

## Translating Qur'anic Past Tense Structures Which Speak about the Hereafter

Mohammad Anwar Shafiq Al-Taher  
Zarqa University, Jordan

**Abstract:** *The study investigates the translation of past verbs in the Noble Qur'an which report Hereafter future events into English. It may be needless to say that the question of viewing time varies among languages. However, it is to be borne in mind that the holy script, believed to be the revelation of God, differs from humans in this matter. For instance, the use of the past tense to convey the future is one of its exclusive features. The purpose is to emphasize the certainty of such incidents and, therefore, push the receivers for more commitment to good deeds and further avoidance of bad deeds. The question raised is whether prominent translators of the Noble Qur'an employ the suitable equivalent techniques which relay the above function by bridging the gap between the past and future. The paper chooses examples of such constructions in the Noble Qur'an. Then, their renditions by Thomas Irving, Mohammed Habib Shakir and Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall are cited and investigated. A number of techniques are chosen by the translators, mainly the present simple, future simple and the modal 'shall.*

**Keywords:** Arabic Translation, Qur'an Translation, Tense shift.

### 1. Introduction

Tenses represent one of the major features of language that expresses the time of an action of the sentence or perhaps the sender's point of view of this action. However, languages vary in their tense system according to the way past, present and future are viewed and contextualized. Arabic, for example, employs a basic verb pattern system of past and non-past, the former of which is usually identified by certain suffixes. The latter includes present (mostly recognized by given prefixes), command (formed by various morphological mechanisms) and future (annexed to the present by adding the prefix or the auxiliary to the main verb). In contrast, the English tense taxonomy is a relatively complicated one, which adds the 'aspect' dimension to show more details about the action or state within the past, present or future time.

After a language user or learner comes to comprehend the main uses of each tense construction within each time stage, he/she is sometimes encountered by a cross-temporal problem. In English, for instance, the present simple could refer to the future, and the present perfect simple may refer to the past. Likewise, in Arabic, a bare present may refer to the past or future, whereas the past could indicate a command.

When it comes to translating an authoritative text, like the Noble Qur'an, the matter becomes even more complicated. This holy script is believed to use the most eloquent grammar and lexis to influence the reader and listener. As the translator is entrusted with the responsibility of mirroring the same force of the original to the TL audience, he/she has to be very careful in choosing the most suitable and adequate structure that satisfactorily serves the function of the structure within the context. The present research looks into those past tense sentences in the Noble Qur'an which talk about the events taking place in the various stages of the Hereafter, i.e., in the future.

The paper is intended to explore a number of areas:

- An overview of the past and future in English
- An overview of the past and future in Arabic
- Past tense in the Noble Qur'an
- An overview of translating the Noble Qur'an
- The translation of past tense structures describing the Hereafter in the Noble Qur'an into English

Of the many past structures talking about the Last Day in the Noble Qur'an, 136 examples are chosen according to certain conditions. Then, their translations by Thomas Irving, Muhammad Habib Shakir and Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall are analyzed in terms of grammatical construction and semantic force.

## **2. An overview of the past and future in English**

### **2.1. Past**

There are a number of past constructions depending on how to view past events, i.e., aspect. Firstly, the past simple is used to convey an action taking place at a specific time in the past.

e.g. - My friend bought a new car yesterday.

It could also refer to a past habit which has no existence in the present.

e.g. - He always bought his wife flowers.

Secondly, the past continuous usually refers to the duration of a past action but interrupted by another short action or time.

e.g. - While John was sleeping, Anne entered the room.

- I was studying math at 3 p.m.

Thirdly, the past perfect places an action prior to another action or time in the past.

e.g. - When I arrived at the airport, the plane had left.

- We had finished the prayer by midnight.

Fourthly, the past perfect continuous is similar to the previous one, but lays emphasis on the duration of the event.

e.g. - The police had been looking for the criminal for 5 years before they arrested him.

On the other hand, the present simple is sometimes employed in what is called ‘historical present’ in the narration of some past events ‘to make the story more vivid and immediate,’ especially when targeting children (Jackson 1995: 90).

e.g. The god Indra sentences a heavenly nymph guilty of an illicit love affair to become a mortal and be murdered by a Javanese queen before she can return to heaven. She descends and becomes incarnate in the wife of a Javanese headman. A prince hunting sees her and weds her, though he is betrothed to a princess. (ibid)

It is also used when discussing literature and commenting on an ongoing football match.

