



Translation Strategies for Rhetorical Questions in the Qur'ān: A Comparative Analysis of Arberry and Asad Using Molina and Albir's Model

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<https://doi.org/10.22081/ttaais.2024.69602.1031>

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 27 May 2023

Revised: 31 July 2023

Accepted: 26 September 2023

Keywords:

Qur'ānic Translation,
Rhetorical Questions,
Molina and Albir Model,
Arberry Translation,
Asad Translation.

ABSTRACT

Rhetorical questions in the Holy Qur'ān serve as powerful devices in argumentation and persuasion. This study investigates the translation strategies employed by Arberry and Asad in translating rhetorical questions from the Holy Qur'ān into English, utilizing the techniques suggested by Molina and Albir. The research adopts a descriptive-analytical method and is based on library research. The sample includes thirteen rhetorical questions selected from different Surahs, analyzed for their rhetorical functions as identified by classical Arabic rhetoric, including refutation, reproach, explanation, negation, astonishment, encouragement, reconciliation, unlikelihood, and magnification. The analysis reveals that both translators employ a range of techniques, with Asad favoring adaptation (42%) and amplification (33%), and Arberry showing a higher frequency of literal translation (50%) and modulation (25%). While both translators effectively convey the rhetorical functions of the questions, Asad's translations often include additional explanatory phrases, making them more interpretive and accessible to readers unfamiliar with the original context. In contrast, Arberry's translations maintain closer adherence to the original structure and wording, which can require more interpretive effort from the reader. The study concludes that while both translators succeed in maintaining the rhetorical essence of the questions, their approaches differ significantly, highlighting the complexities and nuances involved in translating the rhetorical questions in the Qur'ān.

How to cite this article: Habibolahi, M. (2023). Translation Strategies for Rhetorical Questions in the Qur'ān: A Comparative Analysis of Arberry and Asad Using Molina and Albir's Model. *International Journal of Textual and Translation Analysis in Islamic Studies*, 1(4), 368-399. doi: 10.22081/ttaais.2024.69602.1031

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1. Introduction

Translating the Holy Qur'ān poses one of the most profound challenges for translators. As noted by al-Abbas & Haider (2020), translation is not simply about substituting words from the source language (SL) with those from the target language (TL); the distinct cultural backgrounds of Arabic and English add complexity to this task (Catford, 1965, p. 32). The difficulty intensifies when dealing with sacred texts like the Holy Qur'ān. The rhetoric within the Holy Qur'ān, particularly performative utterances, demands careful handling to accurately convey their pragmatic significance and intended effects. Rhetorical questions, a type of performative utterance, present a notable challenge. Few studies have focused on these due to their sensitive nature. Unlike regular questions, rhetorical questions do not seek answers and serve more varied purposes in Arabic than in English. This disparity creates linguistic hurdles for translators of the Qur'ān. Classical Muslim exegetes have identified various functions of rhetorical questions in the Qur'ān, including refutation, astonishment, reproach, explanation, negation, encouragement, reconciliation, unlikelihood, and magnification (Husayni, 1388, p. 97; Hashemi, 1999, p. 84). This study aims to examine how effectively modern English translators, specifically Muhammad Asad and Arthur Arberry, have conveyed these rhetorical functions and the techniques they employed. This research aims to tackle the issue of the translation of rhetorical questions in the Holy Qur'ān and to uncover the techniques used in rendering these rhetorical questions, as well as the extent to which Qur'ān translators paid attention to the intended meaning in the source text.

To conduct this study and examine the translation of rhetorical questions in the selected Qur'ānic translations, the strategies proposed by Molina and Albir (2002, p. 499) will be employed. In their article, "Translation Techniques Revisited: A Dynamic and Functionalist Approach" they review the background of studies on translation strategies and techniques and propose eighteen strategies that form the theoretical basis for the present research. This research will examine the translation of rhetorical questions in the Holy Qur'ān in two English translations of the Qur'ān based on the model proposed by Molina and Albir. The selection of two prominent English translations of the Qur'ān - those by Muhammad Asad and Arthur Arberry - has been made based on several distinguishing criteria. One key factor is the translators' respective religious backgrounds - Asad was a Jewish convert to Islam, while Arberry was a Christian. This diversity in their theological orientations is reflected in their divergent approaches to the translation process (Elnemr, 2020, p. 34).

Asad's translation is characterized by an innovative, rationalistic style that endeavors to convey the intended meaning and broader conceptual essence of the divine scripture to the reader. His method relies less on strict, word-for-word literalism and instead seeks to communicate the underlying purpose and wisdom of the Qur'ānic verses (Awan, 2019, p. 45). In contrast, Arberry's translation exhibits a more literary, aesthetic focus, with a primary aim of capturing the outward beauty and eloquence of the original Arabic text. Arberry's approach is therefore more inclined toward a literal, verbatim rendering of the Qur'ānic lexicon and syntax (Haleem, & Mohadi, 2023, p. 138). These divergent translation philosophies, stemming from the translators' diverse religious and intellectual backgrounds, have resulted in two distinct English renditions of the Qur'ān - one that prioritizes conceptual elucidation, and another that emphasizes literary artistry. The comparative analysis of these translations provides valuable insight into the multifaceted nature of Qur'ānic hermeneutics and the complex challenges inherent in cross-cultural, inter-religious text transmission (Khaleel, 2005, p. 60).

The present study assesses how they translated selected Qur'ānic rhetorical questions into English, using strategies suggested by Molina and Albir (2002). This research is significant due to the vast linguistic and cultural gaps between English and Arabic. The rarity of studies addressing Qur'ānic rhetorical questions in English highlights the importance of this work, which compares the effectiveness of translations by the selected translators. By employing a qualitative rather than quantitative approach and analyzing the data from a linguistic perspective, this study addresses an overlooked area in translation studies.

2. Literature review

The translation of rhetorical questions, a common linguistic feature in the Holy Qur'ān, has long been a topic of interest for scholars in the fields of Qur'ānic studies, exegesis, and translation studies. Previous research has explored various approaches and strategies employed by translators when rendering these rhetorical devices across languages. Molina and Albir (2002) proposed a comprehensive taxonomy of translation techniques that provides a valuable framework for analyzing the translation of rhetorical questions. Building on this foundation, several studies have investigated the application of Molina and Albir's techniques in different texts, including the Qur'ān. Notable works in this area include Arberry's (1955) and Asad's (1980) widely recognized English translations of the Qur'ān, which have been the subject of scholarly examination to elucidate the specific strategies they employed in rendering the Qur'ānic text. The present study aims to contribute to this body of knowledge by exploring the translation strategies used by Arberry and Asad in rendering rhetorical questions in the Holy Qur'ān, drawing upon the techniques suggested by Molina and Albir. The following are similar works conducted in the field of Qur'ānic translations and Molina and Albir's proposed model:

- ✓ Al-Smadi (2022) examined the linguistic challenges faced by seven Qur'ān translators in rendering rhetorical questions into English.
- ✓ Al-Qur'ān and Al-Azzam (2009) focused on rhetorical devices in the Qur'ān, including rhetorical questions, providing a comparative analysis of different translation approaches.
- ✓ Hassan (2020) conducted a pragmatic analysis of lexical choices in five English translations of the Qur'ān, assessing the faithfulness of these translations, particularly in their handling of Qur'ānic phraseology that implies meaning without explicit statements.
- ✓ Hummadi et al. (2020) investigated the rhetorical loss in translating prepositional phrases from the Qur'ān, identifying the causes of this loss and suggesting strategies to address the difficulties in translating these phrases.
- ✓ Hashemi Minabad (2021) explored strategies for translating cultural elements, identifying the use of techniques such as borrowing, calque, literal translation, cultural equivalents, explanation, and omission in the translation of "War City Stories."
- ✓ Hurtado Albir and Molina (2002) provided foundational analysis of translation techniques, offering a comprehensive model that is widely cited in subsequent translation research.
- ✓ Niazi and Goudarzi (2017) studied divine questioning in Surah Yaseen, focusing on its significance within the Qur'ān.

✓ Rezaie Haftadar et al. (2016) examined the rhetorical purposes of interrogative sentences in the Qur'ān, identifying goals such as affirmation, motivation, admonition, guidance, and drawing attention.

✓ Jafarian, Yazdani, and Keramati Yazdi (2023) investigated strategies for achieving functional equivalence in the translation of informative, expressive, and operative aspects of the Qur'ān into English.

Based on this review of the literature, the studies collectively highlight the significant challenges and strategies involved in translating rhetorical questions and other rhetorical devices in the Qur'ān. These studies underscore the complexity of achieving pragmatic equivalence and the risks of rhetorical loss, particularly when translating culturally embedded elements and prepositional phrases. While existing research provides valuable insights into various translation approaches and emphasizes the importance of preserving the original rhetorical intent, there remains a gap in understanding how these strategies impact the overall communicative effectiveness of translated texts.

