Rendering Foregrounding as a Marked Structure in Four Persian Translations of the Holy Qur'ān

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ABSTRACT

Theme/rheme structure plays a crucial role in conveying meaning and facilitating effective communication and comprehension. Moreover, foregrounding is an issue that has attracted much attention from researchers and theorists. Several studies have investigated the translation of marked structures of the Holy Qur'ān into different languages from various perspectives, such as semantics or stylistics, but few have focused on foregrounding in English translations by Iranian translators of the Qur'ān. The present study aimed to examine the challenges that Iranian translators encountered in their renditions. To this end, English equivalents of eighteen Ayahs featuring foregrounding were extracted from four English translations by Iranian translators and the translators' strategies in rendering foregrounding cases were analyzed. The findings revealed that the Iranian translators were inconsistent in their renditions but performed better in cases where marked structures were less complex and aligned with the normative structure of English prose. The translators faced the most difficulties in rendering specification and emphasis, which are two main categories of foregrounding. Interestingly, the translators who had native-like proficiency in English outperformed their peers in rendering foregrounding into English.

1. Introduction

Languages differ in their word order norms and conventions. This difference affects their various systems of foregrounding and backgrounding, which result in differences in styles, meanings and implications. This issue is especially critical when dealing with the translation of Holy texts due to their sensitivity and sacredness. Several studies have investigated the translation of the marked structures of the Holy Qur'ān into different languages from various perspectives, such as semantics or stylistics, but a few have focused on the translation of foregrounding as marked word order in English translations by Iranian translators of the Qur'ān.

The present study aims to fill this gap and examine the challenges that Iranian translators encountered in their renditions. This study will have implications for Qur'ān translators, Qur'ān translation teachers, and critics to become more familiar with the delicate aspects of recreating Qur'ānic marked structures in English. To this end, the author seeks to answer the following research questions:

- How successful have Iranian translators been compared to non-Iranian translators in rendering Qur'ānic foregrounding into English?

- What foregrounding subcategories have posed the most difficulties to Iranian translators?

1. Review of Literature

1.1 Marked Structures

Theme/rheme structure is essential for coordinating meaning and facilitating effective communication and comprehension (Halliday, 1994). The element placed in the initial part of the sentence influences the recipient's perception of the subsequent elements of the speech because it establishes the first context for the following words. Theme-rheme structure is a field that has received much attention from researchers and theorists. The main assumption is that sentences consist of themes, which are context-free messages, and rhemes, which are context-bound messages. Since rhemes are the parts that advance the text, their role in developing meaning is prominent. As Halliday (2004) states, theme is the point of departure in developing meaning. When theme coincides with the subject of the sentence, it is often referred to as unmarked, and when it does not coincide with the subject, it is considered as marked. Thematization is one of the issues discussed in text analysis. Text analysis examines texts from various perspectives, such as text characteristics and gestures. Thematization refers to the selection of themes by the text producer during text development. Given the significant role of theme-rheme structures in producing cohesive texts, the importance of thematicity in translation should also be emphasized. This means that scholars should be familiar with themes and their various types, and should understand how translators deal with themes when translating. Any intentional and illogical alteration of thematic structures can jeopardize the transfer of the author's intended meaning to the readers, as thematic structures are formed and developed differently in different languages (Halliday, 2004).

Linguistically speaking, markedness refers to the quality of being noticeable as unusual or different from normal patterns. In the binary of marked/unmarked, one of the two opposite concepts is considered the primary one, while the other is considered subsidiary. The primary form, which is easily recognized, is considered unmarked, while the second form is marked

(Andersen, 1989). In other words, markedness arises from comparing a normal linguistic form to one or several abnormal ones. In linguistics, structures can be marked in various phonological, structural, and semantic aspects, and can be categorized as either marked or unmarked, such as competent vs. incompetent. Markedness can be solely semantic or can also be seen morphological (Battistella, 1996).

1.2 *Markedness in English and Arabic*

In English, word order is relatively fixed and the meaning of the sentence largely depends on the order of words. However, in Arabic, word order is more flexible due to the complexity and diversity of the inflection system in Arabic. Bearing this difference in mind, the present study will examine the changes in word order, one important aspect of which is foregrounding of words or phrases to an initial position in sentences. This change is often referred to as foregrounding and backgrounding in both Arabic and English. In English, this phenomenon is classified into two main categories: deviation and repetition (Leech, 1966, pp. 145-47).

According to the Prague School of Linguistics, violating word order leads to breaking language conventions, either structurally or conceptually, and sometimes breaking the rules of language usage. Foregrounding is a linguistic phenomenon that poses difficulties for translators. Word order and foregrounding are closely related to cohesion in a text, and linguistic systems such as Arabic and English, which are very different in nature, will present many challenges to translators.

1.3 *Markedness in the Holy Qur'ān and the Translations*

Various aspects of markedness in Qur'ān translation have been addressed by researchers. For instance, Abumahfouz and Al-Shboul (2020) studied semantic markedness in translations of the Qur'ān from a linguistic perspective. On the other hand, Abu-Serie Hussein (2021) explored collocational markedness in translations of the Qur'ān. As the present study is focused on the translation of foregrounding as marked word order, the related literature on the same topic is reviewed in this section.

Elimam (2013) analyzed the marked word order in the Qur'ān and its English translations to explore the patterns used in translations and the motives behind translators' choices. His findings revealed that translators had relatively preferred unmarked word order over marked word order. These results indicate the target-oriented approach of the Qur'ān translators.