## 2.2. Future

There are three main future constructions connected to certain aspects. First, the future simple refers to an action expected to take place, usually at a specific time in the future.

e.g. -These students will pass tomorrow’s exam.

-It may also convey a momentary decision.

e.g. The bell is ringing.

- I’ll answer.

Second, the future continuous refers to a long action, usually interrupted by another short action or time in the future.

e.g. - Mom will be cooking when I come back home.

- I will be sleeping at 11 p.m.

Third, the future perfect refers to an action prior to another action or time in the future.

e.g. - By the time you leave, I will have prepared the sandwiches.

- By sunset, we will have finished the meeting.

On the other hand, the present simple, present continuous and ‘be going to’ are examples of constructions used to convey the future, often in cases of schedules or prior plans.

e.g. - The plane arrives in Istanbul at 10:45.

- I am leaving for Washington next year.

- We are going to build a school in this new neighbourhood.

To sum up, in the English language, there is overlap in use between some past and present constructions and between some present and future constructions. However, past structures are not found to refer to any future action.

## 3. An overview of the past and future in Arabic

### 3.1. Past

A typical use of a past structure is to describe what happened before the moment of speaking.

e.g. - . ذهب

Mohammad went to the market yesterday.

- .  
Ali arrived at school at 8 o'clock.

Another use is supplication to God.

e.g.- .  
May Allah forgive you!

### 3.2. Future

There is no independent category called 'future'. Most of the time, as mentioned earlier, the prefix ( ) or the auxiliary ( ) is added to a non-past verb. The former prefix is used to convey a near future, whereas the latter particle tends to be for more remote future.

e.g. - .  
بزيارة إلى المتحف. \_\_\_\_\_  
We will visit the museum tomorrow.

- إلى بلادنا قريباً. \_\_\_\_\_

We are going to return to our homeland soon.

In addition, the present may refer to the future, sometimes when related to a schedule.

e.g. - .  
يغادر القطار يوم الخميس عند  
The train leaves on Thursday at 5 p.m.

It is also common in whether forecasts.

e.g. - .  
يكون الجو صافياً. \_\_\_\_\_  
Skies will be clear.

Past and future are, then, found to have different purposes with regard to time. However, the future does not make a reference to past, while the past has a very limited scope of referring to the future (a supplication form of command).

### 4. Past tense in the Noble Qur'an

In the Arabic language, texts belong to three forms: verse, prose and the Noble Qur'an. The uniqueness of the holy script emanates from the fact that it is not the production of humans. Therefore, the Great Creator totally differs from humans in the consideration of time; for time represents a limitation on human beings but not the Creator of time (81 :2006 ).

There is a huge gap between the past and future, which is not bridged by typical Arabic usage. In the Qur'an, however, this gap is a characteristic of its style. The past tense portraying the events of the Hereafter is believed by most exegesis scholars to express the conclusive certainty of their occurrence (2004 الهجري الشافعي 2001 1984 1420 1407 ). (2006 . It is a powerful message to the receiver that he/she has to strongly believe in what is going to take place on the Last Day as if it has already happened or about to happen (10 :2003 385 :1407 ). Whatever the case might be, the target is to constantly remind the believer of the great reward and punishment awaiting for people on that horrible day. Keeping this in their minds and hearts necessitates doing good deeds and avoiding evil. For example,

\_\_\_\_\_ اللَّهُ جَمِيعاً \_\_\_\_\_ الضُّعَفَاءُ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا إِنَّا كُنَّا لَكُمْ تَبَعًا فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُعْتَدُونَ  
 لَوْ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ لَهَدَيْنَاكُمْ سِوَاءَ عَلَيْنَا أَجْرَانَا أَمْ صَبَرْنَا مَا لَنَا مِنْ مَحِيصٍ (21) \_\_\_\_\_  
 الشَّيْطَانُ لَمَّا فُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعَدَ الْحَقُّ وَوَعَدْتُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُمْ وَمَا كَانَ لِي عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ

إِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (22) \_\_\_\_\_ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
 وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ تَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيهَا سَلَامٌ  
 (14: 21-23)