In light of these findings, this study aims to address the following research questions:

1. How effectively do current English translations of the Qur'ān convey the rhetorical force of questions as originally intended in the Arabic text?
2. What are the most common strategies employed by translators to achieve functional equivalence in the translation of rhetorical questions in the Qur'ān?
3. What are the implications of these strategies for the broader goal of maintaining the rhetorical and cultural integrity of the Qur'ānic message?

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This falls within the sphere of 'descriptive' translation studies. The descriptive nature of this study involves a detailed examination and comparison of English translations of the Holy Qur'ān, focusing on the strategies used by the translators to handle rhetorical questions. The theoretical framework guiding this analysis is based on the translation techniques proposed by Molina and Albir (2002).

3.2. Corpus

The corpora analyzed in this study consist of selected verses from the Qur'ān and their English translations by Muhammad Asad and Arthur J. Arberry. The specific verses analyzed are those identified as containing rhetorical questions, including (Al-Isra: 40), (Al-Baqarah: 91), (Al-Baqarah:13), (Al-Baqarah: 44), (Al-Baqarah: 108), (Al-Baqarah: 170), (Al-Baqarah: 106), (An-Nisa: 87), (Maryam: 8), (Al-Baqarah: 245), (Al-Munafiqun: 5), (Ad-Dukhan: 13), (Al-Waqi'ah: 27). These verses were selected based on their recognition in renowned Qur'ānic literary commentaries, such as *Al-Kashāf* by Zamakhsharī, *Majma' al-Bayān* by Ṭabarsī, and *Al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr* by Ibn 'Āshūr.

The 13 Qur'ānic verses selected for this study exemplify rhetorical questions, which serve as powerful linguistic and rhetorical devices within the Qur'ān. The criteria for choosing these specific verses included:

- ✓ **Variety of Rhetorical Functions:** The selected verses represent a diverse range of rhetorical functions identified in classical Arabic rhetoric, such as refutation, astonishment, reproach, and denial. This variety enables a comprehensive analysis of how different rhetorical purposes are conveyed through translation.

- ✓ **Frequency and Significance:** The chosen verses are among those frequently cited in classical exegeses for their rhetorical impact. Their frequent discussion in tafsirs (Qur'ānic commentaries) highlights their importance in understanding the Qur'ān's argumentative and persuasive techniques.

- ✓ **Translational Challenges:** These verses present significant challenges for translators, particularly in maintaining the rhetorical force of the original Arabic. By focusing on these challenging verses, the study aims to reveal how different translation strategies impact the preservation of rhetorical intent.

- ✓ **Theological and Contextual Importance:** The selected verses are theologically significant, addressing key themes such as belief and disbelief, divine authority, and moral exhortation. This makes their accurate translation crucial for conveying the intended message to readers of the English translation.

- ✓ **Representation Across Surahs:** The verses were chosen from various Surahs to ensure that the analysis covers a broad spectrum of the Qur'ān's content, providing a more holistic view of how rhetorical questions are handled in different contexts.

By selecting these 13 verses, the study aims to provide a detailed examination of how rhetorical questions are translated, highlighting the effectiveness of different strategies in conveying the Qur'ān's rhetorical power. The target texts include Muhammad Asad's translation, known for its rationalist and modernist approach, which offers a comprehensive and contextual interpretation of the Qur'ānic text (Elnemr, 2020, p. 34), and Arthur J. Arberry's translation, recognized for its literary elegance and attempt to preserve the rhetorical and stylistic elements of the Arabic original (Awan, 2019, p. 45). The selection of Muhammad Asad's and Arthur Arberry's translations of the Holy Qur'ān was driven by several key considerations:

- ✓ **Divergent Translation Philosophies:** Asad and Arberry represent two distinct approaches to Qur'ānic translation. Asad's translation is characterized by its rationalistic and interpretive style, emphasizing the conceptual meaning and broader essence of the Qur'ānic text. In contrast, Arberry's translation is more literal, focusing on maintaining the literary and aesthetic qualities of the original Arabic. This contrast allows for a rich comparative analysis of how each translator approaches the rhetorical questions in the Qur'ān.

- ✓ **Theological and Cultural Backgrounds:** The translators' religious and cultural backgrounds significantly influence their translation styles. Asad, a Jewish convert to Islam, brought a unique perspective to his translation, seeking to communicate the Qur'ān's teachings in a way that resonates with modern readers. Arberry, a Christian scholar of Islamic studies, approached the translation with an emphasis on preserving the original

language's literary qualities. These differing backgrounds provide valuable insights into how religious and cultural perspectives shape translation choices.

✓ **Historical and Scholarly Impact:** Both translations have significantly impacted the study of the Qur'ān in the English-speaking world. Arberry's translation is highly regarded for its scholarly rigor and fidelity to the Arabic text, while Asad's is praised for its accessibility and interpretive depth. Analyzing these well-known translations helps to understand the broader implications of different translation strategies.

✓ **Relevance to the Study:** The study focuses on the translation of rhetorical questions, a challenging aspect of Qur'ānic translation that requires careful handling to convey the intended meaning. The selected translations, with their distinct styles, provide an ideal corpus to explore how different strategies are employed to render these rhetorical devices in English.

This rationale supports the decision to focus on Asad and Arberry's translations, ensuring that the analysis addresses both the interpretive and literal dimensions of Qur'ānic translation. These translations were selected to facilitate a comparative analysis of different translation strategies and their effectiveness in conveying rhetorical questions from the Qur'ān.

3.3. Research instruments

This study employs the following instruments for analysis: first, Molina and Albir's (2002) translation techniques framework, which provides a systematic approach to identifying and categorizing the translation strategies used; and second, the English translations of the Qur'ān by Muhammad Asad and Arthur J. Arberry, which serve as the primary sources for comparative analysis.

3.4 Translation techniques model

Molina and Albir's (2002) model of translation techniques is pivotal to this study. It encompasses 18 techniques, each addressing various translation challenges. These techniques are categorized based on their focus on either the form or content of the source text and their impact on the target text. The techniques are as follows in Table 1 (Molina & Albir, 2002, p. 502).

Table 1. Molina and Albir's Suggested Strategies

No.	Techniques	Definition
1	Adaptation	Replacing a cultural element in the source language (SL) with one from the target language (TL) that serves a similar function or evokes a similar response.
2	Amplification	Adding details not present in the SL to explain or clarify the meaning in the TL.
3	Borrowing	Using a word or expression from the SL directly in the TL.
4	Calque	Translating an expression literally from SL to TL, creating a new expression in the TL.
5	Compensation	Introducing a stylistic or semantic element elsewhere in the text when it can't be directly translated

No.	Techniques	Definition
6	Description	Replacing a term or expression with a description of its form or function.
7	Discursive Creation	Creating a new expression in the TL that preserves the impact of the original
8	Established Equivalent	Using a term or phrase that is already recognized in the TL as the equivalent of the SL term
9	Generalization	Using a more general or less specific term in the TL.
10	Linguistic Amplification	Adding linguistic elements in the TL that are not present in the SL.
11	Linguistic Compression	Synthesizing linguistic elements in the TL that are separated in the SL.
12	Literal Translation	Translating a term or expression word-for-word from SL to TL
13	Modulation	Changing the form or perspective of the SL in the TL without altering the meaning
14	Particularization	Using a more precise or specific term in the TL.
15	Reduction	Omitting elements that are not necessary in the TL.
16	Substitution	Replacing linguistic or paralinguistic elements (intonation, gestures) from SL with other elements in TL
17	Transposition	Changing the grammatical structure from SL to TL
18	Variation	Changing linguistic or paralinguistic elements that affect tone, style, or dialect

3.5. Functions of rhetorical questions in the Qur'ān

Based on classical Arabic rhetoric, rhetorical questions serve multiple functions that enhance the communicative effectiveness and emotional impact of the text. As shown in Table 2, the functions typically discussed in classical Arabic rhetoric literature include (Khaṭīb Qazwīnī, n.d., p. 143; Taftāzānī, 1387, p. 421; Ibn Hishām, 1421, vol. 1, p. 15):

Table 2. Rhetorical Questions Functions

Functions	Definition
Refutation	Challenging or disproving an argument or claim
Reproach	Expressing disapproval or disappointment.
Explanation	Clarifying or elaborating on a point
Negation	Rejecting or negating a statement.
Astonishment	Expressing surprise or wonder.
Encouragement	Motivating or urging someone to take action
Reconciliation	Making a situation or argument appear equal or balanced
Unlikelihood	Indicating that something is unlikely or far-fetched.
Magnification	Emphasizing or exaggerating a point for effect

These functions are essential to the Qur'ānic discourse, adding layers of meaning and rhetorical strength to the text. This study aims to analyze whether the English translations by Asad and Arberry effectively convey these rhetorical functions and to identify the strategies they employ in doing so.

