important to assessing the appropriateness of the translations of the two words by Ali, Arberry, Pickthall, and Shakir, shown in columns (A) and (B) in the table below.

Table 3: Verses including the terms: الحلف and القسم

	(A) الحلف	(B) القسم
Verses	يَخْلِفُونَ لَكُمْ لِتَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ فَإِنْ تَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَرْضَىٰ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْفَاسِقِينَ (9:96)	وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَهَؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ أَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ إِنَّهُمْ لَمَعَكُمْ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَأُصْبِحُوا خَاسِرِينَ (5:53)
Translator	Translations Offered	Translations Offered

Ali	They will swear unto you, that ye may be pleased with them but if ye are pleased with them, Allah is not pleased with those who disobey.	And those who believe will say: "Are these the men who swore their strongest oaths by Allah, that they were with you?" All that they do will be in vain, and they will fall into (nothing but) ruin. Maidah 5:53)
Arberry	They will swear to you, that you may be well-pleased with them; but if you are well-pleased with them, God will surely not be well-pleased with the people of the ungodly.	and the believers will say, 'What, are these the ones who swore by God most earnest oaths that they were with you? Their works have failed now they are losers.'
Pickthall	They swear unto you, that ye may accept them. Though ye accept them. Allah verily accepteth not wrongdoing folk.	Then will the believers say (unto the people of the Scripture): are these they who swore by Allah their most binding oaths that they were surely with you? Their works have failed, and they have become the losers.(Al
Shakir	They will swear to you that you may be pleased with them; but if you are pleased with them, yet surely Allah is not pleased with the transgressing people.	And those who believe will say: Are these they who swore by Allah with the most forcible of their oaths that they were most surely with you? Their deeds shall go for nothing, so they shall become losers.

It is clear from the above table that the four translators made no distinction between **القسم** and **الحلف**, making them semantically identical. The four translators made the two words absolute synonyms that can be interchangeable in all contexts. Making the two words identical means that the translations are inaccurate. This may be ascribed to the translators' tendency to translate words out of context, though context can contribute a great deal to revealing precise meanings.

In my opinion, adding the words 'falsely' and 'truthfully' after the term 'swear' in each verse will go a long way towards informing the reader of the crucial distinction being made. (See Koller in section 2.5 on Pragmatic Equivalence).

4.1.4 الشح and البخل ('miserliness'). The fourth pair of lexical items thought to be absolute synonyms is **الشح والبخل** which generally mean 'miserliness'.

• الشح

As far as the lexical item الشح is concerned, it is derived from the stem شح which means ‘miserliness’ and is said to take care of the context ‘miserliness with attention’. It is also extreme unwillingness to spend money or use resources. In addition, it has been suggested that الشح is general, since it usually comes with money and goodness, while البخل comes only with money (Ibn Manzour, 1999 , p. 2205). According to Al-Asfahany (n. d. p. 446), الشح is a habit and it is miserliness with attention. Verses involving الشح include:

وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّءُوا الدَّارَ وَالْآيْمَانَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّونَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِمَّا أُوتُوا وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ وَمَنْ يُوقِ شَحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَآوَلَيْكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٩﴾

1. Those who entered the city and the faith before them love those who flee unto them for refuge, and find in their breasts no need for that which hath been given them, but prefer (the fugitives) above themselves though poverty become their lot. And whoso is saved from his own **avarice** - such are they who are successful. (59:9) (Pickthall)

فَأَنْقُوا اللَّهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ وَأَسْمِعُوا وَأَطِيعُوا وَأَنْفِقُوا خَيْرًا لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَمَنْ يُوقِ شَحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَآوَلَيْكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

2. So keep your duty to Allah as best ye can, and listen, and obey, and spend; that is better for your souls. And whoso is saved from his own **greed**, such are the successful. (64:16) (Pickthall)

وَإِنْ امْرَأَةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا نُشُوزًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يُصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ وَأُحْضِرَتِ الْأَنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ وَإِنْ تُحْسِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿١٢٨﴾

3. If a woman feareth ill treatment from her husband, or desertion, it is no sin for them twain if they make terms of peace between themselves. Peace is better. But **greed** hath been made present in the minds (of men). If ye do good and keep from evil, lo! Allah is ever Informed of what ye do. (4:128) (Pickthall)

أَشْحَةً عَلَيْكُمْ فَإِذَا جَاءَ الْخَوْفُ رَأَيْتَهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ تَدُورُ أَعْيُنُهُمْ كَالَّذِي يُغْشَى عَلَيْهِ
 مِنَ الْمَوْتِ فَإِذَا ذَهَبَ الْخَوْفُ سَلَفُوكُمْ بِالسِّنَةِ حِدَادٍ أَشْحَةً عَلَى الْخَيْرِ أَوْلِيَّكَ لَمْ
 يُؤْمِنُوا فَأَحْبَطَ اللَّهُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا ﴿١٩﴾

4. Being **sparing** of their help to you (believers). But when the fear cometh, then thou (Muhammad) seest them regarding thee with rolling eyes like one who fainteth unto death. Then, when the fear departeth, they scald you with sharp tongues in their greed for wealth (from the spoil). Such have not believed. Therefor Allah maketh their deeds fruitless. And that is easy for Allah. (33:19) (Pickthall)

• البخل

البخل occurs in a number of verses in the Qur'an. It is derived from the stem بخل which is the opposite of generosity (Ibn Manzour, 1999, p. 222). Verses in which البخل occurs include:

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ هُوَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ بَلْ هُوَ شَرٌّ لَهُمْ
 سَيُطَوَّقُونَ مَا بَخَلُوا بِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلِلَّهِ مِيرَاثُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ
 خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٨٠﴾

5. And let not those who **hoard** up that which Allah hath bestowed upon them of His bounty think that it is better for them. Nay, it is worse for them. That which they **hoard** will be their collar on the Day of Resurrection. Allah's is the heritage of the heavens and the earth, and Allah is Informed of what ye do. (3:180) (Pickthall)

الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ وَيَكْتُمُونَ مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ
 فَضْلِهِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا ﴿٣٧﴾

6. Who **hoard** their wealth and enjoin **avarice** on others, and hide that which Allah hath bestowed upon them of His bounty. For disbelievers We prepare a shameful doom; (4:37) (Pickthall)