And they all appeared before Allah (on the Day of Resurrection) then the weak said to those who were arrogant (chiefs): "Verily, we were following you; can you avail us anything from Allah's Torment?" They said: "Had Allah guided us, we would have guided you. It makes no difference to us (now) whether we rage, or bear (these torments) with patience, there is no place of refuge for us ". (21) And Shaitan (Satan) said when the matter has been decided: "Verily, Allah promised you a promise of truth. And I too promised you, but I betrayed you. I had no authority over you except that I called you, so you responded to me. So blame me not, but blame yourselves. I cannot help you, nor can you help me. I deny your former act in associating me (Satan) as a partner with Allah (by obeying me in the life of the world). Verily, there is a painful torment for the Zalimun (polytheists and wrong-doers, etc ". (22) And those who believed (in the Oneness of Allah and His Messengers and whatever they brought) and did righteous deeds, were made to enter Gardens under which rivers flow, - to dwell therein forever (i.e.in Paradise), with the permission of their Lord. Their greeting therein will be: Salam (peace .!( 23)

(translated by Al-Hilali and Khan except the underlined rendered literally)

When people read or listen to the three verses above, they are expected to remember that they are going to stand before Allah, who will ask them about their life. Their evil partners, whether among the weak or the arrogant, and their devils will never be of any assistance to them if they are not obedient to the Lord. On the other hand, if they do good deeds, they shall be honored forever.

What is even more interesting concerning the setting of the Hereafter scenes in the Qur'an is the shift employed sometimes between the present and past tenses. For instance,

\_\_\_\_\_ وَيَوْمَ نُسَيِّرُهُمْ \_\_\_\_\_ وَحَسْرَتَاهُمْ \_\_\_\_\_ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا (47)

(48)

المُجْرِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا فِيهِ وَيَقُولُونَ يَا وَيْلَتَنَا مَا لَ هَذَا الْكِتَابِ لَا يُغَادِرُ صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً إِلَّا  
 أَحْصَاهَا \_\_\_\_\_ مَا عَمِلُوا خَاصِرًا وَلَا يَظْلِمُ رَبُّكَ أَحَدًا  
 (18: 47-49)

And (remember) the Day We cause the mountains to pass away (like clouds of dust), and you see the earth as a levelled plain, and we gathered them all together so we left none of them behind. (47) And they were set

before your Lord in (lines as) rows, (and Allah will say): "Now indeed, you have come to Us as We created you the first time. Nay, but you thought that We had appointed no meeting for you (with Us)." (48) And the Book (one's Record) was placed (in the right hand for a believer in the Oneness of Allah, and in the left hand for a disbeliever in the Oneness of Allah), and you see the Mujrimun (criminals, polytheists, sinners, etc.), fearful of that which is (recorded) therein. They say: "Woe to us! What sort of Book is this that leaves neither a small thing nor a big thing, but has recorded it with numbers!" And they found all that they did, placed before them, and your Lord treats no one with injustice.

(translated by Al-Hilali and Khan except some of the underlined rendered literally)

The above shift between present and past is aimed at keeping the receivers' attention and, thus, making them feel the horror of that day as they will be totally helpless. It is actually the context which governs the use of one tense rather than another, linking the structure to an intended function (70 141 :2006.

Therefore, the events relayed in the past tense for the sake of certainty are mixed with others in the present to provide vivid description. This 'historical' or 'narrative' present, somehow similar to its English counterpart, is used to involve the receiver in live scenes, mixing the past and the future.

The shift may take place between incidents of this life and the Hereafter, bringing them to the fore or sending them to the back (43 :1983 : ).

These past tense structures in the Noble Qur'an need careful consideration by the translator when dealing with the Hereafter. He/she has to try to eliminate any confusion for the target language reader that is due to the tense shift or to the gap between the past and future.

### **5. An overview of translating the Noble Qur'an**

Religious texts are believed to be more difficult to translate than other texts. They contain sacred ideas and beliefs and, thus, need to be translated "with a high degree of accuracy." Translators are expected "to stick more closely to the original" than in the case of other texts (Al-Khawalda 2004:217).