3.5. Data collection and analysis

The data collection and analysis process were conducted in several stages. First, the source text samples containing rhetorical questions were systematically selected based on their identification in renowned Qur'ānic literary commentaries, such as Al-Kashāf by Zamakhsharī, Majma' al-Bayān by Ṭabarsī, and Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr by Ibn 'Āshūr, among others. Next, the target text samples were chosen according to the distinct translation strategies employed by Muhammad Asad and Arthur J. Arberry. The identification of translation strategies involved a meticulous analysis of each sentence in the target text, which was then compared to its corresponding sentence in the source text. This thorough examination aimed to uncover the specific translation strategies employed in the process. To facilitate this analysis, the strategies were categorized according to Molina and Albir's (2002) model. Notably, in cases where both explicitation and adaptation were utilized, a combined strategy was recorded to reflect the complexity of the translation approach.

4. Findings

This section analyzes 13 selected Qur'ānic verses, concentrating on how Muhammad Asad and Arthur Arberry translated rhetorical questions from the original Arabic into English. Each table presents the Arabic text of the verse, the rhetorical function it serves, and the translations by Asad and Arberry. Additionally, the tables outline the specific techniques employed by each translator based on Molina and Albir's model, assessing their effectiveness in conveying the rhetorical function. Through these detailed comparisons, we gain insights into the varying strategies and effectiveness of each translator in preserving the rhetorical essence of the Qur'ānic questions.

Table 3. Surah Al-Isra (17:40)

أَفَأَصْفَاكُمْ رَبُّكُم بِالْبَنِينَ وَاتَّخَذَ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنَاثًا ۚ إِنَّكُمْ لَتَقُولُونَ قَوْلًا عَظِيمًا	
Function of Rhetorical Question	Refutation
Asad's Translation	Has, then, your Sustainer distinguished you by (giving you) sons, and taken unto Himself daughters in the guise of angels? Verily, you are uttering a dreadful saying!
Technique Used by Asad	Modulation, Amplification
Arberry's Translation	What, has your Lord favoured you with sons and taken to Himself from the angels females? Surely it is a monstrous thing you are saying!
Technique Used by Arberry	Literal Translation, Established Equivalent

Explanation

Function of the Rhetorical Question

The rhetorical function of this verse is refutation, specifically addressed to the polytheists. Despite recognizing their own inherent weakness, they believed that God had granted them sons, the highest form of offspring. At the same time, they attributed daughters to the Almighty, claiming that angels were His daughters. Through this rhetorical question, God refutes and denies these false claims (Rādī, 1420, vol. 2, p. 345; Abū Ḥayyān, 1420, vol. 7, p. 53; Darwīsh, 1415, vol. 5, p. 447).

Both translations aim to convey the critical and refutational function of the rhetorical question in the original Arabic text. Below is an evaluation of how well the translators succeeded in conveying this function.

Asad's Translation

Technique Used: Asad employs modulation and amplification.

- Modulation: He slightly alters the structure to make the rhetorical question more explicit in English.
- Amplification: He adds phrases like “in the guise of angels” to clarify the reference to daughters and “Verily, you are uttering a dreadful saying!” to emphasize the gravity of the statement.

Effectiveness: Asad's translation successfully conveys the refutational function by clearly highlighting the challenge and criticism. The additional phrases provide helpful context, making the rhetorical nature more explicit for the reader.

Arberry's Translation

Technique Used: Arberry uses literal translation and established equivalents.

- Literal Translation: He adheres closely to the original Arabic structure.
- Established Equivalent: He employs standard equivalents for the Arabic terms.

Effectiveness: Arberry's translation also conveys the refutational function, though it is more direct and less explanatory than Asad's. The phrase “Surely it is a monstrous thing you are saying!” captures the severity of the criticism, but it lacks some of the contextual clarity provided by Asad's amplification.

Analysis

As shown in Table 3, both translators successfully convey the refutational function of the verse, but through different approaches. Asad's translation uses additional explanatory phrases, ensuring the reader fully grasps the refutation and the challenge embedded in the rhetorical question. This approach is more interpretive but clear in its rhetorical intent. On the other hand, Arberry's translation remains faithful to the original structure and wording, preserving the directness of the rhetorical question but requiring more interpretive effort from the reader to grasp the full context and intensity of the refutation. Overall, Asad's approach may be more accessible for readers unfamiliar with the context, while Arberry's direct translation may appeal to those who prefer a more literal rendition of the original text.

Table 4. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:91)

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا تَنُؤِمُونَ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْنَا وَيَكْفُرُونَ بِمَا وَرَاءَهُ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَهُمْ ۗ قُلْ فَلِمَ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْبِيَاءَ اللَّهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ	
Function of Rhetorical Question	Refutation
Asad's Translation	And whenever they are told, 'Believe in what God has bestowed from on high,' they reply, 'We believe in only what has been bestowed on us' - and they deny the truth of everything else, although it is the truth confirming the revelation they already possess. Say: 'Why, then, did you slay God's prophets aforetime, if you were (truly) believers? Himself daughters in the guise of angels? Verily, you are uttering a dreadful saying!
Technique Used by Asad	Modulation, Amplification
Arberry's Translation	And when they are told, 'Believe in what God has sent down,' they say, 'We believe in what was sent down on us'; and they disbelieve in what is beyond that, yet it is the truth confirming what is with them. Say: 'Why then were you slaying the Prophets of God in former time, if you were believers?'
Technique Used by Arberry	Literal Translation, Established Equivalent

Function of the Rhetorical Question

The rhetorical function of this verse is refutation, specifically aimed at the Jews. The verse addresses their refusal to accept Islam, as they believed that the Qur'ān was not sent to them and only acknowledged the Torah as divine revelation. They claimed to have faith in the Torah, yet God refutes this claim by pointing out that, despite their professed faith, they killed their prophets. Genuine faith would prevent such acts, but they not only murdered ordinary people, but also God's prophets. Thus, those who kill messengers cannot truly be considered faithful (Abū Ḥayyān, 1420, vol. 1, p. 492; Ibn 'Aṭīyyah, 1422, vol. 1, p. 179).

Techniques Used

Both translations attempt to convey the reproachful nature of the rhetorical question. Below is an evaluation of how effectively each translation captures this function.

Asad's Translation

- Technique Used: Modulation and amplification.
- Modulation: Asad modifies the structure slightly to make the rhetorical question more explicit in English.
- Amplification: He adds explanatory phrases to clarify the context, such as "Say: 'Why, then, did you slay God's prophets aforetime, if you were (truly) believers?'"

Effectiveness: Asad's translation successfully conveys the refutation by making the challenge and criticism clear. The added phrases provide important context, making the rhetorical nature more explicit.

Arberry's Translation

- Technique Used: Literal translation and established equivalent.
- Literal Translation: Arberry closely follows the structure of the original Arabic.
- Established Equivalent: He uses commonly accepted equivalents for the Arabic terms.

Effectiveness: Arberry's translation also conveys the refutational function, though it is more direct and less explanatory than Asad's. The phrase "Why then were you slaying the Prophets of God in former time, if you were believers?" effectively captures the severity of the criticism, but lacks the contextual clarity provided by Asad's amplification.

Analysis

As illustrated in Table 4, both translators effectively convey the refutation, but in different ways. Asad's translation uses additional explanatory phrases to ensure the reader fully understands the embedded criticism and challenge. This approach makes his translation more interpretive but clearer in its rhetorical intent. In contrast, Arberry stays closer to the original wording and structure, preserving the directness of the rhetorical question. However, this may require more interpretive effort from the reader to grasp the full context and intensity of the refutation.

Overall, Asad's approach may be more accessible to readers unfamiliar with the context, while Arberry's maintains the integrity of the original structure, appealing to those who prefer a more literal translation.

Table 5. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:13)

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا كَمَا آمَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا آمَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ ۗ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَكِن لَّا يَعْلَمُونَ	
Function of Rhetorical Question	Refutation
Asad's Translation	And when they are told, 'Believe as other people have believed,' they say, 'Shall we believe as the weak-minded believe?' Oh, verily, it is they, they who are weak-minded - but they know it not!
Technique Used by Asad	Amplification
Arberry's Translation	And when it is said to them, 'Believe as the people believe,' they say, 'Shall we believe as fools believe?' Truly, they are the fools, but they do not know.
Technique Used by Arberry	Literal Translation

Function of the Rhetorical Question

The rhetorical function of this question is refutation. The verse addresses the hypocrites and their strategy of undermining belief. Rather than rejecting faith outright, they claim that

the faith they are called to is that of “fools”, who, due to their lack of understanding, cannot distinguish truth from falsehood. By using the interrogative particle “hamza” the hypocrites mock and deny this faith (Zamakhsharī, 1407, vol. 1, p. 641; Ālūsī, 1415, vol. 1, p. 154; Ibn ‘Āshūr, n.d., vol. 1, p. 283).