فَلَمَّا آتَاهُمْ مِّن فَضْلِهِ بَخِلُوا بِهِ وَتَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾

7. Yet when He gave them of His bounty, they **hoarded** it and turned away, averse; (9:76) (Pickthall)

إِن يَسْأَلْكُمُوهَا فَيُحْفِكُمْ تَبَخَّلُوا وَيُخْرِجْ أَضْغَانَكُمْ ﴿٣٧﴾

8. If He should ask it of you and importune you, ye would **hoard** it, and He would bring to light your (secret) hates. (47:37) (Pickthall)

هَآأَنُتُمْ هَتُوْلَآءُ تُدْعَوْنَ لِتُنْفِقُوْآ فِي سَبِيْلِ اَللّٰهِ فَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يَبْخُلُ وَمَنْ يَبْخَلْ فَاِنَّمَا يَبْخَلْ عَن نَّفْسِهٖ ۗ وَاَللّٰهُ اَلْعَنِيُّ وَاَنْتُمْ اَلْفُقَرَاءُ ۗ وَاِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْآ يَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُوْنُوْآ اَمْثَلَكُمْ ﴿٣٨﴾

9. Lo! ye are those who are called to spend in the way of Allah, yet among you there are some who **hoard**. And as for him who **hoardeth**, he **hoardeth** only from his soul. And Allah is the Rich, and ye are the poor. And if ye turn away He will exchange you for some other folk, and they will not be the likes of you. (47:38) (Pickthall)

From the above verses, it is obvious that the Holy Qur'an distinguishes between الشح والبخل by using each word to serve a different meaning. In verses 1, 2 and 3 الشح is used with the human soul, which means it is to do with nature and instinct (Al-Shaye, 1993, p. 256). Therefore, الشح والبخل are not the same, since البخل is a result or a consequence of الشح (Al-Shaye, 1993, p. 258). On the other hand, البخل is 'withholding money from those who deserve it', as mentioned in the verses 5,6,7,8 and 9 (Al-Munjed, 1997. p. 188). الشح is stable in the soul, while البخل is changeable. That is why الشح comes only as a noun in Qur'an, while البخل comes as a noun and verb. In Arabic, it is an established linguistic fact that nouns refer to stability while verb simply change (Al-Munjed, 1997. p. 190). From the above discussion it is thus clear that most Arabic lexicographers and linguists draw a clear distinction between الشح والبخل. The two concepts are therefore not synonyms, despite the fact that they share the sense of 'miserliness'.

The aforementioned argument about البخل والشح is important to assessing the appropriateness of the translations of the two words by Ali, Arberry, Pickthall, and Shakir, as shown in columns (A) and (B) in the table below:

Table 4: Verses including the terms: الشح and البخل

Verses	(A) الشح	(B) البخل
	وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّءُوا الدَّارَ وَالْإِيمَانَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّونَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِمَّا أُوتُوا وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَّاصَةٌ وَمَنْ يُوَقِّ شَحًّا نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (59:9)	وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّءُوا الدَّارَ وَالْإِيمَانَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّونَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِمَّا أُوتُوا وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَّاصَةٌ وَمَنْ يُوَقِّ شَحًّا نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (59:9)
Translator	Translations Offered	Translations Offered
Ali	But those who before them, had homes (in Medina) and had adopted the Faith, - show their affection to such as came to them for refuge, and entertain no desire in their hearts for things given to the (latter), but give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their (own lot). And those saved from the covetousness of their own souls, - they are the ones that achieve prosperity.	(Nor) those who are niggardly or enjoin niggardliness on others, or hide the bounties which Allah hath bestowed on them; for We have prepared, for those who resist Faith, a punishment that steeps them in contempt.
Arberry	And those who made their dwelling in the abode, and in belief, before them; love whosoever has emigrated to them, not finding in their breasts any need for what they have been given, and preferring others above themselves, even though poverty be their portion. And whoso is guarded against the avarice of his own soul, those -- they are the prosperers.	such as are niggardly, and bid other men to be niggardly , and themselves conceal the bounty that God has given them. We have prepared for the unbelievers a humbling chastisement,
Pickthall	Those who entered the city and the faith before them love those who flee unto them for refuge, and find in their breasts no need for that which hath been given them, but prefer (the fugitives) above	Who hoard their wealth and enjoin avarice on others, and hide that which Allah hath bestowed upon them of His bounty. For disbelievers We prepare a shameful doom

	themselves though poverty become their lot. And whoso is saved from his own avarice - such are they who are successful.	
Shakir	And those who made their abode in the city and in the faith before them love those who have fled to them, and do not find in their hearts a need of what they are given, and prefer (them) before themselves though poverty may afflict them, and whoever is preserved from the niggardliness of his soul, these it is that are the successful ones.	

Examining the translations of الشح والبخل offered in the table above, it is obvious that Ali made a distinction between the two words by using ‘covetousness’ to refer to الشح and ‘niggardliness’ to refer to البخل . This indicates that the translator seems to have been aware of the difference between the two words and of the fact that they are not synonyms. Using ‘avarice’ to refer to الشح , however, might in fact be more appropriate in this context, since, according to Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, covetousness signifies ‘the feeling of having a strong desire for the things that other people have’, while avarice means ‘the extreme desire for wealth, possessions, power, etc. that far exceeds what a person needs’. Pickthall, however, made no distinction between the two words making them absolute synonyms by using ‘avarice’ to refer to الشح and البخل in the above verses. Shakir also did the same and used the same word ‘niggardliness’ to refer to الشح and البخل making them absolute synonyms. It is interesting to note, however, that the only translator who differentiated appropriately between الشح and البخل by using “avarice” to refer to الشح and “niggardliness” to refer to البخل is Arberry.

4.1.5 الخوف and الخشية (‘fear’). The fifth pair of lexical items thought to be absolutely synonymous is الخوف and الخشية that generally mean ‘fear’.