Among these, the Noble Qur'an is a unique text. It is believed by Muslims to be the greatest miracle in language, science, legislation, history, etc. It represents, according to rhetoricians, the highest standard of eloquence in the Arabic language, which has preserved the language for centuries (عبد الرحيم :1981 (252 245. The form and meaning of the holy scripture are amazingly intertwined in a particular relationship, as it is "understood to say what it says in an inseparable identity with how it says it and that its literary power belongs squarely with its religious intent" (Zebiri 2003:97).

It is argued that the Noble Qur'an is "inimitable", it "can only exist in its original language", and it "cannot be understood fully by non-Arabic speakers" (Al-Kharabsha and Al-Azzam 2008:1-2). Even those who have already produced translations of the Noble Qur'an, such as Arberry and Irving, conclude

that it is untranslatable "because each time one returns to the Arabic text, he finds new meanings and fresh ways of interpreting" (Al-Jabari 2008:18-19). It is "impossible to find any language which is able to find equivalent expressions and meanings to the lofty language of the Qur'an" (ibid).

Literal translation of the Qur'an is opposed by many. It is said to have "produced ponderous and laboured style in English", and thus created "a difficulty in readability and understanding" (Abdul-Raof 2001:181-2). They find that the wealth of the language of the holy book in terms of vocabulary, structures and metaphors – let alone the truth of content – makes it impossible to accept literal rendition ( 1998: 329-353).

In practice, a translator of the Qur'an is encountered by the basic question of equivalence, which has witnessed the most heated debate among scholars of translation. For instance, some deny the existence of complete equivalence because each linguistic unit contains "a set of non-transferable associations and connotations" (Bassnett 1991: 15). If there can never be absolute synonymy between words of the same language, how could equivalence be found between different languages (Bell 1993: 6)? If such equivalence cannot be achieved between texts produced by humans, it is impossible between God's word and its human translation. Therefore, the challenge for the translator is to try and achieve equivalence on certain levels or in certain aspects of the ST, depending on a number of factors, such as the type and context of the text.

Some specify a function for equivalence, such as relaying the "communicative effect...determined by the initial communicative situation and its components" (Sanchez-Ortiz 2000:96). Skopos theorists use the concept *commission* to refer to the purpose of the translation (Vermeer 1989: 184). However, most arguments over equivalence take a binary form. One example is the distinction between *formal* and *dynamic* equivalence. The former aims to allow the target text reader to understand "as much as possible of the form and content of the ST message." On the other hand, the latter aims to achieve "equivalent effect" between what the target text audience experiences and what the source text audience does (Nida 1964: 157-9). Another one calls the main translation methods *semantic* and *communicative*. The first is set at the author's level, in contrast with the second which is more likely to create what is also described as "equivalent effect" because it is set at the receiver's level (Newmark 1988: 48-9).

Upon the literature on the unique nature and grandeur of the language of the Noble Qur'an, in addition to the brief on the issue of equivalence, the paper adopts a dynamic, communicative approach. Bearing in mind that the topic under scrutiny is basically a structural rather than a cultural one, content must be assigned priority over form in a bid to reflect the force of the function of the original message.

## 6. The translation of past tense structures describing the Hereafter in the Noble Qur'an into English

As mentioned earlier, in both Arabic and English, there is a great deal of overlap between the past and present as well as between the future and present in terms of their daily use. However, the huge gap between the past and future has not been bridged. The case here not only constitutes a distinguished feature of the Noble Qur'an, but it is also atypical of the Arabic language. Bearing in mind the exceptional nature of the Qur'anic text, a translator needs to exert great efforts to reflect its literary power in order to affect the minds and hearts of receivers. As the form and meaning of the Noble Qur'an are closely associated, any rendition to another language would most probably lead to a sacrifice of either. In fact, the English language system seems to be unable to employ any past tense structure for conveying the future. Therefore, a translator is encountered by the challenge of choosing an alternative time construction which can put across the intended meaning of the certainty of the Hereafter actions.

## 7. Research method

To examine possible techniques which put across the effect of past structures referring to the Hereafter, a number of steps were taken. First, all the instances of past verbs that indicate the Hereafter were identified. Second, the following verbs were omitted from the list:

- (said), being a high frequency verb
- , , , (How bad! vs. How good!), being emotive rather than expressing actions or states
- (was/were), being semantically elusive
- , , (prepared, made, created), as they could sometimes express actual past in the future
- Verbs mentioned in conditional or other similar complex sentences, as they are in the subjective mode
- verbs mentioned within quotations, as they may refer to actual past in a previous life time
- any action which might have other past interpretations by some exegesis scholars.