Techniques Used

Both translations attempt to convey the refutation function of the rhetorical question in the original Arabic text. Below is an evaluation of how well each translator achieves this goal.

Asad’s Translation

The rhetorical question in the verse (“Shall we believe as the weak-minded/fools believe?”) refutes and criticizes the hypocrites’ mocking attitude towards the believers’ faith.

- Technique Used: Amplification.
- Asad employs amplification by adding explanatory phrases like “Oh, verily, it is they, they who are weak-minded” to ensure the reader comprehends the refutation within the rhetorical question. This clarifies the criticism and makes the rhetorical function more explicit. Asad’s amplification technique enhances the interpretive clarity, making the refutation easier to grasp, particularly for readers unfamiliar with the context.

Arberry’s Translation

Arberry follows a more literal translation, closely adhering to the structure and wording of the original Arabic text.

- Technique Used: Literal translation.
- Arberry's technique is seen in his choice to retain the straightforwardness and directness of the rhetorical question, preserving the integrity of the original structure. While faithful to the source text, this approach may require more interpretive effort from the reader to fully grasp the implied criticism.

Analysis

Reflected in Table 5, the contrast between the two translations highlights different priorities in rendering the rhetorical force of the verse. Asad's use of amplification makes the rhetorical function clearer and more accessible to a broader audience, especially those unfamiliar with the context. By providing additional explanations, he ensures the reader fully understands the severity of the refutation. Arberry’s translation, on the other hand, is commendable for its faithfulness to the original structure. However, this directness may be less immediately clear to some readers, requiring more effort to interpret the underlying criticism. Overall, Asad’s translation may be more effective for a general audience, while Arberry’s may appeal to those seeking a closer adherence to the original text.

Table 6. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:44)

اتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ	
Function of Rhetorical Question	Reproach
Asad's Translation	Do you enjoin other people to be pious, the while you forget your own selves - and yet you recite the divine writ? Will you not, then, use your reason?
Technique Used by Asad	Modulation, Amplification
Arberry's Translation	Do you bid others to piety, and forget yourselves while you recite the Book? Do you not understand?
Technique Used by Arberry	Literal Translation, Established Equivalent

Explanation

Function of the Rhetorical Question

The rhetorical function of this question is reproach. The speaker uses this type of rhetorical question to criticize the listener for doing something deemed inappropriate or unworthy. Unlike a negation of fact, this form of denial acknowledges that the action has occurred, and the speaker reprimands the doer (Taftāzānī, 1387, p. 421; Ibn Hishām, 1421, vol. 1, p. 16). It is reported that one of the Jews in Medina invited his relatives to convert to Islam and follow the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) while not believing in him himself (Wāḥidī, 1411, p. 27). In response, the verse in question was revealed. Through a figurative question, God reproaches him and others like him for encouraging others to do good while neglecting it themselves. The verse concludes with another reproachful question (Abū Ḥayyān, 1420, vol. 1, p. 295; Ṣāfi, 1418, vol. 1, p. 118).

Techniques Used

Both translators recognize the figurative nature of the question and attempt to convey the reproach using different strategies:

Asad's Translation

- Technique Used: Asad employs modulation and amplification.
- Modulation: He alters the form slightly by adding the phrase "Will you not, then, use your reason?" to highlight the irrationality of the hypocritical behavior.
- Amplification: Asad further clarifies the meaning with phrases like "the while you forget your own selves" and "and yet you recite the divine writ."

Effectiveness: Asad's translation effectively conveys the reproach by making the criticism clear and ensuring the reader understands the challenge being posed.

Arberry's Translation

- Technique Used: Arberry opts for literal translation and established equivalents.

- Literal Translation: He closely follows the original Arabic structure and uses commonly accepted equivalents for key terms.

Effectiveness: Arberry’s translation also conveys the reproach, capturing the intensity of the criticism. However, it remains closer to the original, relying more on the reader’s interpretation to grasp the full weight of the reprimand.

Analysis

As outlined in Table 6, Arberry’s translation preserves the original structure and directness, maintaining the rhetorical force of the question. However, it may require more effort from the reader to fully appreciate the reproach and reflect on its implications. Asad’s approach, with its added clarity and context, may be more accessible to readers unfamiliar with the background or nuances of the text.

Table 7. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:108)

أَمْ تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَسْأَلُوا رَسُولَكُمْ كَمَا سُئِلَ مُوسَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلَ ۗ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعِ الْكُفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ	
Function of Rhetorical Question	Reproach
Asad's Translation	Would you, perchance, ask of your Apostle the same as was asked of Moses in the past? But whoever changes faith for unbelief has indeed gone astray from a level path.
Technique Used by Asad	Modulation, Amplification
Arberry's Translation	Or do you desire to question your Messenger as Moses was questioned aforetime? Whoso exchanges belief for unbelief has surely gone astray from the right way.
Technique Used by Arberry	Literal Translation, Modulation

Function of the Rhetorical Question

The rhetorical function of the question in the verse is reproach. Some Muslims had posed questions to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) similar to those the Jews had asked Moses (AS) (Ṭabāṭabāī, 1417, vol. 1, p. 257). As a result, God uses this verse to reprimand the Muslims and also to criticize the Jews' behavior toward Moses (AS). Narratives regarding the occasion of revelation suggest that certain individuals made unreasonable and inappropriate requests of the Prophet (PBUH), leading to the revelation of this verse (Wāḥidī, 1411, p. 37). The negation in this rhetorical question serves as a reproach, not a refutation, contrary to the interpretation of some commentators (Ibn ‘Āshūr, n.d., vol. 1, p. 660).

Techniques Used

Below is an analysis of the techniques used by the translators based on Molina and Albir’s Model:

Asad’s Translation

- Modulation: Asad changes the perspective to make the sentence more natural in English. For instance, phrases like “perchance” and “in the past” are not literal translations but are added to enhance the context and make the text more idiomatic.

- Linguistic Amplification: He adds words such as “perchance” and “in the past”, which are not present in the original text, to provide clarity and facilitate understanding.

Effectiveness: Asad’s translation successfully conveys the function of reproach by clearly expressing the challenge and criticism embedded in the rhetorical question.

Arberry’s Translation

- Literal Translation: Arberry sticks closely to the original Arabic text, maintaining formal equivalence by preserving its structure and wording.
- Modulation: Despite the literal translation, Arberry uses modulation with terms like “aforetime” and “right way” to make the meaning more natural in English while maintaining a formal tone.

Effectiveness in Conveying Reproach: Arberry’s translation preserves the critical tone of the original text through direct language. The phrase "do you desire to question your Messenger" directly challenges the reader, maintaining the reproach. His use of the archaic term "aforetime" reinforces historical continuity, further emphasizing the reprimand.

Analysis

The critical tone of the original Arabic is well preserved in Arberry's translation through its direct language, particularly with the phrase “do you desire to question your Messenger,” which conveys the reproach effectively. The use of “aforetime” highlights the historical parallel between past and present, reinforcing the severity of the reprimand. Asad’s translation, while more idiomatic and explanatory, also effectively communicates the reproach, particularly for readers less familiar with the historical context. This contrast is evident in Table 7.

Table 8. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:170)

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا أَوَلَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَسْمَعُونَ	
Function of Rhetorical Question	Reproach
Asad's Translation	But when they are told, 'Follow what God has bestowed from on high,' they answer, 'Nay, we shall follow that which we found our forefathers believing in and doing.' Why, even if their forefathers did not use their reason at all, and were devoid of all guidance?
Technique Used by Asad	Adaptation, Modulation
Arberry's Translation	And when it is said to them, 'Follow what God has sent down,' they say, 'No; but we will follow such things as we found our fathers doing.' What? And if their fathers had no understanding of anything, and if they were not guided?
Technique Used by Arberry	Literal Translation, Established Equivalent, <i>Modulation</i>

Function of the Rhetorical Question

The rhetorical function of the question in the verse is reproach. The verse suggests that the disbelievers blindly followed their forefathers, regardless of whether their actions were right or wrong. God reproaches this irrational imitation, viewing it as contrary to reason (Ṭabāṭabāī, 1417, vol. 1, p. 409; Ālūsī, 1415, vol. 2, p. 40). Interpreting this reproach as astonishment is reasonable, considering that despite their forefathers' ignorance of religion and lack of guidance, the disbelievers still chose to follow them (Zamakhsharī, 1407, vol. 1, p. 328; Ṭabarsī, 1372, vol. 1, p. 97).