- **الخوف**

The word الخوف, as well as its derivatives, occur in many verses of the Qur’an. Verses involving the word and its derivatives include:

قُلْنَا أَهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَمَا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ
وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

1. We said: Go down, all of you, from hence; but verily there cometh unto you from Me a guidance; and whoso followeth My guidance, there shall no **fear** come upon them neither shall they grieve. (2:38) (Pickthall)

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ لَهُمْ
أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٢٧٧﴾

2. Lo! those who believe and do good works and establish worship and pay the poor-due, their reward is with their Lord and there shall no **fear** come upon them neither shall they grieve. (2:277) (Pickthall)

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن مَّنَعَ مَسْجِدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ وَسَعَىٰ فِي خَرَابِهَا أُولَٰئِكَ مَا
كَانَ لَهُمْ أَنْ يَدْخُلُوهَا إِلَّا خَائِفِينَ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ
عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١١٤﴾

3. And who doth greater wrong than he who forbiddeth the approach to the sanctuaries of Allah lest His name should be mentioned therein, and striveth for their ruin. As for such, it was never meant that they should enter them except in **fear**. Theirs in the world is ignominy and theirs in the Hereafter is an awful doom. (2:114) (Pickthall)

فَمَنْ خَافَ مِنْ مُّوَسِّ جَنَفًا أَوْ إِتْمَانًا فَاصْلَحَ بَيْنَهُمْ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ
﴿١٨٢﴾

4. But he who **feareth** from a testator some unjust or sinful clause, and maketh peace between the parties, (it shall be) no sin for him. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (2:182) (Pickthall)

الطَّلَقُ مَرَّتَانٍ فَإِمْسَاكٌ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَنٍ وَلَا يُحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَأْخُذُوا بِمَا
 ءَاتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ شَيْئًا إِلَّا أَنْ يَخَافَا أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَلَا جُنَاحَ
 عَلَيْهِمَا فِيمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَعْتَدُوهَا وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

٢٢٩

5. A divorce is only permissible twice: after that, the parties should either hold Together on equitable terms, or separate with kindness. It is not lawful for you, (Men), to take back any of your gifts (from your wives), except when both parties **fear** that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by Allah. If ye (judges) do indeed fear that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by Allah, there is no blame on either of them if she give something for her freedom. These are the limits ordained by Allah; so do not transgress them if any do transgress the limits ordained by Allah, such persons wrong (Themselves as well as others). (2:229) (Pickthall)

• الخشية

As far as the word الخشية is concerned, this occurs in a number of verses in the Qur'an, including:

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ قَسْوَةً وَإِنْ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا
 يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْأَنْهَارُ وَإِنْ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَقَّقُ فِيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ وَإِنْ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ
 خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

٧٤

6. Then, even after that, your hearts were hardened and became as rocks, or worse than rocks, for hardness. For indeed there are rocks from out which rivers gush, and indeed there are rocks which split asunder so that water floweth from them. And indeed there are rocks which fall down for the **fear** of Allah. Allah is not unaware of what ye do. (2:74) (Pickthall)

وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا
 وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَيْكُمْ حُجَّةٌ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ فَلَا
 تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِي وَلَا تَمَنَّيْ عَلَى كُفْرِهِمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

١٥٠

7. Whencesoever thou comest forth turn thy face toward the Inviolable Place of Worship; and wheresoever ye may be (O Muslims) turn your faces toward it (when ye pray) so that men may have no argument against you, save such of them as do

injustice - **Fear** them not, but **fear** Me! - and so that I may complete My grace upon you, and that ye may be guided. (2:150) (Pickthall)

الَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدِ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَآخَظَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَقَالُوا
حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ

8. Those unto whom men said: Lo! the people have gathered against you, therefor **fear** them. (The threat of danger) but increased the faith of them and they cried: Allah is Sufficient for us! Most Excellent is He in Whom we trust! (3:173) (Pickthall)

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوا أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ يَخْشَوْنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا لِمَ كَتَبْتَ عَلَيْنَا الْقِتَالَ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنَا إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ قُلْ مَنْعَ الدُّنْيَا قَلِيلٌ وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا

9. Hast thou not seen those unto whom it was said: Withhold your hands, establish worship and pay the poordue, but when fighting was prescribed for them behold! a party of them **fear** mankind even as their **fear** of Allah or with greater **fear**, and say: Our Lord! Why hast Thou ordained fighting for us? If only Thou wouldst give us respite yet a while! Say (unto them, O Muhammad): The comfort of this world is scant; the Hereafter will be better for him who wardeth off (evil); and ye will not be wronged the down upon a date-stone. (4:77) (Pickthall)

وَالَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ وَيَخَافُونَ سُوءَ الْحِسَابِ

10. Such as unite that which Allah hath commandeth should be joined, and **fear** their Lord, and dread a woeful reckoning; (13:21) (Pickthall)

الخوف is derived from the stem خوف which means ‘panic’ because you anticipate that something you hate will happen. It is the opposite of ‘safety’ (Al-Jamal, 2003, p. 72). الخشية, however, is ‘to fear someone greater than you are, thus you fear the danger that might be caused’. الخشية from God is the fear from His anger and torment (Al-Jamal, 2003, pp. 40-41).

True, some Arabic lexicographers do not distinguish between الخوف والخشية as they see both words to mean ‘fear’ or ‘panic’ (Al-Razy, 1989, pp. 74; Ibn Manzour,

1999, p. 1169, p. 1290). But there are those Arabic linguists who highlight subtle differences between *الخوف والخشية*. According to Al-Shaye, for example, *الخشية* is of a higher order than *الخوف*. It is ‘extreme fear’. *الخشية* is ‘fearing someone’s greatness, thus praising him, because one knows that he is powerful’. *الخشية* is a special kind of fear that is special for specific people. On the other hand, *الخوف* is anticipating that something one hates will happen. In other words, *الخشية* is a mental perception of things and it is associated with the future in general. However, *الخوف* is associated with sadness in many verses in the Qur’an such as verses 1 and 2 above (pp. 267-70).

Examining the Qur’anic contexts in which *الخوف* and *الخشية* occur, it turns out that *الخشية* is a result of faith and knowledge and it is from praiseworthy things, while *الخوف* is from a blameworthy thing that is associated with the feeling of insecurity. Moreover, *الخشية* is a result of praising someone (i.e. God) , whereas *الخوف* is a result of a weakness in the one who is afraid (Al-Doury, 2005, p. 205).