Thus, the 136 verbs left indicate pure future actions but in a past form. Third, their renditions by Irving, Shakir and Pickthall were picked up in a bid to investigate each translator's favoured construction(s). Fourth, as each translator uses more than one form to translate them, percentages were calculated for every construction.

## 8. Results

Examination shows that the three translators have used five major techniques to convey the Hereafter verbs.

### 1. Past simple

The structure has been employed only 5 times by Irving and 2 times by Shakir, but never by Pickthall.



e.g. - "فَأَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا عَمِلُوا \_\_\_\_ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ" (16: 34)

The evil deeds which they had been doing assailed them, and what they had been sneering at swept in around them! (Irving)

The past simple represents a completely formal equivalent which does not reflect the effect of the original on the TL audience, as it unconsciously links the construction to past time events. Native speakers of English are not accustomed to use it to convey the future.

## 2. Present simple

This construction has been used 16 times by Irving, 25 times by Shakir and, interestingly, 76 times by Pickthall.

e.g. - "قَالَ اللَّهُ هَذَا يَوْمٌ يَنْفَعُ الصَّادِقِينَ صِدْقُهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا \_\_\_\_" (5: 119)

God said: "This is a day when their truthfulness will benefit the truthful: they shall have gardens through which rivers flow, to live in ever and ever." God approves of them, while they are pleased with Him; that will be the supreme Achievement. (Irving)

" يَوْمَ نُسَيِّرُ الْجِبَالَ وَتَرَى الْأَ \_\_\_\_ وَحَسْرَتَاهُمْ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا (47) \_\_\_\_ (48)

الْكِتَابُ فَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا فِيهِ وَيَقُولُونَ يَا وَيْلَتَنَا مَا لَ هَذَا الْكِتَابِ لَا يُغَادِرُ صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً إِلَّا أَحْصَاهَا \_\_\_\_ مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا وَلَا يَظُنُّ رَبُّكَ أَحَدًا" (18: 47-49)

And (bethink you of) the Day when We remove the hills and ye see the earth emerging, and We gather them together so as to leave not one of them behind. 48. And they are set before thy Lord in ranks (and it is said unto them): Now verily have ye come unto Us as We created you at the first. But ye thought that We had set no tryst for you. 49. And the Book is placed, and thou seest the guilty fearful of that which is therein, and they say: What Kind of a book is this that leaveth not a small thing nor a great thing but hath counted it! And they find all that they did confronting them, and thy Lord wrongeth no one. (Pickthall)

The present simple does not seem to accomplish the equivalent effect, since it serves as a scene-setter rather than an indicator of certainty.

## 3. Present perfect

This structure has been chosen 9 times by Irving, only once by Shakir and 15 times by Pickthall.

e.g. - "يَوْمَئِذٍ لَا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ إِلَّا مَنْ \_\_\_\_ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ \_\_\_\_ لَهُ قَوْلًا" (20: 109)

On that day intercession will only benefit someone whom the Mercygiving has permitted to enjoy it, and whose statement has pleased Him. (Irving)

"فَوْقَاهُ اللَّهُ شَرَّ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمِ وَلَقَاهُمْ \_\_\_\_ وَجَزَاهُمْ بِمَا صَبَرُوا جَنَّةً وَحَرِيرًا" (11) (76: 11-12)

Therefore Allah hath warded from them the evil of that day, and hath made them find brightness and joy; 12. And hath awarded them for all that they endured, a Garden and silk attire. (Pickthall)

It is noticeable here that Pickthall tends to use the old suffix 'eth' for the present simple 's' and the old 'hath' rather than 'have' or 'has', following an approach of translating the Noble Qur'an which makes it sound biblical.

The present perfect might be helpful in limited cases when the action precedes other ones in terms of time, but not in referring to a list of future actions.