Techniques Used

Both translators effectively convey the primary intent of the rhetorical question, but they employ different strategies and levels of precision to capture the exact meaning.

Asad's Translation

- **Adaptation and Modulation:** Asad uses adaptation by employing contemporary language and phrasing to clarify the meaning for modern readers. For instance, “bestowed from on high” is more interpretive than a literal translation.
- **Modulation:** He shifts perspective with phrases like “bestowed from on high” and “did not use their reason at all, and were devoid of all guidance”, which are not literal translations but convey the intended meaning.

Effectiveness: Asad's translation effectively communicates the reproach. The rhetorical question, “Why, even if their forefathers did not use their reason at all, and were devoid of all guidance?” conveys incredulity and criticism. His use of modern language makes the reproach clear and relatable to contemporary readers.

Arberry's Translation

- **Literal Translation:** Arberry stays true to the original Arabic structure and wording, retaining its formal tone.
- **Modulation and Established Equivalent:** He applies modulation by using the term “What?” followed by a rhetorical question, providing emphasis and a natural conveyance of the original intent. He also employs established equivalents by using commonly accepted translations for Arabic terms.

Effectiveness: Arberry's translation preserves the reproach through direct and formal language. The rhetorical question, “What? And if their fathers had no understanding of anything, and if they were not guided?” maintains the critical tone of the original. The use of “What?” adds an element of surprise and disapproval, reinforcing the reproach.

Analysis

Both translations successfully communicate the reproach inherent in the rhetorical question, albeit in different ways. Asad's translation makes the reproach explicit and accessible for modern readers through adaptation and modulation, emphasizing the irrationality of blindly following forefathers. Arberry's translation maintains the original

structure and formal tone, using literal translation and modulation to preserve the directness and critical nature of the reproach. This distinction is highlighted in Table 8.

Table 9. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:106)

مَا نَنْسَخُ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلَهَا أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ	
Function of Rhetorical Question	Affirmatory
Asad's Translation	Any message which, We annul or consign to oblivion, We replace with a better or similar one. Do you not know that God has the power to will anything?
Technique Used by Asad	Adaptation, Modulation, Amplification
Arberry's Translation	And for whatever verse We abrogate or cast into oblivion, We bring a better or the like of it. Do you not know that God is powerful over everything?
Technique Used by Arberry	Literal Translation, Modulation, Established Equivalent

Explanation

Function of the Rhetorical Question

The rhetorical question in the verse serves an affirmatory function. Such a question is used when both the speaker and the listener are already aware of the subject matter, and the speaker's goal is to prompt the listener to acknowledge it. In Arabic literature, this is known as an “affirmatory” or “confirmatory” rhetorical question (Taftāzānī, 1387, p. 418; Ibn Hishām, 1421, vol. 1, p. 16). The Prophet's opponents apparently saw contradictions in the Qur’ān’s commands and prohibitions, casting doubt on its divine origin (Wāhidī, 1411, p. 37). In response, God revealed this verse (Zamakhsharī, 1405, 1/303), which legitimizes the concept of abrogation in divine commands and uses an affirmatory rhetorical question to compel the audience to acknowledge His omnipotence. Although the rhetorical question is framed negatively, its intent is affirmatory (Ibn ‘Āshūr, no date, vol. 1, p. 647). Although directed at the Prophet (PBUH), the question also extends to the entire community (Ālūsī, 1415, vol. 1, p. 353).

Techniques Used

Both translations effectively convey the affirmatory nature of the rhetorical question.

Asad’s Translation

1. Adaptation: Asad uses modern, accessible language. For instance, the phrase “consign to oblivion” replaces a more literal translation to resonate better with contemporary readers.

2. Modulation: Asad modifies the phrasing for clarity and emphasis. The phrase “a better or similar one” simplifies the concept of abrogation, making it more comprehensible for modern readers.

3. Amplification: Asad adds “Do you not know” to underscore the rhetorical nature of the question, making God's omnipotence even more explicit.

Arberry's Translation

1. **Literal Translation:** Arberry follows the original Arabic closely, maintaining a formal and traditional tone. Phrases like “abrogate” and “cast into oblivion” are direct translations from the Arabic.

2. **Modulation:** Arberry adjusts the question slightly— “Do you not know that God is powerful over everything?”—to sound more natural in English while retaining the original meaning.

3. **Established Equivalent:** The term “abrogate” is a recognized equivalent for the Arabic term, preserving the technical accuracy of the translation.

Analysis

Asad's translation effectively highlights the affirmatory aspect of the rhetorical question. His use of modern, accessible language and the explicit rhetorical phrase, “Do you not know that God has the power to will anything?” clearly emphasizes God's omnipotence, making the message more apparent to modern readers.

Similarly, Arberry's translation conveys the affirmatory nature of the rhetorical question. His formal tone and literal approach retain the original emphasis on God's omnipotence. By preserving a traditional style, Arberry ensures that the affirmatory message remains clear and respectful. The differences in their approaches are reflected in Table 9.

Table 10. Surah An-Nisa (4:87)

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ ۚ وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حَدِيثًا	
Function of Rhetorical Question	Negation
Asad's Translation	God - there is no deity save Him. He will surely gather you all together on the Day of Resurrection, which is beyond all doubt; and whose word could be truer than God's?
Technique Used by Asad	---
Arberry's Translation	God, there is no god but He. He will surely gather you on the Day of Resurrection, wherein is no doubt. And who is there more truthful in tidings than God?
Technique Used by Arberry	---

Explanation

Function of the Rhetorical Question

The rhetorical function of the question in the verse mentioned above is to express denial or negation. In this context, the question indicates that the event or statement has not or will not occur. Essentially, it shares a connection with refutation. However, unlike simple negation, this refutation addresses the listener's false assumption or claim, correcting it (Maṭ'anī, 1420, vol. 1, p. 98). In this verse, God demonstrates His power and greatness by speaking of gathering all creatures on the Day of Resurrection, and emphasizes His truthfulness through a rhetorical question. Commentators consider this question a form of refutation (Ālūsī, 1415, vol. 5, p. 105). However, since no one doubts God's truthfulness, the rhetorical question seems to convey negation instead (Maṭ'anī, 1420, vol. 1, p. 221).

The Techniques Used

Both translations successfully capture the negation implied in the rhetorical question of the verse.

Asad's Translation

1. **Adaptation:** Asad modernizes the phrasing to make the text more accessible, such as translating “there is no god but He” as “there is no deity save Him”.
2. **Modulation:** The phrase “He will surely gather you all together on the Day of Resurrection, which is beyond all doubt” shifts the original to a more explanatory form, emphasizing the certainty of the event.
3. **Linguistic Amplification:** Asad adds “which is beyond all doubt” to clarify and reinforce the certainty of the Day of Resurrection.
4. **Compensation:** He retains the impact of the rhetorical question, “and whose word could be truer than God's?” emphasizing God's ultimate truthfulness.

Arberry's Translation

1. **Literal Translation:** Arberry remains close to the original Arabic structure, with a direct translation like “there is no god but He”.
2. **Calque:** The phrase “wherein is no doubt” is a literal translation that maintains the structure of the original Arabic.
3. **Established Equivalent:** Arberry uses recognized equivalents such as “Day of Resurrection” and “more truthful in tidings” for accuracy and clarity.
4. **Modulation:** The rhetorical question “And who is there more truthful in tidings than God?” is slightly adjusted for idiomatic correctness while preserving the original meaning.

Analysis

Asad's translation effectively conveys the negation in the rhetorical question. “Whose word could be truer than God's?” implies that no one's word can be truer, reinforcing the negation. As illustrated in Table 10, the added phrase “which is beyond all doubt” further underscores the certainty and negation of any doubt regarding the Day of Resurrection. Arberry's translation similarly conveys the negation through the question, “And who is there more truthful in tidings than God?” This implies that no one is more truthful, emphasizing the denial of any other being's truthfulness compared to God. His phrase “wherein is no doubt” preserves the directness of the original negation about the Day of Resurrection.