The role of context in identifying the differences in meaning between *الخوف* and *الخشية* figures most conspicuously in the following verse:

وَلَقَدْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي فَاصْرَبْ لَهُمْ طَرِيقًا فِي الْبَحْرِ يَبَسًا لَا تَخَفْ دَرَكًا
وَلَا تَخْشَىٰ

11. And verily We inspired Moses, saying: Take away My slaves by night and strike for them a dry path in the sea, **fearing** not to be overtaken, neither **being afraid** (of the sea). (20:77) (Pickthall)

As the above verse indicates, *الخوف* and *الخشية* occur in the same context (i.e. same textual environment). This suggests that the two words have been selected very carefully to serve different functions, and that they must differ in some highly subtle and intricate ways. It also indicates that *الخوف* and *الخشية* cannot be interchangeable in all contexts. This view complies, as one may recall, with the definitions of ‘complete synonymy’ given by classical or contemporary, Arab and non-Arab, linguists, who generally hold that ‘absolutely synonymous’ words must be identical in meaning and must be capable of replacing each other in all contexts.

The aforementioned argument *الخوف* and *الخشية* is indispensable to assessing the appropriateness of the translations of the two words by Ali, Arberry, Pickthall, and Shakir, presented in columns (A) and (B) in the table below.

Table 5: Verses including the terms: الخشية and الخوف

Verses	(A) الخوف	(B) الخشية
		<p>إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (2:277)</p>
Translator	Translations Offered	Translations Offered
Ali	Those who believe, and do deeds of righteousness, and establish regular prayers and regular charity, will have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear , nor shall they grieve.	Thenceforth were your hearts hardened: They became like a rock and even worse in hardness. For among rocks there are some from which rivers gush forth; others there are which when split asunder send forth water; and others which sink for fear of Allah. And Allah is not unmindful of what ye do..
Arberry	Those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, and perform the prayer, and pay the alms -- their wage awaits them with their Lord, and no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow.	Then your hearts became hardened thereafter and are like stones, or even yet harder; for there are stones from which rivers come gushing, and others split, so that water issues from them, and others crash down in the fear of God. And God is not heedless of the things you do.
Pickthall	Lo! those who believe and do good works and establish worship and pay the poor-due, their reward is with their Lord and there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve.	Then, even after that, your hearts were hardened and became as rocks, or worse than rocks, for hardness. For indeed there are rocks from out which rivers gush, and indeed there are rocks which split asunder so that water floweth from them. And indeed there are rocks which fall down for the fear of Allah. Allah is not unaware of what ye do.
Shakir	Surely they who believe and do good deeds and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate they shall have their reward from their Lord, and they shall have no fear , nor shall they grieve.	Then your hearts hardened after that, so that they were like rocks, rather worse in hardness; and surely there are some rocks from which streams burst forth, and surely there are some of them which split asunder so water

		issues out of them, and surely there are some of them which fall down for fear of Allah, and Allah is not at all heedless of what you do.
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It is obvious from the table above that Ali, Arberry, Pickthall, and Shakir saw no distinction between the two concepts in translating الخوف والخشية, making them absolute synonyms that are interchangeable in all contexts, hence the inadequacy of the translations. They use the term 'fear' to refer to الخوف والخشية making the reader think that it is one and the same word.

By using the word "fear" to refer to الخوف they are correct, since, according to the Oxford Learner's Dictionary, fear is defined as 'the bad feeling that you have when you are in danger, when something bad might happen, or when a particular thing frightens you'. Therefore, the renditions of الخوف as fear offered by the four translators are adequate, since their translations of الخوف as fear comply with the definition and interpretation of the word given by both English lexicographers and Arab linguists.

On the other hand, by also using 'fear' to refer to الخشية the four translators seem to have missed the point and failed to deliver the intended meaning. They have inappropriately used the word 'fear' as equivalent to الخشية, thus making الخوف والخشية absolute synonyms. This shows a remarkable inability to recognize the subtle difference between the two words. The researcher suggests the use of the word 'dread' to refer to الخشية, thus to distinguish between الخوف والخشية. (See Venuti in section 2.5 on Domestications vs. Foreignization in Cultural Studies).

4.1.6 السبيل and الطريق ('road'). The sixth pair of lexical items thought to be absolutely synonymous is طريق and سبيل that generally mean 'road', 'way', 'path', etc.

- طريق

The word طريق, as well as its derivatives, occur in 11 verses of the Qur'an, including:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَظَلَمُوا لَمْ يَكُنِ اللَّهُ لِيَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ طَرِيقًا ﴿١٦٨﴾

1. Lo! those who disbelieve and deal in wrong, Allah will never forgive them, neither will He guide them unto a **road**, (4:168) (Pickthall)

إِلَّا طَرِيقَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا ﴿١٦٩﴾

2. Except the **road** of hell, wherein they will abide forever. And that is ever easy for Allah. (4:169) (Pickthall)

وَلَقَدْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي فَاصْرَبْ لَهُمْ طَرِيقًا فِي الْبَحْرِ يَبَسًا لَا تَخَفُ دَرَكًا
وَلَا تُخَشَىٰ ﴿٧٧﴾

3. And verily We inspired Moses, saying: Take away My slaves by night and strike for them a dry **path** in the sea, fearing not to be overtaken, neither being afraid (of the sea). (20:77) (Pickthall)

قَالُوا يَا قَوْمَنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا كِتَابًا أُنزِلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَىٰ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ يَهْدِي إِلَى
الْحَقِّ وَإِلَىٰ طَرِيقٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٣٠﴾

4. They said: O our people! Lo! we have heard a scripture which hath been revealed after Moses, confirming that which was before it, guiding unto the truth and a right **road**. (46:30) (Pickthall)

وَأَلَّوِ اسْتَقَمُوا عَلَىٰ الطَّرِيقَةِ لَأَسْقَيْنَهُمْ مَاءً غَدَقًا ﴿١٦﴾

5. If they (the idolaters) tread the right **path**, We shall give them to drink of water in abundance. (72:16) (Pickthall)

• سبيل

As far as the word سبيل is concerned, it occurs in 174 verses of the Qur'an (Al-Shaye, 1993, p. 263). Among the verses in which it appears are:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ قَدْ ضَلُّوا ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا ﴿١١٧﴾

6. Lo! those who disbelieve and hinder (others) from the way of Allah, they verily have wandered far astray. (4:167) (Pickthall)

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ وَلَا
 جُنُبًا إِلَّا عَابِرِي سَبِيلٍ حَتَّىٰ تَغْتَسِلُوا وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنْكُمْ
 مِنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَمَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ يَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا
 بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُورًا غَفُورًا ﴿٤٣﴾