In a similar study, Elimam (2020) conducted a qualitative and quantitative inquiry to find variations in translating word orders of the Holy Qur'ān. His findings revealed that the translators had noticed marked word orders and their significance/application, but had used different choices in rendering them. In fact, they had not taken a consistent course of action. They had recreated the source word order in some cases and had ignored them in some other cases for no apparent reason.

In a study specifically focused on the translation of foregrounding, Abdul Aziz (2013) assessed the quality of rendering foregrounding and deferment in English translations of the Qur'ān. His findings revealed the various problems that translators had faced. At the level of register, translators did not adhere to the source but at the level of genre, all translators imitated the rhetorical structure of the Qur'ān. Generally, translators opted for a literal and

overt translation in rendering Qur'ānic meanings. Many studies have been conducted on the topic in Iran.

Kazemi Najafabadi (2021) studied the alteration of marked structures of the Holy Qur'ān during translation into Persian. Her findings revealed that due to the different grammatical structures of source and target languages, marked structures of the Qur'ān could not be fully recreated in Persian and had been often rendered into Persian unmarked structures.

Mohammadpour and Nikoopour (2017) studied topicalization in three English translations of the Qur'ān. Based on their obtained results, all of the translators had preserved topicalization in their renditions, and unit shift and literal translation were the most applied techniques used by the translators.

Finally, Mansoori (2012) studied markedness in Persian translation of the Holy Qur'ān. His findings revealed that some unmarked structures in Arabic were different from their corresponding unmarked structures in Persian in terms of the use of verbs. Many translators had neglected this difference in their works and had rendered unmarked Arabic structures into marked Persian ones which was a type of translation error. Review of the related literature shows that the Qur'ān translators have taken various approaches to rendering foregrounding. However, Iranian researchers have considered the structural difference among Persian, English, and Arabic as a challenge to the Qur'ān translators in recognizing and rendering foregrounded structures. This study will look into the specific areas where Iranian translators lag behind their non-Iranian peers in recreating Qur'ānic foregrounding in English.

3. Research methodology

As previously mentioned, the primary objective of this study is to investigate the choices made by translators when rendering Qur'ānic foregrounding, specifically marked word order, into English. This research adopts a corpus-based qualitative approach and focuses on four English translations of the Holy Qur'ān carried out by Iranian translators: Ali Salami (2016), Seyyed Hossein Nasr (2015), Laleh Bakhtiar (2009), and Tahereh Safarzadeh (2001). The selection of these translations was based on the reputation of their translators and place of publication, with Safarzadeh and Salami's translations published in Iran, while the other two were published in the USA. Additionally, apart from Safarzadeh's translation, the selected translations have received limited attention in Iran.

This study builds upon pioneering research conducted by Elimam (2013), who examined the marked word order in the Qur'ān and its English translations to explore the translation patterns employed and the underlying motivations behind translators' choices. The present study specifically focuses on the 18 verses explored by Elimam, which prominently feature marked word order. Elimam categorized these verses into three main categories based on the types of foregrounding utilized: specification, restriction, and emphasis. According to Al-Baydawi (quoted by Elimam, 2013), specification, also referred to as special attachment or reference, involves highlighting a specific characteristic of a phenomenon rather than its entirety. Generally, a phenomenon can be defined by its similarities or differences from other phenomena. In the latter case, specification is employed. By utilizing specification, the speaker or writer emphasizes a particular aspect of an entity as significant without negating its other features. Conversely, if the speaker intends to deny certain features, they would employ restriction instead of specification.

The following section will delve into the concept of restriction, which is closely related to specification. While specification involves highlighting a particular aspect of a phenomenon, restriction encompasses negation and emphasis. It emphasizes what is explicitly mentioned or intended, in contrast to what is left unsaid or implied. In other words, when a component is foregrounded to convey restriction, it becomes the focal point of the sentence, while simultaneously negating the other component. Furthermore, emphasis shares similarities with restriction as it also entails both negation and emphasis. Emphasis serves to underscore the significance of a certain element over others (Elimam, 2013).

To analyze the presence of foregrounding in the Holy Qur'ān, the English equivalents of the 18 Ayahs examined by Elimam were extracted from four different translation versions. The translators' choices in rendering the marked structures were analyzed and discussed to determine whether the source's foregrounding instances were adequately conveyed in the translations. The selection of these specific Ayahs was made using purposive sampling, as Elimam (2013) conducted an extensive study that identified apparent cases of foregrounding in the Holy Qur'ān. His selection methodology was based on the works of renowned Qur'ānic scholars such as Zamakhshari and Al-Baydawi, who were instrumental in recognizing instances of foregrounding in the Qur'ān. Hence, the same Ayahs were chosen for the present study.

It is important to note that while the present study and Elimam's (2013) research both examine the performance of Qur'ān translators in conveying various subcategories of Qur'ānic foregrounding from Arabic into English, their approaches differ. Therefore, the selection of the same Ayahs in this research allows for a comparison of the results obtained in this study with those reported by Elimam, enabling the identification of specific areas that have presented significant challenges to Iranian translators.

2. Results

4.1 Specification and its Translations

Some examples of foregrounding and their English translations are discussed in this section.