Table 11. Surah Maryam (19:8)

قَالَ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَكَانَتِ امْرَأَتِي غَائِبًا وَقَدْ بَلَغْتُ مِنَ الْكِبَرِ عِتِيًّا	
Function of Rhetorical Question	Astonishment
Asad's Translation	He answered: 'O my Sustainer! How can I have a son when my wife has always been barren and I have become utterly infirm through old age?'
Technique Used by Asad	Adaptation, Linguistic, Modulation, Compensation
Arberry's Translation	He said, 'Lord, how shall I have a son, seeing my wife is barren, and I have reached the end of my life?'
Technique Used by Arberry	Literal Translation, Established Equivalent, Calque, Modulation

Explanation

Function of the Rhetorical Question

The rhetorical function of the question in the verse mentioned above is to express astonishment. Speakers sometimes use rhetorical questions to convey their surprise or wonder to the listener, and this style is also found in the Qur'ān (Ibn 'Āshūr, n.d., vol. 1, p. 368). In Qur'ān 19:8, the rhetorical question uses the term "أَنَّى", which can have various meanings. In this verse, it is interpreted as "how" or "from where" (Abū Ḥayyān, 1420, vol. 7, p. 243). The secondary function of this rhetorical question is to express astonishment, as the situation—having a child despite the woman being barren and the man being old and weak—is unusual and extraordinary (Qurashi, 1377, vol. 6, p. 299).

However, this astonishment does not undermine Zechariah's faith in God's power. Feeling wonder in such a situation is natural and does not affect one's belief or certainty. Even when the conditions for an event seem impossible and obstacles are present, receiving unexpected glad tidings can stir emotions and raise questions, even if one is certain of the truth from the start. Certainty does not prevent emotional responses (Ṭabāṭabāī, 1417, vol. 14, p. 16).

The Techniques Used

Both translations effectively convey the astonishment embedded in the rhetorical question in this verse.

Asad's Translation

1. Adaptation: Asad uses modern and accessible language, such as translating "Lord" to "O my Sustainer" to make the text relatable.

2. Linguistic Amplification: He adds details like "always been barren" and "utterly infirm through old age" to emphasize the improbability of the situation, enhancing the sense of astonishment that isn't as explicit in the original text.

3. Modulation: The phrase “How can I have a son” simplifies the expression of incredulity, making it more straightforward than the original question.

4. Compensation: Asad adds context and emphasis to compensate for any loss of nuance from the original Arabic, ensuring the emotional depth is retained.

Arberry’s Translation

1. Literal Translation: Arberry stays close to the original Arabic, using direct translations like “how shall I have a son” and “seeing my wife is barren”.

2. Established Equivalent: He uses established equivalents like “Lord” and “barren” to ensure accuracy and clarity.

3. Calque: The phrase “seeing my wife is barren” is a word-for-word translation, preserving the structure and meaning of the original.

4. Modulation: The phrase “I have reached the end of my life” is slightly modified to fit idiomatic English, while still conveying the sense of advanced age and improbability.

Analysis

Asad’s translation effectively conveys the astonishment in the rhetorical question. By detailing the conditions (“always been barren” and “utterly infirm through old age”), he emphasizes the impossibility of having a son, highlighting the incredulity in the verse. Arberry’s translation also captures the astonishment through the rhetorical question “how shall I have a son”, followed by the factual conditions. As demonstrated in Table 11, his formal and direct language maintains the gravity and incredulity of the situation, and the phrase “I have reached the end of my life” conveys the improbability of having children at an advanced age.

Table 12. Surah al-Baqarah (2:245)

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقرضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيضاعفه له أضعافًا كثيرة ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَقْبِضُ وَيَبْسُطُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرجعونَ	
Function of Rhetorical Question	Encouragement
Asad's Translation	Who is it that will offer up unto God a goodly loan, which He will amply repay, multiplying it many times? For it is God alone who grants abundance or gives in scant measure; and unto Him you shall be brought back.
Technique Used by Asad	Adaptation, Amplification, Modulation, Compensation
Arberry's Translation	Who is he that will lend to God a good loan, and He will multiply it for him manifold? God straitens and enlarges; and unto Him you shall be returned.
Technique Used by Arberry	Literal Translation, Established Equivalent, Calque, Modulation

Explanation

Function of the Rhetorical Question

A rhetorical question is sometimes used to encourage and motivate the audience to take action or adopt a specific behavior (Ibn ‘Āshūr, n.d., vol. 2, p. 452). In the verse mentioned above, God encourages believers to give charity by likening it to lending to Him. The purpose of this rhetorical question is to inspire and motivate the audience (Ibn ‘Āshūr, n.d., vol. 2, p. 452).

The Techniques Used

Both translations effectively convey the encouraging nature of the rhetorical question in this verse.

Asad’s Translation

1. Adaptation: Asad uses modern, accessible language. For example, “offer up unto God a goodly loan” is a contemporary and relatable expression that makes the meaning clearer than a strictly literal translation would.

2. Amplification: Asad adds explanatory details like “multiplying it many times” to emphasize the concept of divine reward, ensuring clarity.

3. Compensation: The phrase “God alone who grants abundance or gives in scant measure” adds context about God’s control over provision, which may be less explicit in the original but is vital for understanding.

4. Modulation: Asad adjusts the phrasing slightly to make the rhetorical question’s purpose of encouragement more understandable to modern readers.

Arberry’s Translation

1. Literal Translation: Arberry stays close to the original structure and phrasing, using a formal, traditional tone. For instance, “lend to God a good loan” is a direct translation.

2. Established Equivalent: Arberry uses familiar equivalents like “God straitens and enlarges” to convey God's control over provision with accuracy.

3. Calque: Phrases like “lend to God a good loan” and “He will multiply it for him manifold” are calques, preserving the original structure directly.

4. Modulation: While mostly literal, Arberry slightly modulates the phrasing to make it fit more naturally into idiomatic English, without losing the original meaning.

Analysis

Asad’s translation effectively conveys the encouragement embedded in the rhetorical question. The phrasing “Who is it that will offer up unto God a goodly loan” directly invites the reader to take action, while the promise that God will “amply repay, multiplying it many times” serves as strong encouragement. As reflected in Table 12, the added context about God’s control over provision reinforces the reliability of this divine promise.

Arberry’s translation also conveys the encouragement through the rhetorical question “Who is he that will lend to God a good loan?” The promise that God “will multiply it for him manifold” provides strong motivation for the reader. The phrase “God straitens and

enlarges” emphasizes God’s power over provision, reinforcing the reliability of the divine promise and encouraging trust in God’s ability to reward.

Overall Analysis

Both translations successfully convey the encouragement inherent in the rhetorical question. Asad’s translation makes this encouragement explicit and relatable through modern, amplified phrasing, emphasizing the promise of multiplied rewards. Arberry’s translation maintains a formal, traditional tone with a more literal approach, preserving the original structure while still effectively conveying the message of encouragement.

Table 13. Surah al-Munafiqun (63:5-6)

وَأِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا يَسْتَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ لَوَّا رُءُوسَهُمْ وَرَأَتْهُمُ بِصُدُونٍ وَهُمْ مُسْتَكْبِرُونَ. سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَسْتَغْفَرْتَ لَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ لَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ	
Function of Rhetorical Question	Reconciliation
Asad's Translation	And when they are told, 'Come, the Messenger of God will pray for your forgiveness,' they turn their heads away, and you see them drawing back in arrogance. It is all the same for them whether you pray for their forgiveness or do not pray for their forgiveness; God will not forgive them. Verily, God does not bestow His guidance upon such iniquitous folk.
Technique Used by Asad	Adaptation, Amplification, Compensation, Modulation
Arberry's Translation	And when it is said to them, 'Come now, the Messenger of God will ask forgiveness for you,' they twist their heads, and thou seest them turning away, waxing proud. Equal it is to them, whether thou askest forgiveness for them or thou askest not forgiveness for them; God will never forgive them. God guides not the people of the ungodly.
Technique Used by Arberry	Literal Translation, Established Equivalent, Calque, Modulation

Explanation

Function of the Rhetorical Question

In rhetorical analysis, the function of reconciliation (تسويه) in rhetorical questions involves using a question to establish equality or balance between two elements. This is often achieved through the use of the interrogative particle “همزة استفهام”, (hamzah of interrogation), which indicates that the elements before and after the question are considered equal in significance from the speaker’s perspective (Ibn Hishām, 1422, 1/15). In the specified verse, the rhetorical question serves to equalize (تسويه) the two conditions mentioned: whether someone prays for forgiveness for them or not, it makes no difference (Abū Ḥayyān, 1420, vol. 10, p. 184). The question highlights that their condition remains unchanged, regardless of any intercession (Ibn ‘Āshūr, n.d., vol. 28, p. 219).

The Techniques Used

Since reconciliation (تسوية) in Arabic has a specific structure, understanding this function goes beyond just interrogative words and includes various elements that help convey the concept (Ibn Hishām, 1422, 1/15). Both translations reflect this idea but use different methods to express it.

Asad's Translation

1. Adaptation: Asad uses contemporary and accessible language, such as “the Messenger of God will pray for your forgiveness”, ensuring clarity for modern readers.
2. Amplification: He adds details like “drawing back in arrogance” to emphasize the futility of their request for forgiveness, enriching the meaning of the rhetorical question.
3. Compensation: Asad reinforces the concept of equality by explicitly stating “It is all the same for them,” clarifying the rhetorical question’s role in highlighting their indifference and stubbornness.
4. Modulation: He slightly adjusts the tone to make the rhetorical question’s function—clarifying the futility and equality of their state—more apparent.