7. O ye who believe! Draw not near unto prayer when ye are drunken, till ye know that which ye utter, nor when ye are polluted, save when journeying upon the **road**, till ye have bathed. And if ye be ill, or on a journey, or one of you cometh from the closet, or ye have touched women, and ye find not water, then go to high clean soil and rub your faces and your hands (therewith). Lo! Allah is Benign, Forgiving. (4:43) (Pickthall)

سَأَصْرِفُ عَنْ ءَايَاتِي الَّذِينَ يَتَكَبَّرُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كَلِمَةً ءَايَةٍ
 لَا يُؤْمِنُوهَا وَإِنْ يَرَءُوا سَبِيلَ الرَّشْدِ لَا يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا وَإِنْ يَرَءُوا سَبِيلَ الْغَيِّ
 يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوا بِءَايَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ ﴿١٤٦﴾

8. I shall turn away from My revelations those who magnify themselves wrongfully in the earth, and if they see each token believe it not, and if they see the **way** of righteousness choose it nor for (their) way, and if they see the way of error choose if for (their) way. That is because they deny Our revelations and are used to disregard them. (7:146) (Pickthall)

قَالَ قَدْ أُجِيبَت دَعْوَتُكُمْ فَاَسْتَقِيمَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعَانَّ سَبِيلَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾

9. He said: Your prayer is heard. Do ye twain keep to the straight **path**, and follow not the road of those who have no knowledge. (10:89) (Pickthall)

أَدْعُ إِلَىٰ سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَدِلْ لَهُم بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ
 رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۗ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

10. Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the better way. Lo! thy Lord is Best Aware of him who strayeth from His **way**, and He is Best Aware of those who go aright. (16:125) (Pickthall)

Most Arabic lexicographers make no distinction between طريق وسبيل. They say that طريق is سبيل which simply means way or path (Al-Razy, 1989, pp. 120, 164; Ibn Manzour.1999 Vol 3 p. 1930, Vol 4 p. 2665). سبيل is defined by Al Jamal as ‘the clear path’ (2003, Vol 2 , p. 286).

Nevertheless, investigating the Qur’anic contexts in which طريق and سبيل are mentioned is necessary to explore the differences in meaning between the two words. According to Al-Shaye (1993), the Qur’an prefers to use سبيل more than طريق: سبيل with its derivatives occur 174 times, compared with طريق used only 11 times. This preference is not unmotivated: according to the Qur’anic context, سبيل most of the time indicates ‘ease, convenience and clarity’, and it is associated with ‘goodness’. طريق on the other hand, indicates ‘goodness’ only when it collocates with another word that describes something good, such as in verse 4 cited above. طريق is usually used when God is addressing evildoers and hypocrites, while threatening them or warning them (verses 1 and 5 above) unlike سبيل which God uses to talk with or about believers. سبيل is used with the name of Allah in many verses throughout the Qur’an, but طريق is not (Al Shaye, 1993, pp. 263-66).

However, the distinction in meaning between the two lexical items in the Qur’anic text is not fortuitous; rather, it is intended by Allah (Highly Exalted) to serve a specific function. This not only testifies to the non-existence of absolute synonymy in the Qur’an but also to the inimitable aspects of expression characteristic of this sacred text. Therefore, سبيل and طريق cannot be completely synonymous. Rather, they can be regarded as near-synonyms, only sharing slight shades of meaning.

Undoubtedly, the aforementioned critique is necessary to assess the adequacy of the translations of سبيل and طريق offered by Ali, Arberry, Pickthall, and Shakir. The table below shows the four translators’ renditions of طريق وسبيل in columns (A) and (B).

Table 6: Verses including the terms: الطريق and السبيل

	(A) طريق	(B) سبيل
Verses	إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَظَلَمُوا لَمْ يَكُنِ اللَّهُ لِيُغَيِّرَ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ طَرِيقًا (4:168)	يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَارَى حَتَّى تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ وَلَا جُنُبًا إِلَّا عَابِرِي سَبِيلٍ حَتَّى تَغْتَسِلُوا وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَى أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِنْكُم مِّنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ

		لَا مَسْئَمَةَ الْنِّسَاءِ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُورًا غَفُورًا (4:43)
Translator	Translations Offered	Translations Offered
Ali	Those who reject Faith and do wrong,- Allah will not forgive them nor guide them to any way ,-(Al Nisaa 4:168)	O ye who believe! Approach not prayers with a mind befogged, until ye can understand all that ye say,- nor in a state of ceremonial impurity (Except when travelling on the road), until after washing your whole body. If ye are ill, or on a journey, or one of you cometh from offices of nature, or ye have been in contact with women, and ye find no water, then take for yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub therewith your faces and hands. For Allah doth blot out sins and forgive again and again..(Al Nisaa 4:43)
Arberry	Surely the unbelievers, who have done evil, God would not forgive them, neither guide them on any road	O believers, draw not near to prayer when you are drunken until you know what you are saying, or defiled -- unless you are traversing a way -- until you have washed yourselves; but if you are sick, or on a journey, or if any of you comes from the privy, or you have touched women, and you can find no water, then have recourse to wholesome dust and wipe your faces and your hands; God is All-pardoning, All-forgiving.
Pickthall	Lo! those who disbelieve and deal in wrong, Allah will never forgive	O ye who believe! Draw not near unto prayer when ye are drunken,

	them, neither will He guide them unto a road	till ye know that which ye utter, nor when ye are polluted, save when journeying upon the road , till ye have bathed. And if ye be ill, or on a journey, or one of you cometh from the closet, or ye have touched women, and ye find not water, then go to high clean soil and rub your faces and your hands (therewith). Lo! Allah is Benign, Forgiving
Shakir	Surely (as for) those who disbelieve and act unjustly Allah will not forgive them nor guide them to a path	O you who believe! do not go near prayer when you are Intoxicated until you know (well) what you say, nor when you are under an obligation to perform a bath-- unless (you are) travelling on the road -- until you have washed yourselves; and if you are sick, or on a journey, or one of you come from the privy or you have touched the women, and you cannot find water, betake yourselves to pure earth, then wipe your faces and your hands; surely Allah is Pardoning, Forgiving.