Surat Al-Fatihah (1: 1)

<div dir="rtl">بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم</div>

Salami: (1) **In the Name of God**, the Giver of Grace, the Master of Mercy

Nasr: **In the Name of God**, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Bakhtiar: **In the Name of YHWH**, The Merciful, The Compassionate

Safarzadeh: **In the Name of Allah**, The Merciful, The Beneficent

Zamakhshari (quoted by Elimam, 2013) believes that "In the Name of Allah" has the role of object and is foregrounded to the beginning of the sentence before an ellipted "I read" or "I recite". Al-Rahman and Al-Rahim are qualifiers used to describe Allah. The meaning implied in this foregrounded structure is that only Allah is worthy of being worshipped.

As observed above, all four translations demonstrate adherence to the word order of the original text. None of the four translators have made any direct or indirect reference to the foregrounding and ellipsis present in the Ayah, nor have they included the ellipted words within parentheses. However, it is noteworthy that none of the translators have utilized a full stop (.) or semicolon (;) at the end of the first clause. This suggests that the translators were somehow aware of the ellipted structure of "بسم الله". These findings align with those reported by Elimam in his analysis of ten English translations by non-Iranian translators, where the translators also overlooked the foregrounding in the Arabic Ayah.

Surat Yusuf (12:67)

وَقَالَ يَٰبَنِىَّ لَا تَدْخُلُواْ مِنْ بَابٍ وَٰحِدٍ وَٱدْخُلُواْ مِنْ أَبْوَٰبٍ مُّتَفَرِّقَةٍۖ وَمَآ أُغْنِى عَنكُم مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ مِن شَىْءٍۖ إِنِ ٱلْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِۖ **عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ**ۖ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ ٱلْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ

Salami: He said, "My sons, do not enter all by one door; enter by separate doors. But I cannot help you against the will of God. Judgment rests with God alone. In Him have I put my trust and those who have faith in Him, put their trust in Him."

Nasr: And he said, "O my sons! Enter not by one gate, but enter by separate gates. Yet, I cannot avail you aught against God. Judgment belongs to God alone. I trust in Him; and let those who trust, trust in Him."

Bakhtiar: And he said: O my sons! Enter not by one door, but enter by different doors. I will not avail you against God in anything. Truly, the determination is but with God. In Him I put my trust. And in Him put their trust the ones who put their trust.

Safarzadeh: And he added: "Oh, my sons! Do not enter by one gate. Yet my admonition does not avail you against Allah's Will; The command belongs to none but Allah: In Allah I have put my trust AND Let all the believers put their trust in Allah."

According to Al-Baydawi (quoted by Elimam, 2013), the word "عليه" (in Him) in the final two clauses is emphasized by being placed before the verbs denoting trust and faith. This emphasis suggests that believers should specifically place their trust in Allah.

From the analysis above, it is evident that only one of the translators (Bakhtiar) has followed the distinct word order and placed the word "Allah" at the beginning of the sentence. The other translators have used a more common sentence structure, either due to a lack of awareness regarding the significance of the emphasis or because they preferred a conventional word order. These findings differ from what Elimam reported about the 10 non-Iranian translators, as nearly all of them (with the exception of one) adhered to the unique structure of the original text.

Surat Al-Muddaththir (74: 1-3)

وَرَبَّكَ **فَكَبِّرْ** قُمْ فَأَنذِرْ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلْمُدَّثِّرُ

Salami: (1) O you [Prophet] wrapped in cloak! (2) Arise and give warning! (3) **And glorify your Lord!**

Nasr: (1) O thou who art covered, (2) arise and warn! (3) **Thy Lord magnify!**

Bakhtiar: O thou, the one who wrapped himself in a cloak! Stand up and warn! **And magnify thy Lord.**

Safarzadeh: O, you who have wrapped yourself in a cloak! Arise and proclaim the warning publicity! **And Celebrate the Greatness of your Creator!**

Razi and Zamakhshari posit that in Ayah 3, the word "ربک" (your Lord) has been deliberately emphasized by being placed before "فکبر" (magnify). This intentional foregrounding, a marked linguistic structure, signifies the magnificence of Allah as the sole entity deserving of reverence.

Upon close examination, it is evident that Nasr stands as the solitary translator who has faithfully adhered to the marked word order of the original text while preserving the stylistic nuances of the source. Conversely, the other translators have employed an unmarked word order, thereby disregarding or overlooking the implied significance derived from the foregrounding in the Ayah. These observations align with the findings reported by Elimam (2013) regarding non-Iranian translators, wherein only 30% out of the sample of 10 translators adhered to the unmarked word order of this particular Ayah.

Surat At-Taghabun (64:1)

يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِى ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَمَا فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ ۖ لَهُ ٱلْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ ٱلْحَمْدُ ۖ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Salami: All that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth glorifies God. **All rule and all praise belong to God** and He has power over all beings.

Nasr: Whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth glorifies God. **His is the Sovereignty and His is the praise**, and He is Powerful over all things.

Bakhtiar: Whatever is in the heavens glorifies God and whatever is in and on the earth. **His is the dominion and to Him belongs all the praise**. And He is Powerful over everything.

Safarzadeh: all creatures in the heavens and on The earth Celebrate Allah's Attributes and His Absolute Purity. To Him belongs the Dominion of the heavens And the earth and what is between Them; **thanksgiving and adoration of the worshippers is due only to Him**. Verily, Allah is powerful over all the things.

According to Baydawi and Zamakhshari (as cited by Elimam, 2013), the middle section of the above Ayah demonstrates two instances of foregrounding: "له" preceding the subject "الملک" and "له" preceding "الحمد". This particular form of foregrounding, akin to previous occurrences, signifies that sovereignty and praise exclusively belong to Allah and no one else.