Arberry's Translation

1. Literal Translation: Arberry maintains a formal and traditional tone, staying close to the original with phrasing like “Come now, the Messenger of God will ask forgiveness for you”.
2. Established Equivalent: He uses well-established terms like “waxing proud” to accurately capture the original meaning.
3. Calque: The phrase “Equal it is to them” is a calque, translating the original structure directly and emphasizing the equality of their situation.
4. Modulation: While generally literal, Arberry modulates the phrasing slightly to ensure clarity, while keeping the formal tone intact. This effectively conveys the rhetorical question’s role in equalizing their unchanging state.

Analysis

Asad’s translation effectively captures the function of the rhetorical question, emphasizing the futility of seeking forgiveness for those who remain arrogant. By highlighting their unchanged condition—whether or not the Prophet prays for them—Asad clarifies that the rhetorical question serves to equalize their situation, revealing the ineffectiveness of any prayer on their behalf.

Arberry’s translation similarly conveys the function of reconciliation, with the rhetorical question “Equal it is to them” emphasizing the futility of seeking forgiveness. The formal tone and direct phrasing reinforce the idea that their state remains unchanged, underlining their obstinacy and the ineffectiveness of any intercession.

Overall Analysis

Both translations successfully convey the function of reconciliation in the rhetorical question. Asad's modern and explanatory approach makes the equalizing function explicit, emphasizing the futility and unchanged condition of the individuals. This distinction is evident in Table 13, where Arberry's more literal and formal approach retains the original structure, highlighting the equalization of their condition and the ineffectiveness of seeking forgiveness for them.

Table 14. Surah Al-Dukhan (44:13)

أَنَّى لَهُمُ الذِّكْرَى وَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مُّبِينٌ	
Function of Rhetorical Question	Unlikelihood
Asad's Translation	[But] how shall this remembrance avail them [at the Last Hour], seeing that an apostle had previously come unto them, clearly expounding the truth,
Technique Used by Asad	Modulation, Expansion, Transposition
Arberry's Translation	How should they have the Reminder, seeing a clear Messenger already came to them,
Technique Used by Arberry	Literal Translation, Calque, Transposition, Reduction

Explanation

Function of the Rhetorical Question

Sometimes a speaker uses a rhetorical question to indicate that performing a certain action is improbable or unlikely. One such function of rhetorical questions is to convey unlikelihood. In this verse, the term “أَنَّى” (annā) is interpreted to mean “how” (Ibn ‘Āshūr, n.d., vol. 25, p. 315), or “why”, as in “why should I care” (Ālūsī, 1415, vol. 25, p. 1318). The verse suggests that it is highly improbable that those who rejected clear evidence of the truth in this world will change their stance in the afterlife (Ṭabāṭabāī, 1417, vol. 18, p. 137).

The Techniques Used

Asad's Translation

1. Modulation: Asad uses modulation to rephrase the rhetorical question, emphasizing the futility of the remembrance. For example, by rephrasing “how shall this remembrance avail them” and adding context like “at the Last Hour”, Asad helps highlight the unlikelihood of their change.

2. Expansion: Asad expands the original text by adding additional context, such as “at the Last Hour” and “clearly expounding the truth”. These additions clarify why the remembrance is ineffective, reinforcing the unlikelihood implied by the rhetorical question.

3. Transposition: Asad rearranges the sentence structure to better suit English syntax, making the concept of unlikelihood more accessible and effectively conveying the intended meaning.

Arberry's Translation

1. Literal Translation: Arberry stays close to the literal meaning, maintaining much of the original phrasing.

2. Calque: Terms like "Reminder" and "clear Messenger" reflect a calque, directly translating the Arabic terms. However, this may not fully capture the rhetorical nuance of unlikelihood.

3. Transposition: Arberry makes minimal adjustments to the sentence structure, keeping it close to the original, which could affect the clarity of the rhetorical question's implication of unlikelihood.

4. Reduction: His translation is concise and omits additional context, which may make the unlikelihood implied by the rhetorical question less explicit compared to Asad's expanded version.

Overall Analysis

Asad's translation clearly emphasizes the unlikelihood of the situation by rephrasing and expanding on the original text, making the rhetorical question more understandable to modern readers. As shown in Table 14, Arberry's translation, while accurate, retains a more literal approach, which may not fully convey the sense of improbability without additional context.

Table 15. Surah Al-Waqi'ah (56:27)

وَأَصْحَابُ الْيَمِينِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْيَمِينِ	
Function of Rhetorical Question	Magnification
Asad's Translation	NOW AS FOR those who have attained to righteous-ness - what of those who have attained to righteous-ness?
Technique Used by Asad	Literal Translation, Expansion, Modulation, Established Equivalence
Arberry's Translation	The Companions of the Right (O Companions of the Right!)
Technique Used by Arberry	. Literal Translation, Calque

Explanation

Function of the Rhetorical Question

One of the less commonly noted functions of rhetorical questions is magnification—emphasizing the grandeur or significance of something, which is present in this verse. This figurative use of interrogation highlights the greatness and dignity of the subject (Ṭabarsī,

1372, vol. 10, p. 516). This Qur'ānic verse is similar to expressions used in everyday conversation, like "What a person he is!" In this context, the rhetorical question underscores the high status of the "Companions of the Right" (Makarem Shirazi, 1374, vol. 23, p. 219).

The Techniques Used

Asad's Translation

1. **Literal Translation:** Asad closely follows the original wording, retaining the phrase "those who have attained to righteousness." This preserves the emphasis and magnification present in the original.

2. **Expansion:** By repeating the phrase "those who have attained to righteousness," Asad amplifies the rhetorical effect, heightening the sense of grandeur surrounding the "Companions of the Right".

3. **Modulation:** Asad modulates the text by adding the phrase "NOW AS FOR" to introduce the rhetorical question. This draws attention to the magnification of the righteous, making the intended effect more pronounced.

4. **Established Equivalence:** Asad aims for dynamic equivalence, ensuring that the rhetorical impact of the repetition is clear to modern readers. His approach reflects the magnification intended in the original verse.

Arberry's Translation

1. **Literal Translation:** Arberry adopts a literal approach, translating "أَصْحَابُ الْيَمِينِ" as "The Companions of the Right". While accurate, this does not fully replicate the magnifying effect present in the original.

2. **Calque:** Arberry uses a calque, directly translating the term "Companions of the Right" without additional modification or emphasis.

Analysis

Asad's translation effectively conveys the magnification through the repetition of the phrase and the expanded introduction, which emphasize the importance of the "Companions of the Right" and align with the rhetorical grandeur of the original verse. This contrast is highlighted in Table 15, where Arberry's translation, while accurate, only partially conveys the magnification. The exclamatory phrase offers some emphasis, but the literal translation and calque do not capture the full rhetorical effect of repetition and magnification present in the original.

Comparison of Strategies Used

The analysis of rhetorical questions in the Qur'ān, using Molina and Albir's model, reveals distinct translation strategies employed by Muhammad Asad and Arthur Arberry. The following section will provide a detailed comparison, statistical analysis, and discussion of the effectiveness of these strategies in conveying the rhetorical functions inherent in the original Arabic text.