As indicated by the table above, Pickthall renders سبيل وطريق as 'road' making them absolute synonyms which is inadequate. Ali renders طريق as 'way' and سبيل as 'road'. Arberry renders طريق as 'road' and سبيل as 'way' and Shakir renders طريق as 'path' and سبيل as 'road'. It is clear that these three translators may have been simply confused by the distinction, thus failing to make the right choice. In my opinion, some consensus over consistency must be reached by all translators of the Holy Qur'an. For example, a distinction must be established, maintained and heeded between such pairs of concepts as طريق and سبيل so the reader will recognize that there is a difference between the two words.

4.1.7 نعم and بلى ('yes'). The seventh pair of lexical items thought to be absolutely synonymous is نعم and بلى that generally mean 'yes'.

- نعم

The word نعم occurs in a number of verses of the Qur'an, including:

وَنَادَى أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ أَصْحَابَ النَّارِ أَنْ قَدْ وَجَدْنَا مَا وَعَدَنَا رَبُّنَا حَقًّا فَهَلْ وَجَدْتُمْ مَا وَعَدَ رَبُّكُمْ حَقًّا قَالُوا نَعَمْ فَأَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ بَيْنَهُمْ أَنْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

1. And the dwellers of the Garden cry unto the dwellers of the Fire: We have found that which our Lord promised us (to be) the Truth. Have ye (too) found that which your Lord promised the Truth? They say: **Yea**, verily. And a crier in between them crieth: The curse of Allah is on evil-doers, (7:44) (Pickthall)

قَالَ نَعَمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ لِمِنَ الْمُقْرَبِينَ ﴿١١٤﴾

2. He answered: **Yes**, and surely ye shall be of those brought near (to me). (7:114) (Pickthall)

قَالَ نَعَمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ إِذَا لِمِنَ الْمُقْرَبِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

3. He said: **Aye**, and ye will then surely be of those brought near (to me). (26:42) (Pickthall)

قُلْ نَعَمْ وَأَنْتُمْ دَاخِرُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

4. Say (O Muhammad): **Ye**, in truth; and ye will be brought low. (37:18) (Pickthall)

- بلى

As far as the word (بلى) is concerned, it occurs in a number of verses in the Qur'an. Among the verses in which it appears are:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى قَالَ أُولِمْتُ تُوْمِنُ قَالَ بَلَىٰ وَلَٰكِن لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ أَجْعَلْ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْيًا وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٣٦٠﴾

5. And when Abraham said (unto his Lord): My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead, He said: Dost thou not believe? Abraham said: **Yea**, but (I ask) in order that my heart may be at ease. (His Lord) said: Take four of the birds and cause them to incline unto thee, then place a part of them on each hill, then call them, they will come to thee in haste, and know that Allah is Mighty, Wise. (2:260) (Pickthall)

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ
قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا أَن تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ ﴿١٧٢﴾

6. And (remember) when thy Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam, from their reins, their seed, and made them testify of themselves, (saying): Am I not your Lord? They said: **Yea**, verily. We testify. (That was) lest ye should say at the Day of Resurrection: Lo! of this we were unaware; (7:172) (Pickthall)

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَأْتِينَا السَّاعَةُ قُلْ بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّي لَتَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يُعْزِبُ عَنْهُ
مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا أَصْغَرُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْبَرُ إِلَّا فِي
كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٣﴾

7. Those who disbelieve say: The Hour will never come unto us. Say: **Nay**, by my Lord, but it is coming unto you surely. (He is) the Knower of the Unseen. Not an atom's weight, or less than that or greater, escapeth Him in the heavens or in the earth, but it is in a clear Record, (34:3) (Pickthall)

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِقَدِيرٍ عَلَىٰ أَن يَخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُمْ بَلَىٰ وَهُوَ الْخَلَّاقُ
الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٨١﴾

8. Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth Able to create the like of them? **Aye**, that He is! for He is the All-Wise Creator, (36:81) (Pickthall)

وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ رُمًّا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءُوهَا فَتَحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ
خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ رَبِّكُمْ وَيُنذِرُونَكُمْ لِقَاءَ
يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَلَكِنْ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٧١﴾

9. And those who disbelieve are driven unto hell in troops till, when they reach it and the gates thereof are opened, and the warders thereof say unto them: Came there not unto you messengers of your own, reciting unto you the revelations of your Lord and warning you of the meeting of this your Day? they say: **Yea**, verily. But the word of doom of disbelievers is fulfilled. (39:71) (Pickthall)

Most Arabic lexicographers distinguish between نعم and بلى. They assert that نعم affirms what comes before it as a proper ‘answer’. On the other hand, بلى is an utterance occurring after a question that contains a negation, and it is this negation which gets refuted. (Al-Razy, 1989, p. 279; Ibn Manzour. 1999, p. 357; Al-Jamal, 2003, p. 85).

In like manner, some contemporary Arabic linguists draw clear lines of demarcation between the two words. For example, Al-Shaya (1993) asserts that in the Qur’an بلى comes to refute a negation that occurs before it such as in verses **H** and **I**. However, نعم occurs to assert the question that comes before it such as verses **A,B,C** and **D** even if the question contains a negation (p. 296).

It can therefore be safely concluded that if the question is to be negated, our answer should be with بلى which tends to refute the negation. But, if the question is not negated, our answer should be with نعم which tends to assert what comes before it.

The above formulation should be sufficient to indicate that there is a clear distinction between نعم and بلى making them ‘near synonyms’ rather than ‘absolute synonyms’. The analysis along these lines is necessary in any assessment of the adequacy of the translations of نعم and بلى offered by Ali, Arberry, Pickthall, and Shakir. The table below shows the four translators’ renditions of نعم and بلى laid out in columns (A) and (B) respectively.