With the exception of Salami, who disregarded the specification and foregrounding, the remaining three translators appear to have recognized the significance of foregrounding and consequently rendered the Ayah into a marked sentence structure. These findings provide support for the outcomes documented by Elimam, who observed that all non-Iranian translators, with only two exceptions (80%), reproduced the marked structure of the original text in English.

Surat An-Nur (24: 48-49)

وَإِذَا دُعُوٓاْ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِۦ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُم مُّعْرِضُونَ

وَإِن يَكُن لَّهُمُ ٱلْحَقُّ يَأْتُوٓاْ إِلَيْهِ مُذْعِنِينَ

Salami: And when they are called to God and His Messenger to judge between them, lo, a party of them turn away. But if they are in the right, **they will come to him submissively.**

Nasr: And when they are called to God and His Messenger, that He may judge between them, behold, a group of them turn away. But if the right is theirs, **they come unto Him submissively.**

Bakhtiar: And when they were called to God and His Messenger to give judgment among them, then, a group of people among them are ones who turn aside. But if they would be in the right, **they would approach him as ones who are yielding.**

Safarzadeh: and when they are enjoined to turn to Allah and come to the messenger for judging between them, a party of them Turn away in Rebellion. And if the messenger's judgment Which is based on truth by chance Concludes to their benefit **they turn to Him with total submission**;

Zamakhshari, as quoted by Elimam (2013), extensively discusses the distinctive structure of the final clause in Ayah 48. Specifically, "الیه" (to him) has been emphasized and placed before the adverb "مُذْعِنِينَ" (submissive). This emphasis signifies that people solely turn to the messenger and no one else.

Upon reviewing the four translations, it is evident that all translators have maintained the same word order as the source text. However, their choice does not emphasize the same aspect in English and fails to capture the markedness conveyed in the original text. These findings align with the research conducted by Elimam (2013), who observed that none of the non-Iranian translators accurately represented the marked structure of the original text in their English versions.

Surat Al-Muzzammil (73:20)

... ۚ عَلِمَ أَن لَّن تُحْصُوهُ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ ... ۚ **وَٱللَّهُ يُقَدِّرُ** ٱلَّيْلَ وَٱلنَّهَارَ

Salami: ….. **God measures** the night and the day. He knows that you cannot calculate it and He turns to you mercifully……….

Nasr: ….. **God measures** out the night and the day. He knows that you will not keep count of it and has relented unto you ………

Bakhtiar: ….. **God ordains** the nighttime and the daytime. He knew that you would not be able to keep count of it, so He turned towards you in forgiveness…

Safarzadeh: **Allah is able to keep the due measure for** the night and the day knowing that you can never keep the exact measure of time

According to Razi and Zamakhshari (as cited by Elimam, 2013), the subject "الله" has been emphasized in the aforementioned structure, causing the original unmarked verbal sentence structure to become a marked nominal structure.

Upon examining the four translations of the Ayah, it becomes evident that all translators have remained faithful to the original structure. However, paradoxically, their renditions lack markedness. This can be attributed to the disparity between the marked word order in Arabic and English, a factor overlooked by all translators. Elimam (2013) further noted that none of the ten non-Iranian translators managed to capture the markedness of the source text in their English translations.

4.2 Restriction and its Translations

Some examples of restriction and their English translations are discussed in this section:

Surat Hud (11:88)

<div dir="rtl">

..... وَمَا تَوْفِيقِيَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ ۚ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ

</div>

Salami: …… I cannot succeed without the help of God. **In Him do I trust and to Him I turn.**

Nasr: …. but my success lies with God alone. **In Him do I trust and unto Him do I turn.**

Bakhtiar: And my success is not but from God. **In Him I put my trust and to Him I am penitent.**

Safarzadeh: ….. and any achievement in my Mission depends on Allah's aid: **In Allah I trust only; and to Him alone I turn.**

According to Baydawi and Razi (as cited by Elimam, 2013), the Ayah mentioned above emphasizes the words "عليه" and "اليه" by placing them before the verbs "توكلت" and "انيب" respectively. This marked structure signifies that only Allah is deserving of reliance and turning to.

Upon examining the aforementioned translations, it becomes evident that all translators have recognized the focal point of the Ayah as Allah and have translated the marked sentence structure from the original text into a marked word order in English to emphasize the intended meaning. This approach differs from what Elimam (2013) reported regarding non-Iranian translators. Only two of them replicated the markedness of the source structure (20%), while the others utilized an unmarked word order.

Surat Al-'Ankabut (15:23)

<div dir="rtl">

وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ نُحْيِ وَنُمِيتُ وَنَحْنُ الْوَارِثُونَ

</div>

Salami: **It is We who give life and death** and it is We who inherit things.

Nasr: Surely **it is We Who give life and cause death**, and We are the Inheritor.

Bakhtiar: And, truly, **it is We Who give life and cause to die** and We are the ones who inherit.

Safarzadeh: And verily, **It is We Who give life and Who cause death** and We are The Inheritor of all.

According to Baydawi (quoted by Elimam, 2013), this word order in the Ayah illustrates the use of an extra independent pronoun نحن before the verbs نحيى and نميت. This foregrounding which is a case of restriction implies the ability of Allah as the only power who can give birth and cause death.