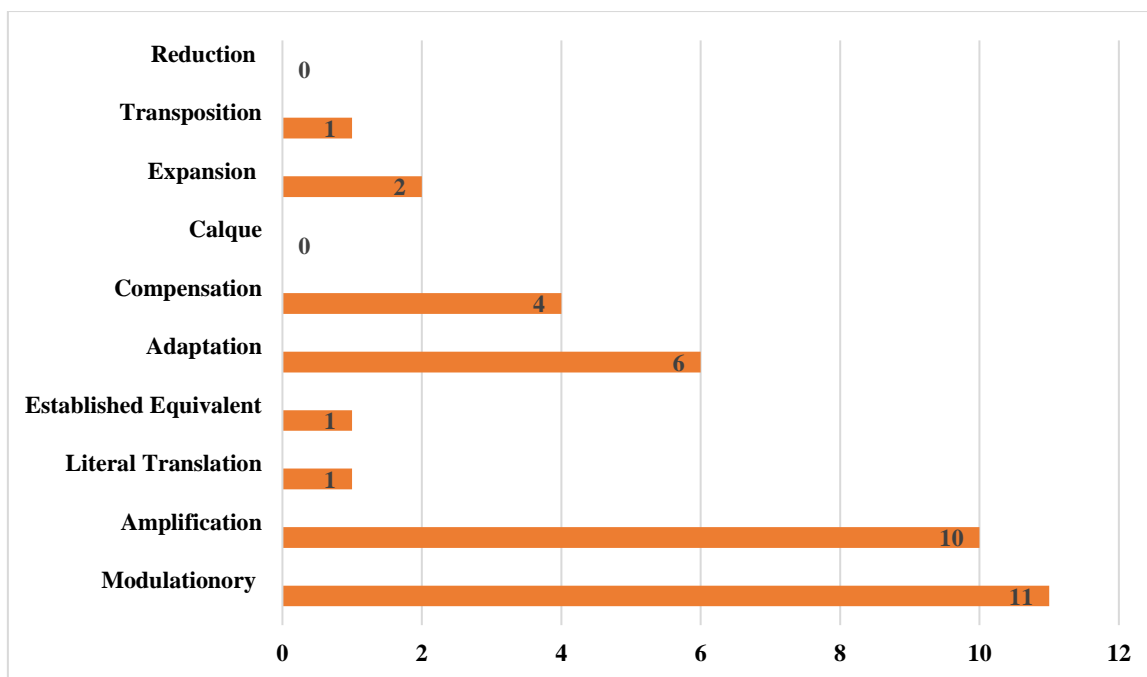


Figure 1. Asad's translation strategies

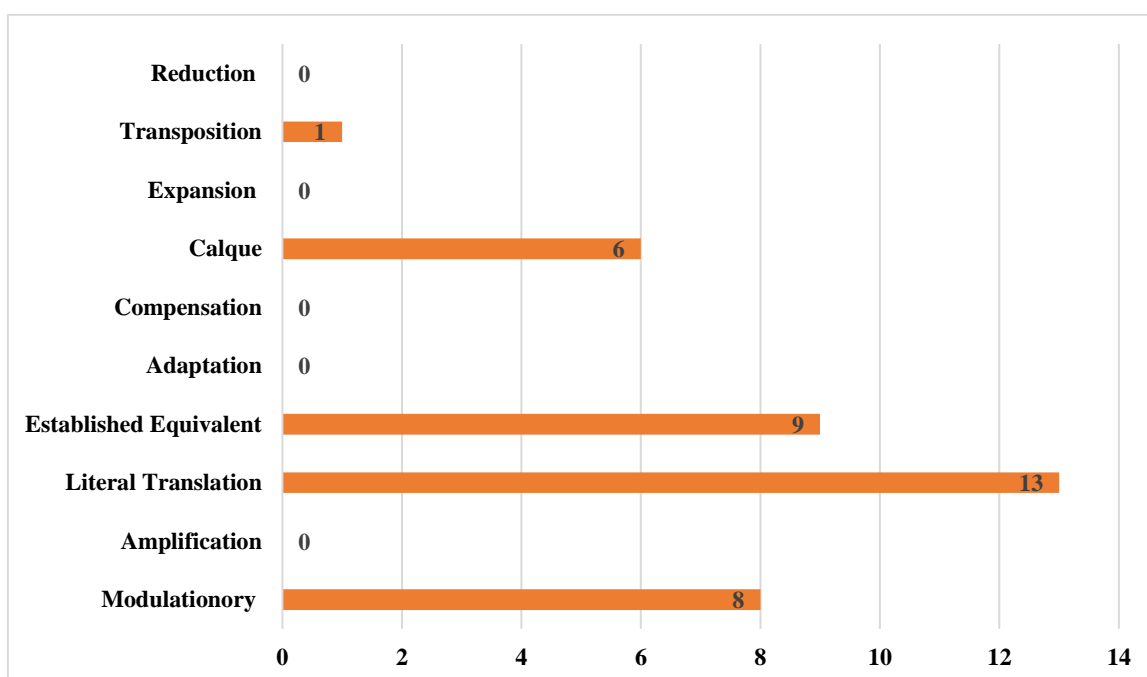


Figure 2. Arberry's strategies

5. Discussion

The data reveals a clear divergence in the translation strategies employed by Asad and Arberry. As illustrated in Figure 1, Asad utilizes modulation more frequently, with 11 instances compared to Arberry's 8. This strategy involves altering the point of view or cognitive category to effectively convey meaning, suggesting Asad's effort to adapt the translation contextually. Additionally, Asad employs amplification 10 times, while Arberry

does not use this strategy at all. Amplification adds detailed information not explicitly present in the original text to enhance clarity and comprehension, reflecting Asad's interpretive approach. In contrast, Arberry favors literal translation, employing it 13 times compared to Asad's single instance. This indicates Arberry's preference for a direct translation that closely follows the structure and wording of the original Arabic, maintaining textual fidelity but potentially demanding more interpretative effort from readers.

Furthermore, as seen in Figure 2, Arberry uses established equivalents 9 times, significantly more than Asad's single instance. This approach aids readability and consistency for the target audience. On the other hand, Asad exclusively employs adaptation and compensation, using these strategies 6 and 4 times, respectively, which demonstrates his inclination to adjust content for cultural relevance and to compensate for potential meaning loss in translation. Arberry applies calque 6 times, a technique that involves direct translation of elements, retaining the foreign structure but sometimes resulting in unnatural expressions in the target language. Asad, however, does not use this strategy, indicating his preference for more natural English expressions. Moreover, Asad uses expansion twice to add explanatory material, a method absent in Arberry's work, highlighting Asad's tendency to ensure thorough understanding. Both translators employ transposition and reduction minimally, with each using transposition once to alter grammatical structure, while Arberry uses reduction once to omit unnecessary elements.

Asad's translations are characterized by rich explanatory content, incorporating amplification and expansion, which make them more accessible to readers unfamiliar with the cultural and historical context of the Qur'ān. His frequent use of modulation and adaptation ensures that the translated text resonates with the target audience's perspective. However, this heavy reliance on interpretative strategies may sometimes lead to a departure from the original text's simplicity and directness. In contrast, Arberry's preference for literal translation and established equivalents maintains a high level of fidelity to the original text, preserving the Qur'ān's linguistic structure. His use of calque reflects an effort to retain the foreign essence of the source language. Nevertheless, this literal approach may result in translations that are harder to understand without prior knowledge of the context, potentially obscuring the rhetorical impact of the original verses.

6. Conclusion

The comparative analysis of translation strategies used by Muhammad Asad and Arthur J. Arberry reveals distinct approaches to translating rhetorical questions in the Qur'ān. Asad frequently employs amplification and literal translation, resulting in translations that are both explanatory and closely aligned with the original text's wording. In contrast, Arberry leans towards using compensation and established equivalents, focusing on balancing the text while incorporating well-recognized translations. Although both translators aim to preserve the rhetorical features of the Qur'ān, their differing strategies highlight their unique translation philosophies.

Asad's translations are more interpretive and explanatory, which may aid readers unfamiliar with the Qur'ānic context. Conversely, Arberry's translations maintain the directness and integrity of the original text, appealing to those who prefer a closer adherence to the source language. Overall, both translators successfully convey the refutation function embedded in the rhetorical questions, albeit through different strategies. The choice of strategy reflects their respective translation philosophies and the intended audience.

The comparison between Muhammad Asad and Arthur Arberry's translations of rhetorical questions in the Qur'ān highlights distinct approaches:

✓ **Literal vs. Interpretive:** Arberry's literal approach ensures textual fidelity but may require additional interpretive effort from readers. In contrast, Asad's interpretive method, through amplification and modulation, makes the text more comprehensible but may introduce subjective elements.

✓ **Cultural Relevance:** Asad's use of adaptation and compensation enhances cultural relevance, while Arberry's translation retains foreign elements through calque, emphasizing the original linguistic structure.

✓ **Rhetorical Effectiveness:** Both translators effectively convey the rhetorical functions, but their methods differ significantly. Asad's approach may be more suitable for readers seeking clarity and context, while Arberry's method appeals to those interested in a more literal and direct translation.

This study underscores the importance of selecting appropriate translation strategies to balance fidelity to the original text with readability and comprehension for the target audience. The findings suggest that a combination of strategies might be necessary to fully capture the rhetorical nuances of the Qur'ānic text. This study is limited by its focus on only two translators, which may not fully represent the diverse range of translation strategies employed by different translators. Additionally, the analysis is based on English translations, which might not capture all the nuances present in the original Arabic text. The subjective nature of translating rhetorical questions and the potential biases of the selected translators also limit the generalizability of the findings. The findings suggest that a combination of translation strategies might be necessary to fully capture the rhetorical nuances of the Qur'ānic text. Future research could explore a broader range of translators to provide a more comprehensive understanding of translation strategies. Additionally, investigating how different strategies impact reader comprehension and reception could offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of various translation approaches. This study emphasizes the importance of selecting appropriate translation strategies to balance fidelity to the original text with readability and comprehension for the target audience.

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