Table 7: Verses including the terms: نعم and بلى

	(A) نعم	(B) بلى
Verses	وَنَادَى أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ أَصْحَابَ النَّارِ أَنْ قَدْ وَجَدْنَا مَا وَعَدَنَا رَبُّنَا حَقًّا فَهَلْ وَجَدْتُمْ مَا وَعَدَ رَبُّكُمْ حَقًّا قَالُوا نَعَمْ فَأَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ بَيْنَهُمْ أَنْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ (7:44)	وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَى شَهِدْنَا أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ (7:172)
Translator	Translations Offered	Translations Offered

Ali	The Companions of the Garden will call out to the Companions of the Fire: "We have indeed found the promises of our Lord to us true: Have you also found Your Lord's promises true?" They shall say, " Yes "; but a crier shall proclaim between them: "The curse of Allah is on the wrongdoers	When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves, (saying): "Am I not your Lord (who cherishes and sustains you)?"- They said: " Yea! We do testify!" (This), lest ye should say on the Day of Judgment: "Of this we were never mindful":
Arberry	The inhabitants of Paradise will call to the inhabitants of the Fire: 'We have found that which our Lord promised us true; have you found what your Lord promised you true?' ' Yes, ' they will say. And then a herald shall proclaim between them: 'God's curse is on the evildoers	And when thy Lord took from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their seed, and made them testify touching themselves, 'Am I not your Lord?' They said, ' Yes, we testify'-- lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, 'As for us, we were heedless of this,'
Pickthall	And the dwellers of the Garden cry unto the dwellers of the Fire: We have found that which our Lord promised us (to be) the Truth. Have ye (too) found that which your Lord promised the Truth? They say: Yea, verily. And a crier in between them crieth: The curse of Allah is on evildoers	And (remember) when thy Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam, from their reins, their seed, and made them testify of themselves, (saying): Am I not your Lord? They said: Yea, verily. We testify. (That was) lest ye should say at the Day of Resurrection: Lo! of this we were unaware;(Al Aaraf 7:172)
Shakir	And the dwellers of the garden will call out to the inmates of the fire: Surely we have found what our Lord promised us to be true; have you too found what your Lord promised to be true? They will say: Yes. Then a crier	And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants, and made them bear witness against their own souls: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes! we bear witness. Lest you should say on the

	will cry out among them that the curse of Allah is on the unjust.	day of resurrection: Surely we were heedless of this.
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From the table above, it is obvious that the four translators seem to have missed the point by making نعم and بلى absolute synonyms and by using the word “yes” to refer to both concepts indiscriminately. By using “yes” to refer to نعم they are of course correct, given that lexicographers and linguists have generally endorsed ‘yes’ in verse **A** to mean that those who entered the paradise found what their Lord promised them true. However, using ‘yes’ which is the equivalent of نعم in verse **B** can only erroneously mean that Allah is not their Lord, simply because نعم occurs to assert what come before it and doesn’t refute the negation like بلى.

In my opinion, another word should be used to refer to بلى to make the reader aware that what comes before (i.e. the negation) is refuted. The researcher recommends the word “nay” to be an appropriate equivalent for بلى in this particular context.

4.1.8 ثواب and أجر (‘reward’). ثواب and أجر are present us with the eighth pair of lexical items that generally mean ‘reward’ and that are regarded as completely synonymous.

- أجر

As far as the lexical item أجر is concerned, this is derived from the stem أجر which means ‘a reward for doing a certain work’ (Ibn Manzour, 1999, p. 31). Verses involving أجر include:

فَجَاءَتْهُ إِحْدَاهُمَا تَمْشِي عَلَى اسْتِحْيَاءٍ قَالَتْ إِنَّكَ أَنَّى يَدْعُوكَ لِتَجْزِيَكَ أَجْرَ مَا
سَقَيْتَ لَنَا فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ وَقَصَّ عَلَيْهِ الْقِصَصَ قَالَ لَا تَخَفْ نَجَوْتَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ
الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

1. Then there came unto him one of the two women, walking shyly. She said: Lo! my father biddeth thee, that he may **reward** thee with a payment for that thou didst water (the flock) for us. Then, when he came unto him and told him the (whole) story, he said: Fear not! Thou hast escaped from the wrongdoing folk. (28:25) (Pickthall)

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ السَّحَرَةُ قَالُوا لِفِرْعَوْنَ أَإِنَّا لِنَأْتِيَنَّكَ أَوْلَادُكَ مِنَ الْغَالِبِينَ ﴿٤١﴾

2. And when the wizards came they said unto Pharaoh: Will there surely be a **reward** for us if we are the winners? (26:41) (Pickthall)

أُولَئِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَجَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا
وَنِعَمَ أَجْرَ الْعَامِلِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

3. The reward of such will be forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide for ever - a bountiful **reward** for workers!
(3:136) (Pickthall)

الَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِلَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْقَرْحُ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقُوا
أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٧٢﴾

4. As for those who heard the call of Allah and His messenger after the harm befell them (in the fight); for such of them as do right and ward off (evil), there is great **reward**.!(3:172) (Pickthall)

وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا آمَاؤُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

5. And know that your possessions and your children are a test, and that with Allah is immense **reward**. (8:28) (Pickthall)

- (ثواب)

The term ثواب occurs in a number of verses in the Qur'an, including :

﴿ لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يَبَايَعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ فَعَلِمَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ
فَأَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَثَبَهُمْ فَتَحًا قَرِيبًا ﴾ ﴿١٨﴾

6. Allah was well pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance unto thee beneath the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down peace of reassurance on them, and hath **rewarded** them with a near victory; (48:18) (Pickthall)

فَأَثَبَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِمَا قَالُوا جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ
 الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾

7. Allah hath **rewarded** them for that their saying - Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide for ever. That is the reward of the good. (5:85) (Pickthall)

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تَمُوتَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ كِنَبَأً مُؤَجَّلًا وَمَنْ يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا
 نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَنْ يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ الْآخِرَةِ نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَسَنَجْزِي الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٤٥﴾

8. No soul can ever die except by Allah's leave and at a term appointed. Whoso desireth the **reward** of the world, We bestow on him thereof; and whoso desireth the reward of the Hereafter, We bestow on him thereof. We shall reward the thankful. (3:145) (Pickthall)

فَعَانَهُمُ اللَّهُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا وَحَسَنَ ثَوَابِ الْآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٤٨﴾

9. So Allah gave them the **reward** of the world and the good reward of the Hereafter. Allah loveth those whose deeds are good. (3:148) (Pickthall)

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ ثَوَابُ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا
 ﴿١٣٤﴾

10. Whoso desireth the **reward** of the world, (let him know that) with Allah is the reward of the world and the Hereafter. Allah is ever Hearer, Seer. (4:134) (Pickthall)

Most Arabic lexicographers make no distinction between **ثواب** and **أجر**, and use one word to interpret the other interchangeably (Ibn Manzour, 1999, Vol.1, p. 31, Vol.11, p. 27; Al-Jamal, 2003, Vol.1, p. 57; Al-Razy, 1989, pp. 3). On the other hand, some linguists tend to distinguish between **ثواب** and **أجر**, making them near synonyms rather than absolute synonyms. According to Al-Munjed (1997), for example, **أجر** and **ثواب** are not absolute synonyms for two reasons. First, in the proper Qur'anic context **أجر** might signify 'a general reward given by Allah' (Verses 3, 4 and 5) or 'a reward given by people' (Verses 1 and 2). Second, **أجر** is a reward given for accomplishing a certain job of work only, whereas **ثواب** is a reward by God for good deeds and even sayings (Verse 7).