All of the translators have adhered to the word order of the original and have correctly emphasized the absolute power of Allah in determining life and death. Elimam (2013) reported the same about the ten non-Iranian translators. Similarly, they all had rendered the source marked structure into equivalent marked structures in English.

Surat An-Nahl (16:10)

هو ٱلَّذِىٓ أَنزَلَ مِنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ مَآءً ۖ لَّكُم مِّنْهُ شَرَابٌ وَمِنْهُ شَجَرٌ فِيهِ تُسِيمُونَ

Salami: He it is who sends down to you **from the sky water of which you drink; and of which, the trees grow** which you use to feed your cattle.

Nasr: He it is Who sends down water from the sky, **from which you have drink, and from which comes forth vegetation** wherewith you pasture your cattle.

Bakhtiar: It is He Who caused water to descend from heaven **for you to drink from it and from it, trees wherein you pasture your herds.**

Safarzadeh: Allah is the One Who sends down rain from the sky **which is your drinking water and also you grow by it grasslands** in which you pasture your cattle,

Baydawi and Razi (quoted by Elimam, 2013) have explained that the particle "منه" functions as a partitive marker and is used before the nouns "شراب" (drink) and "شجر" (trees). This emphasis on restriction indicates the significance of water as a divine blessing and emphasizes that humans can only drink and cultivate through the water provided by Allah from the sky.

While the marked word order can be easily translated into English, only Salami and Nasr have followed the marked structure and emphasized restriction in their translations. Bakhtiar has highlighted the second instance of restriction (and from it, trees...). On the other hand, Safarzadeh has transformed the original marked structure into an unmarked subordinate clause (which is your drinking water). It appears that Bakhtiar and Safarzadeh have either overlooked or disregarded the intended emphasis on restriction. Similar findings were reported by Elimam (2013) regarding the performance of ten non-Iranian translators. He found that six out of ten translators replicated the marked structure in English (60%). Therefore, approximately half of both Iranian and non-Iranian translators failed to convey the marked word order in their translations.

Surat Fatir (35:28)

وَمِنَ ٱلنَّاسِ وَٱلدَّوَابِّ وَٱلْأَنْعَـٰمِ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَٰنُهُ كَذَٰلِكَ ۗ إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى ٱللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ٱلْعُلَمَـٰٓؤُا۟ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ

Salami: and people, animals and cattle of diverse hues. Even so, **only those of His servants who are wise are mindful of God** who is Most Mighty, Most Forgiving.

Nasr: And of mankind, beasts, and cattle there are, likewise, those of diverse colors. [Yet] **only those among His servants who know fear God**. Truly God is Mighty, Forgiving.

Bakhtiar: and of humanity and moving creatures and flocks, thus, they are likewise of hues, ones at variance. **Only His servants who dread God are knowing.** Truly, God is Almighty, Forgiving.

Safarzadeh: And also men and beasts and cattle are of various colors. The truth remains that among Allah's worshippers **only the believing learned men are those who fear the disobeying Allah**. Verily, Allah is the Forgiving Invincible Mighty [Notwithstanding His Might He forgives men who do wrong out of ignorance.]

According to Razi, as quoted by Elimam in 2013, the word order in the aforementioned Ayah indicates that the word "ﷲ" (Allah) has been emphasized by being placed before the subject "علما" (knowledgeable). This distinctive word order serves as a restriction, suggesting that only those who possess knowledge of Allah are truly fearful of Him. Hence, knowledge acts as a prerequisite for experiencing fear towards Allah.

Upon examining the four translations, it becomes apparent that only Bakhtiar has adhered to the distinctive word order of the original text, placing Allah before knowing. The remaining translators have opted for a more conventional sentence structure in English, disregarding or overlooking the significance of the restriction present in the Arabic text. Based on the information provided by Elimam, more than half of the non-Iranian translators (6 out of 10 translators) have successfully conveyed the markedness of the Arabic Ayah in their English renderings. In comparison, they have surpassed their Iranian counterparts in accurately reproducing the marked word order of the Ayah.

Surat Ghafir (40:28)

وَقَالَ رَجُلٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ مِّنْ ءَالِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَكْتُمُ إِيمَـٰنَهُ أَتَقْتُلُونَ رَجُلًا أَن يَقُولَ رَبِّيَ ٱللَّهُ...

Salami: Then, a believing man among the people of Pharaoh, who had concealed his faith, said, "Will you kill a man for saying: '**My Lord is God**'

Nasr: And a believing man from the House of Pharaoh who was concealing his belief said, "Will you kill a man for saying, '**My Lord is God**,'

Bakhtiar: Said a believing man of the family of Pharaoh, who keeps back his belief: Would you kill a man because he says: **My Lord is God**,

Safarzadeh: meanwhile a believing man of Firown's family who used to hide his Faith out of fear intervened saying: "will you slay a man with the charge that he says: "**My Creator is Allah**, the One."

Razi and Zamakhshari (as cited by Elimam, 2013) have provided an explanation regarding the positioning of the predicate "ربّى" before "ﷲ". This particular word order

signifies a marked construction, indicating that the speaker acknowledges no deity other than Allah.

A closer examination of the four translations reveals that all translators have adhered to the grammatical word order of the original Arabic text. However, they have encountered difficulties in conveying the foregrounding effect in English due to disparities between the predicate-subject order in Arabic and English. Consequently, their renditions fail to convey the inherent restriction present in the source text. These findings align with Elimam's findings (2013) concerning non-Iranian translators, where only one of them successfully captured the foregrounding and markedness of the source text when translating into English.