#### 4. Future Simple

This construction has been frequently selected 95 times by Irving, in contrast with 29 times by Shakir and 39 times by Pickthall.

e.g. - "وَقِيلَ ادْعُوا شُرَكَاءَكُمْ فَدَعَوْهُمُ فَلَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُمْ \_\_\_\_\_ الْعَذَابَ لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَهْتَدُونَ" (28: 64)

Someone will say: "Appeal to your associates!" So they will appeal to them, yet they will not answer them. They will see the Torment-if only they had accepted guidance! (Irving)

\_\_\_\_\_ بَعْضُهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَمُوجُ فِي بَعْضٍ \_\_\_\_\_ فَجَمَعْنَاهُمْ (99) \_\_\_\_\_  
 "جَهَنَّمَ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَرْضًا" (18: 99-100)

And on that day We will leave a part of them in conflict with another part, and the trumpet will be blown, so We will gather them all together; And We will bring forth hell, exposed to view, on that day before the unbelievers. (Shakir)

The future simple conveys the real time when the actions are going to take place. The equivalence of function displays how certain the fact that humans are going to witness those future events.

#### 5. 'Shall'

This modal verb has been employed 10 times by Irving, 77 times by Shakir and just 4 times by Pickthall.

e.g. - "هُنَالِكَ تَبْلُو كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا أَسْلَفَتْ \_\_\_\_\_ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَوْلَاهُمْ الْحَقَّ \_\_\_\_\_ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ" (10: 30)

There shall every soul become acquainted with what it sent before, and they shall be brought back to Allah, their true Patron, and what they devised shall escape from them. (Shakir)

\_\_\_\_\_ وَأَيُّومَ يَقُولُ نَادُوا شُرَكَائِيَ الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ فَدَعَوْهُمُ \_\_\_\_\_ لَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُم مَّوْبِقًا (52) -  
 "أَنَّهُمْ مُّوَافِعُوهَا وَلَمْ يَجِدُوا عَنْهَا مَصْرِفَ" (18: 52-53)

And on the day when He shall say: Call on those whom you considered to be My associates. So they shall call on them, but they shall not answer them, and We will cause a separation between them. And the guilty shall see the fire, then they shall know that they are going to fall into it, and they shall not find a place to which to turn away from it. (Shakir)

'Shall' is traditionally believed to be a variation on the modal 'will' when the subject is *I* or *we*, especially in British English, conveying intention or 'intermediate volition' (Quirk et al. 1972: 99). However, in the American English, it is more common in formal, legal documents (ibid).

Thus, 'shall' seems to be another equivalent of the Arabic structure in question, due to its emphasis on function and formality, especially in American

English. The percentage of the use of each of the above strategies is shown in Table 1.

## 9. Conclusion

There are two main reasons to make the translation of the Noble Qur'an into English a very hard task. The first is the uniqueness of its language and the second is the remoteness between the SL and the TL, mainly in grammatical and cultural terms. They maximize the translator's responsibility for selecting the structures and vocabulary which achieves the utmost possible level of equivalence.

On the bases of the above data analysis, the following observations can be made:

First, the past simple, which is the direct equivalent of the Arabic past verb, is ignored by the three translators in most cases. It seems to be unfit for the original function of certainty of future actions in the TL. Second, the present simple may be relevant for its 'historical' function; it is used to set a vivid scene for the listener or reader. However, it does not serve the purpose of future certainty. Although Pickthall has used it a lot to convey the future, it may actually be more appropriate for Qur'anic present tense verbs which describe the Hereafter, as they are believed to be scene-setters. Third, the present perfect could be a good choice only when an action has already preceded another one or has a direct effect on it. Fourth, the future simple and the modal 'shall' – which are favoured, respectively, by Irving and Shakir – are argued here to be excellent choices. The former represents a natural equivalent of the required function of certainty of Hereafter events. There is no doubt, for believers, that they will experience these events as soon as this life comes to an end and the Hereafter begins. The latter addresses the topic from another angle. Because it implies formality and loftiness and it gives biblical flavour, 'shall' could be communicatively successful in reflecting some of the grandeur of the Noble Qur'an. However, it is likely to have a more powerful effect on native speakers of American English than on speakers of British English.