The abovementioned argument is necessary in any proper assessment of the adequacy of the translations of أجر and ثواب offered by Ali, Arberry, Pickthall, and Shakir. The table below shows the four translators' renditions of أجر و ثواب in columns (A) and (B) respectively.

Table 8: Verses including the terms: ثواب and أجر

Verses	(A) أجر	(B) ثواب
		أُولَئِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَجَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ (3:136)
Translator	Translations Offered	Translations Offered
Ali	For such the reward is forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens with rivers flowing underneath,- an eternal dwelling: How excellent a recompense for those who work (and strive)!	Allah's Good Pleasure was on the Believers when they swore Fealty to thee under the Tree: He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down Tranquillity to them; and He rewarded them with a speedy Victory;;
Arberry	Those -- their recompense is forgiveness from their Lord, and gardens beneath which rivers flow, therein dwelling forever; and how excellent is the wage of those who labour!	God was well pleased with the believers when they were swearing fealty to thee under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down the Shechina upon them, and rewarded them with a nigh victory
Pickthall	The reward of such will be forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide for ever - a bountiful reward for workers!	Allah was well pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance unto thee beneath the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down peace of reassurance on them, and hath rewarded them with a near victory
Shakir	(As for) these-- their reward is forgiveness from their Lord, and	Certainly Allah was well pleased with the believers when they swore

	gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them, and excellent is the reward of the laborers.	allegiance to you under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down tranquillity on them and rewarded them with a near victory,
--	--	--

From the above table, it is obvious that Pickthall and Shakir seem to make no distinction between أجر and ثواب making them absolute synonyms and using the word “reward” as an equivalent for both words. On the other hand, Arberry renders أجر into “wage” which is regrettably inaccurate in this context, since, according to Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, ‘wage’ means ‘a regular amount of money that you earn, usually every week, for work or services’, whereas, in this verse, God is talking about paradise, not money, as a reward. It is interesting to note, however, that Ali seems to be the only translator who has rendered both words correctly. He renders أجر into “recompense” and ثواب into “reward” which, in my opinion, is an accurate rendition of the two words: it is sufficient to make the reader aware that أجر and ثواب are by no means absolute synonyms.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Absolute synonymy in the Holy Qur'an is simply an illusion; it just does not exist. What certainly exists is near synonymy, that is, lexical items which appear to be synonymous at first glance, but which, on closer scrutiny, reveal distinct semantic values. Totally different meanings emerge, and these subtle shades of meaning become particularly difficult to deal with in translation. This is what creates an insurmountable hurdle for translators particularly of sacred and sensitive texts (e.g. the Qur'an). In fact, it is often the case that translators (and readers of such texts in general) do not seem to notice the subtle differences between these words, a situation which invariably result in totally misperceiving the text message or rendering it inaccurately.

This study investigates, from a translation perspective, the extent to which translators of the Holy Qur'an have been successful in dealing with the phenomenon of near synonymy. The study concludes that the task of translating near synonyms in general, and near synonymy in the Holy Qur'an in particular, is not an easy undertaking. This is because near synonyms (especially those which occur in, and are characteristic of, sacred and sensitive texts) tend to involve extremely subtle differences in meaning that are not easy to identify, let alone to preserve, in the process of reflective reading or translating.

The study also comes to the conclusion that the chosen translations by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (2004), Arthur Arberry (1955), Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1930) and Muhammad Shakir (1983) have not been entirely successful in capturing the subtle shades of meaning involved in the use of the selected pairs of near synonyms. These are : الرجز والعذاب (generally yielding the semantic value 'torment'), البحر واليم ('sea'), الحلف والقسم ('swear'), الشح والبخل ('miserliness'), الخوف ('fear'), الطريق والسبيل ('road'), نعم وبلَى ('yes'), and أجر وثواب ('reward'). The translators have sometimes opted for different words to refer to the concepts in question. But it is clear that the choices made are not done in a motivated manner. Furthermore, these fortuitous choices are sometimes confused or inattentive to the fact that in using two different words, Allah must be conveying added semantic values that simply cannot be ignored. So the translations often come up with only one word to refer to two distinct concepts. For example, most of the translations consulted used "reward" to refer to الأجر والثواب . This is regrettable but understandable: the translators

probably could not recognize the subtle differences among the various near synonyms, or were victims of a tendency to translate near synonyms out of context, or without referring to the linguistic or exegetical works pertinent to items being tackled.

In short, this thesis concludes that absolute synonymy is nonexistent in the Holy Qur'an and that what exists is, at best, near synonymy. Near synonymy in the Holy Qur'an creates a big problem for the translators and most of the translators under study seem to have paid little or no attention to the subtle distinctions at play, a sad situation which can only result in immeasurable losses. This is particularly deplorable when translating a text as sacred and sensitive as the Holy Qur'an. In this most sacred of books, each word, indeed each letter, is used to deliver an intended meaning. Translators must be fully aware of this and should under no circumstances be permitted to take unforgivable liberty with the source text that in any way leads to the slightest loss in meaning. The context in which near synonyms occur is the most important clue that will help the translator to translate near synonym adequately. In addition, translators must refer to relevant linguistic works and exegeses to grasp the intended meaning adequately in order that they might be able to deliver the message appropriately.

Building on the above analysis of near synonyms, and bearing in mind the failure of most translators to render crucial near synonyms adequately, it is recommended that a comprehensive study of near synonyms in the Holy Qur'an that have not been explored yet be conducted. This should make full use of context, linguistic clues and exegesis. Secondly, translators should be made more aware of the necessity of reading extensively in the field of exegesis and linguistics pertinent to the Holy Qur'an. Finally, translators should pay more attention to the crucial role of context in disambiguating the complex meanings of the Holy Qur'an.

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