5.3 Emphasis and its Translations

Some examples of foregrounding as emphasis in the Holy Qur'ān and their English translations are discussed below.

Surat Al-Baqarah (2:269)

يُوتِى ٱلْحِكْمَةَ مَن يَشَآءُ ۚ وَمَن يُؤْتَ ٱلْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِىَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا ۗ وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّآ أُوْلُواْ ٱلْأَلْبَبِ

Salami: **God gives wisdom to whom He will**; and he who is given wisdom is given abundant good, but none will remember except those endowed with perception.

Nasr: **He grants wisdom to whomsoever He will.** And whosoever is granted wisdom has been granted much good. Yet none remember save the possessors of intellect.

Bakhtiar: **He gives wisdom to whom He wills**. And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.

Safarzadeh: **[So] Allah grants [the blessing of] wisdom to whomsoever He Wills**. Indeed he who has been granted wisdom, has been granted blessing in abundance, but none is reminded, save those men of wisdom.

According to Baydawi (as cited by Elimam, 2013), it is believed that the object "الحكمه" has been highlighted and moved to a position preceding the verb "من يشاء". This alteration in the unmarked word order appears to be intended to emphasize knowledge.

An examination of the four English translations reveals that all translators have attempted to maintain the precise structure and word order of the original text. However, their choices have not resulted in a marked structure, as seen in the original text. Once again, this can be attributed to the differing ways in which markedness is expressed in Arabic and English.

Surat Al-Ikhlas (112:4)

وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُۥ كُفُوًا أَحَدُۢ

Salami: nor is there **anyone comparable to Him**."

Nasr: And **none is like unto Him**."

Bakhtiar: and there be **not anything comparable with Him**.

Safarzadeh: And there is **no equal, no match and no Mate for Allāh**, the Almighty."

According to Razi and Zamakhshari (cited in Elimam, 2013), the phrase "له" has been positioned before "كفوا" to emphasize the restriction of Uniqueness to Allah. This use of a marked structure serves to emphasize this point.

An examination of the four English translations reveals that all four translators have opted for an unmarked sentence structure, thereby failing to effectively convey the emphasis placed on Allah's uniqueness in the Qur'ān. This choice may be attributed to either the oversight of the translators or their preference for an unmarked English structure. These findings align with the observations made by Elimam (2013), who reported that only two out of the ten non-Iranian translators (20%) preserved the markedness of the original structure in their translations.

Surat Al-Baqarah (2:249)

فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِالْجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُم بِنَهَرٍ فَمَن شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّى وَمَن لَّمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّ إِلَّا مَنِ اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِۦ

Salami: When Saul set out with his forces, he said, "God will test you with a river. He who drinks from it is not of mine. Yet, **whoever does not taste it is of mine except he who scoops up with his hand**."

Nasr: And when Saul set out with the hosts he said, "Truly God will try you with a stream, whosoever drinks from it is not of me, and **whosoever tastes not of it is of me me—save one who scoops out a handful.**"

Bakhtiar: So when Saul set forward with his army he said: Truly, God is One Who Tests you with a river. So whoever would drink of it, he is not of me, **and whoever tastes it not, truly, he is of me, but he who scoops up with a scooping of his hand.**

Safarzadeh: When Tālut set out with his army, he Said: "Verily, Allāh will try you by a Stream: Whoever [of you] drinks from It, then he is not of **me and whoever Does not drink, he is of me save he Who drinks a draught with a hollow Of his hand."**

Baydawi and Zamakhshari (cited by Elimam, 2013) have provided an explanation that the clause "وَمَن لَّمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّى" has been given prominence by being placed before the clause "إِلَّا مَنِ اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ". This phenomenon is commonly referred to as foregrounding for emphasis and results in a distinctive word order. This structure suggests that the primary directive and principle is to abstain from drinking.

Upon examining the aforementioned translations, it becomes evident that all four translators have adhered to the structure of the source text. However, their translations fail to capture the foregrounding and marked structure of the original due to the disparity between marked structures in Arabic and English. It appears that the translators have sacrificed the distinctive word order and its implications for an ordinary structure in English. These findings align with Elimam's report, which indicates that none of the non-Iranian translators have successfully recreated the marked structure of the Arabic texts in their translations.

Surat Al-A'raf (7:139)

إِنَّ هَٰؤُلَآءِ مُتَبَّرٌ مَّا هُمْ فِيهِ وَ بَٰطِلٌ مَّاكَانُوا۟ يَعْمَلُونَ

Salami: Surely, **the path they pursue is doomed and vain is what they were doing!**

Nasr: As for these, **what they practice shall perish, and vain is that which they used to do."**

Bakhtiar: Truly, **these are the ones who are ruined and falsehood is what they had been doing.**

Safarzadeh: [Mussa added:] "Verily**, these people will be destroyed for that which they are doing and what they have been doing is absurd."**

According to Baydawi, as quoted by Elimam (2013), the predicates "مُتَبَّرٌ" and "بَٰطِلٌ" have been emphasized and used before "مَّا هُمْ فِيهِ" and "مَّا كَانُوا۟ يَعْمَلُونَ" respectively. This emphasis and use of marked structures serve the purpose of drawing attention and issuing a warning, indicating that the actions of idol worshippers are destined to fail.