Table 1. Techniques for translating past verbs in the Noble Qur'an which speak about the Hereafter

Verb form	Irving	Shakir	Pickthall
Past simple	5 (3.76%)	2 (1.47%)	0 (0%)
Present simple	16 (11.76%)	25 (18.32%)	76 (55.88%)
Present perfect	9 (6.61%)	1 (0.73%)	15 (11.02%)
Future simple 'will'	95 (69.85%)	29 (21.32%)	39 (28.67%)
'Shall'	10 (7.35%)	77 (56.61%)	4 (2.94%)
Others	1 (0.73%)	2 (1.47%)	2 (1.47%)

Mohammad Anwar Shafiq Al-Taher  
Department of Translation  
Zarqa University  
Jordan  
Email: [tahers1@yahoo.com](mailto:tahers1@yahoo.com)

## References

## References in English

- Abdul-Raof, Hussein.** (2001). *Qur'an Translation, Discourse, Texture and Exegesis*. Richmond: Curzon Press.
- Al-Hilali, Mohammad and Muhsin Khan.** (1998). *Noble Qur'an: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary*. (2007 ed.). Medina: King Fahd Complex.
- Al-Jabari, Raed.** (2008). *Reasons for the Possible Incomprehensibility of Some Verses of Three Translations of the Meaning of the Holy Quran into English*. MA Thesis. Salford: University of Salford.
- Al-Kharabsheh, Aladdin and Bakri Al-Azzam.** (2008). 'Translating the invisible in the Qur'an'. *Babel*, 54 (1): 1-18.
- Al-Khawalda, Mohammad.** (2004). 'The deterioration of the usage of 'kaana' in the Holy Quran via translation'. *Babel*, 50 (30): 215-229.
- Bassnett, Suzan.** (1991). *Translation Studies*. (revised ed.). London & New York: Routledge.
- Bell, Roger.** (1993). *Translation and Translating: Theory and Practice*. London: Longman.
- Irving, Thomas.** (1998). *The Qur'an*. (3rd ed.). Essex: Amana Trust Books.
- Jackson, Howard.** (1995). *Grammar and Meaning*. London: Longman.
- Newmark, Peter.** (1988). *A Textbook of Translation*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Nida, Eugene.** (1964). *Toward a Science of Translating: with Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating*. Leiden: Brill.
- Pickthall, Mohammad Marmaduke.** (2001). *The Glorious Qur'an*. New York: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an.
- Quirk, Randolph, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech and Jan Svartvik.** (1972). *A Grammar of contemporary English*. London: Longman.
- Sanchez-Ortiz, Maria.** (2000). 'Equivalence and adequacy in translation'. In Myrian Salama-Carr (ed.), *On Translating French Literature and Film II*, 89-97. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Shakir, Mohammad Habib.** (1999). *The Qur'an Translation*. (10th ed.). New York: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an Inc.
- Vermeer, Hans.** (1989). 'Skopos and commission in translational action'. In Andrew Chesterman (ed), *Readings in Translation Theory*, 173-187. Finland: Loimann Kirjapaino Oy.
- Zebiri, Kate.** (2003). 'Towards a rhetorical criticism of the Qur'an'. *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 5 (2): 95-120.

## References in Arabic

- القرآن الكريم.  
ابن عاشور، محمد الطاهر بن محمد. (1948). *التحرير والتنوير*. 1. : الدار التونسية للنشر.

1. (2004). صفوة الآثار والمفاهيم من تفسير القرآن العظيم. الرياض: ر والتوزيع.
- الرازي، فخر الدين محمد بن عمر. (1420هـ). مفاتيح الغيب (التفسير الكبير). 3. بيروت: دار إحياء التراث العربي.
1. (1998). ترجمة القرآن وأثرها في معانيه. بيروت: دار إحياء التراث العربي.
3. (1407هـ).
- بيروت: دار إحياء التراث العربي.
- عبد الرحمن، مروان محمد سعيد. (2006). دراسات أسلوبية في سورة الكهف. رسالة ماجستير. جامعة النجاح الوطنية.
- عبد الرحيم، عبد الجليل. (1981). لغة القرآن الكريم. 1. مكتبة الرسالة الحديثة.
- القدومي، سامي وديع عبد. (2003). التفسير البياني لما في سورة النحل من دقائق المعاني. 1. القاهرة: دار إحياء التراث العربي.
- قطب، سيد. (1983). مشاهد القيامة في القرآن. 1. القاهرة: دار إحياء التراث العربي.
- الهوري الشافعي، محمد الأمين. (2001). حدائق الروح والريحان في روابي علوم القرآن. 1. بيروت: دار إحياء التراث العربي.