Analyzing the translations provided, it evident that Salami, Nasr, and Bakhtiar have emphasized the second predicate (بَٰطِلٌ), while rendering the first predicate (مُتَبَّرٌ) in unmarked structures. On the other hand, Safarzh has not emphasized either of the predicates. This reveals inconsistencies in the choices made by the four translators, both collectively and individually, suggesting a lack of awareness regarding the significant implications of the marked structures in the Ayah. Elimam (2013) also reported a similar trend among non-Iian translators, where only three out of ten (30%) recreated the second instance of emphasis while overlooking the first instance. The remaining translators either neglected or disregarded the marked structures present in the original text.

Surat Al-Hashr (59:2)

هُوَ ٱلَّذِىٓ أَخْرَجَ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ مِنْ أَهْلِ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ مِن دِيَٰرِهِمْ لِأَوَّلِ ٱلْحَشْرِ ۚ مَا ظَنَنتُمْ أَن يَخْرُجُوا۟ ۖ وَظَنُّوٓا۟ أَنَّهُم مَّانِعَتُهُمْ حُصُونُهُم مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ

Salami: It was God who caused those people of the Scripture1 who disbelieved to leave their homes into their first banishment. You did not think that they would go forth and they thought that **their fortifications would protect them against God**.

Nasr: He it is Who expelled those who disbelieve among the People of the Book from their homes at the first gathering. You did not think they would go forth, and they thought **their fortresses would protect them from God**.

Bakhtiar: It is He Who drove out those who were ungrateful—among the People of the Book—from their abodes at the first assembling. You thought that they would not go forth. And they thought that **they are ones who are secure in their fortresses from God**.

Safarzadeh: He is the One Who drove out the disbelievers of the people of the Book from their homeland at their first encounter [with the Muslims]; you did not think that you could expel them and also thought that **their strong fortresses would defend them against Allah's wrath**.

According to Baydawi and Zamakhshari (as cited by Elimam, 2013), the verb "مانعتهم" has been emphasized and employed as a predicate preceding the subject "حصونهم". This distinctive word order in the original text suggests that the unbelievers were confident in the protective power of their idols.

An examination of the four translations reveals that all translators, except Bakhtiar, have rendered the marked structure the original into an unmarked normal structure in English. Bakhtiar, on the other hand, has employed a structural shift by repositioning "secure" and "fortress" within a passive structure. In doing so, Bakhtiar has partially recreated the marked structure in her translation. These findings corroborate the conclusions presented by Elimam (2013), who also noted that none of the non-Iranian translators reflected the marked structure of the Arabic text in their English translations.

Surat Az-Zumar (39:2)

إِنَّآ أَنزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكَ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ بِٱلْحَقِّ فَٱعْبُدِ ٱللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَّهُ ٱلدِّينَ

Salami: Lo, it is We who revealed to you this Scripture in truth. **So worship God alone with utter devotion.**

Nasr: Indeed, We have sent down unto thee the Book in truth; **so worship God, devoting religion entirely to Him**.

Bakhtiar: Truly, We caused to descend to thee the Book with The Truth **so worship God as one who is sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him**.

Safarzadeh: Verily, We have sent this Book down to You [O, Messenger] from the source of Truth, **so worship Allah sincerely**.

According to Baydawi, as quoted by Elimam in 2013, the proposition "له" in the above Ayah has been emphasized and used as a predicate before "الدين" to highlight that devotion is specific to Allah. A review of the English translations reveals that Salami and Safarzadeh did not translate "له الدين" into English at all. On the other hand, Nasr and Bakhtiar used "له" as "to Him" at the end of the sentence. Therefore, none of the translators have accurately conveyed the marked structure of the Arabic Ayah and its implication in English. Elimam (2013) also noted that none of the non-Iranian translators maintained the marked structure of the original text in their translations.

Surat Al-Insan (76:26)

وَ مِنَ ٱلَّيْلِ فَٱسْجُدْ لَهُۥ وَسَبِّحْهُ لَيْلًا طَوِيلًا

Salami: Bow down before Him and **glorify Him all night long**!

Nasr: prostrate unto Him during the night, and **glorify Him by night at length**.

Bakhtiar: And during the night, prostrate thyself to Him **and glorify Him a lengthy part of the night**.

Safarzadeh: and **some part of the night be prostrating for Him** and Celebrate Allah's Attributes a longer part of the night [so that you may benefit from the blessings of the invocation and Allah's Remembrance]

Baydawi and Razi have provided an explanation regarding the positioning of the adverbial phrase "من الليل" at the forefront of the Ayah, preceding the imperative verb " فاسجد له". This deliberate word order highlights the significance of nighttime worship.

An examination of various translations reveals that Bakhtiar and Safarzadeh have faithfully maintained the original word order, commencing the sentence with the mention of night. Conversely, Salami and Nasr have placed the adverbial phrase at the end of the sentence, disregarding or overlooking the emphasis conveyed through the foregrounding and marked structure of the source text. A similar pattern was observed by Elimam (2013) in the translations of non-Iranian translators, where half of them (50%) preserved the marked structure of the Arabic Ayah in their English renditions.

3. Discussion

The current study aimed to examine the performance of Iranian translators of the Qurʾān in accurately conveying foregrounding as marked structures of Ayahs into English. Table 1 presents a comparison of the translators' choices in translating each Ayah, taking into account their peers as well as the average performance of non-Iranian translators, as reported by Elimam (2013).

Table 1. Translators' performance in rendering foregrounding of the original

Ayah	Salami	Nasr	Bakhtiar	Safarzadeh	Iranian Translators Performance (%)	Non-Iranian Translators Performance (%)
1:1	-	-	-	-	0%	0%
12:67	-	-	+	-	25%	90%
74:3	-	+	-	-	25%	30%
46:1	-	+	+	+	75%	80%
24:48	-	-	-	-	0%	0%
73:20	-	-	-	-	0%	0%
11:88	+	+	+	+	100%	80%
15:23	+	+	+	+	100%	100%
16:10	+	+	-	-	50%	60%
35:28	-	-	+	-	25%	60%
40:28	-	-	-	-	0%	10%
2:269	-	-	-	-	0%	0%
112:4	-	-	-	-	0%	20%
2:249	-	-	-	-	0%	0%
7:139	+	+	+	-	75%	30%
59:2	-	-	+	-	25%	0%
39:2	-	-	-	-	0%	0%
76:26	-	-	+	+	50%	50%

As shown in Table 1, Iranian and non-Iranian translators have not been consistent in their approach to rendering marked structures into English. In six cases (Ayahs 1:1, 24:48, 73:20, 2:267, 2:249, and 39:2), none of the Iranian or non-Iranian translators have rendered foregrounding into English. Analysis of these Ayahs reveals that the foregrounding in them was either too subtle to be noticed by translators (e.g., in 1:1) or their marked structure equivalent in English was not natural and straightforward (e.g., in 73:20). The data in the above table also indicate that the performance of Iranian translators in rendering foregrounding of two Ayahs significantly falls behind the performance of their non-Iranian peers (Ayahs 12:67 and 35:28). Analysis of the two Ayahs shows that the marked structures used in these Ayahs could be easily rendered into English.

Therefore, we might assume that Iranian translators used unmarked structures based on their personal preferences or for stylistic reasons. The obtained data can also be analyzed based on various categories of foregrounding. The translators' performance in rendering various categories are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Translators' performance in rendering various categories of foregrounding

Marked structure category	Specification	Restriction	Emphasis
Salami Performance (%)	0%	60%	14%
Nasr Performance (%)	33%	60%	14%
Bakhtiar Performance (%)	33%	60%	43%
Safarzadeh Performance (%)	17%	40%	14%
Iranian Translators' Performance (%)	21%	55%	21%
Non-Iranian Translators' Performance (%)	33%	62%	14%

As shown in Table 2, both Iranian and non-Iranian translators have performed well in rendering the second category of foregrounding (restriction) but they have not performed equally well in rendering the other two categories. Therefore, the Qur'ān translators and translation teachers should be more attentive to specification and emphasis as the more challenging subcategories of foregrounding. Another issue to be addressed is the comparison of the performance of four Iranian translators. In Table 3, the translators' performance is presented.

Table 3. The Iranian translators' performance in rendering Qur'ānic foregrounding into English

Translator	Salami	Nasr	Bakhtiar	Safarzadeh
Performance	22%	33%	50%	22%

The above table indicates that Bakhtiar (50%) and Nasr (33%) have achieved the highest rate of recreating Arabic foregrounding in English. The main point about Bakhtiar and Nasr is that they are native-like English speakers who have spent most of their lives in the United States, an English-speaking country. We can infer that their familiarity with English prose and stylistics is higher than their peers and this fact has helped them in more successful rendering of marked structures into English.

4. Conclusions

The primary objective of this study was to examine the proficiency of Iranian translators in accurately conveying foregrounding as a marked structure in English translations of the Holy Qur'ān. The study specifically analyzed eighteen Ayahs that exhibited foregrounding. The findings indicated that the renditions by Iranian translators were inconsistent, but they demonstrated better performance when dealing with marked structures that aligned more closely with the conventional structure of English prose. The results of this study hold significant implications for Qur'ān translators, particularly those from Iran. It provides insights into the challenges associated with translating foregrounding in the Qur'ān and highlights areas where Iranian translators may have fallen behind their international counterparts. Additionally, this research offers valuable guidance to translation instructors and critics seeking a deeper understanding of foregrounding translation in the Holy Qur'ān.

Among the various subcategories of foregrounding, the Iranian translators encountered the most difficulties in rendering specification and emphasis. Consequently, both Qur'ān translators and translation instructors should pay heightened attention to these challenging aspects. Furthermore, it is worth noting that both Iranian and non-Iranian translators exhibited the lowest performance in translating foregrounding in six specific Ayahs: 1:1, 24:48, 73:20, 2:267, 2:249, and 39:2. Special consideration should be given to these Ayahs, the foregrounding elements within them are either exceptionally subtle and easily overlooked by translators (e.g., in 1:1) or lack a straightforward equivalent in English. Iranian Qur'ān translators who have native-like proficiency in English have been more successful in rendering foregrounding into English than their peers. This suggests that Iranian Qur'ān translators should either strive to improve their language proficiency to a native-like level or collaborate with native English speakers to improve their ability to recognize and translate backgrounded structures in the Qur'ān.

This study has some limitations. The researcher relied on the pioneering work of Elimam (2013) and focused solely on the eighteen verses discussed in the research. Future studies could explore additional instances of foregrounding in the Holy Qur'ān. Additionally, this study only considered four English translations by Iranian translators (two published in Iran and two published abroad). To enhance the generalizability of findings, future researchers may consider incorporating a broader range of translations into their analysis.

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