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**TEMPORAL ENTITIES RELATED TO ‘YEAR’ IN THE
HOLY QURAN: A FRAME SEMANTIC APPROACH**

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Abstract

The study deals with semantic analysis of temporal terms in Arabic ‘aam’ /ʕ:m/, ‘sana’ /sana/, ‘haul’ /haw/ and ‘hija’ /hidʒadz/; year in the Holy Qur’an. This study explores how translators have rendered these synonyms into English. It also explores the strategies used by different Qur’an translations in rendering these synonyms into English and to find which translations could be more semantically sensible than others based on exegesis. The findings reveal that some Qur’anic terms are untranslatable, and finding an appropriate and faithful equivalent in the target language is not possible. The differences and the scarcity of lexical equivalent rendered in the target language are analyzed. The aim of the study is to depict how these terms are different from each other and how much they give the semantic equivalence of the original. This paper follows Charles J. Fillmore’s frame semantics.

Keywords: Cognitive Linguistics, Frame Semantics, Semantic Equivalence, Qur’an, Temporal Expressions.

Introduction

A word can express and disseminate a myriad of implications, connotations, and attitudes in addition to its basic “dictionary” meaning. And a word often has near-synonyms that differ from it solely in these nuances of meaning. So, finding the right lexical choice to use in any particular situation is very important in terms of semantic aspects. This study also tries to look at these synonyms through Fillmore’s frame semantics. Frame is a mental structure which evokes naturally when we use language¹. It defines and determines the meaning through the knowledge based on conceptualization. The basic or fundamental idea of frame is that one cannot comprehend the meaning of a word

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without approach to all essential knowledge that is related to the sense of the word. For instance, one who has not seen an ocean would never get complete sense of it. It is the experience of ocean that makes the meaning, though ocean can be described with similar words and things. The ocean as a frame is formed through understanding of epistemic sign such as wave's infinite presence of water and constant winds with salty droplets. Thus, a word activates or evokes a frame of semantic knowledge relating to the specific concept to which it refers.

Aim of the Study

This study aims to find out the semantic distance among the four temporal terms related to the meaning 'year' used in the Holy Quran. It also tries to depict the translations of these synonyms by the Qur'an translators.

Holy Quran and Translation

The expert translators confirm that rendering the Holy Qur'an into a foreign language is only about transmitting the meanings of the text into the target language since literal translation is inconceivable and cannot deliver the intended message behind the verses (Zarkani, 1945). Moreover, many words in the Holy Qur'an have more than one meaning, and therefore, the translators must be careful when they choose the proper equivalent of these words. This entails referring to various Qur'anic exegeses to determine the exact meaning of the lexemes (Hassan, 2003, p. 40). Abobaker Ali, Brakhw, Nordin, Shaik Ismail, and Humanity (2012) investigated the linguistic difficulties that translators of the Holy Quran face, among which is rendering some Islamic items that lack equivalence in the target language. This compels translators to use the communicative manner by giving approximate meanings such as صمياً (alms giving). This confirms that any translation of the Holy Qur'an is "bound to be little more than an approximation of the source language text" (Al-Malik, 1995, p. 3).

The eloquence and beauty of the Qur'an is incomparable in that it is considered to be the ultimate reference for the Arabic rhetoric, grammar, and syntax (Ubaidat, 1990). It employs many stylistic, linguistic and rhetorical features that may impose even more challenges on the translators, especially when it comes to literary devices such as metaphor, irony, polysemy, metonymy, simile, synonymy and homonymy. Therefore, translators should not ignore such semantic features when attempting to translate the Qur'anic text.

In light of the difficulties mentioned above, it must be noted that translators of the Holy Qur'an need to have a linguistic competence in classical Arabic, including syntax and rhetoric, in order to understand the linguistic and rhetorical structures of the Qur'anic verses. Beyond all these notions regarding the translation, it's very essential to understand the views by Fillmore's semantics view.

Year Terms in the Holy Qur'an

The study is to examine the semantic distance of the terms *sana*, *aam*, *haul* and *hijaj* in four Qur'an translations from different times and religious backgrounds. They are:

قال تزرعون سبع سنين دأبا فما حصدتم فنروه في سنبله إلا قليلا مما تأكلون
(Yoosuf 12: 47)

*qa:la tazraʕu:na sabʕa sini:na daʕaban fama: hasʕathum
faḏaru:hu fee sumbulihi: ʔilla: qali:lan mimma: thaʔkulu:n*

- [Yusuf (Joseph)] said: "For seven consecutive **years**, you shall sow as usual and that (the harvest) which you reap you shall leave it in the ears, (all) except a little of it which you may eat (Hilali and Khan).
- [Joseph] said: "For seven **years** shall ye diligently sow as is your wont: and the harvests that ye reap, ye shall leave them in the ear, - except a little, of which ye shall eat (Yusuf Ali).
- He said: Ye shall sow seven **years** as usual, but that which ye reap, leave it in the ear, all save a little of that which eat. (Pickthall).
- He said, You shall sow seven **years** after your wont; what you have harvested leave in the ear, excepting a little whereof you eat (Arberry).

ثم يأتي من بعد ذلك عام فيه يغاث الناس وفيه يعصرون

Yoosuf 12: 49

*ʕumma jaʔti: min baʕdi ḏalika ʕa:mun feehi juyaḏu nnaasi va
feehi jʕasiru:n*

- Then thereafter will come a **year** in which people will have abundant rain and in which they will press (wine and oil), (Hilali & Khan).
- Then will come after that [period] a **year** in which the people will have abundant water, and in which they will press [wine and oil] (Yusuf Ali).

- Then, after that, will come **a year** when the people will have plenteous crops and when they will press (wine and oil), (Pickthall).
- Then thereafter there shall come **a year** wherein the people will be succoured and press in season (Arberry).

ولقد أرسلنا نوحا إلى قومه فلبث فيهم ألف سنة إلا خمسين عاما فأخذهم الطوفان وهم ظالمون

(العنكبوت) 29: 14

wa laqad ʔarsalna: nu:han ʔila: qaumihi: fa labiṡa fi:him ʔalfa sanatin ʔilla: xamsi:na ʕ:mman fa ʔaxaḡahumu tʕu:fa:nu wa hum ḡ:limu:n

- And indeed, we sent Nuh (Noah) to his people, and he stayed among them **a thousand years less fifty years** (inviting them to believe in the oneness of Allah (Monotheism), and discard the false gods and other deities); and the deluge overtook them while they were wrong doers (polytheists or disbelievers), (Hilali and Khan).
- We [once] sent Noah to his people, and he tarried among them **a thousand years less fifty:** but the Deluge overwhelmed them while they [persisted in] sin (Yusuf Ali).
- And verily we sent Noah (as our messenger) unto his folk, and he continued with them **for a thousand years save fifty years;** and the flood engulfed the, for they were wrongdoers (Pickthall).
- Indeed, we sent Noah to his people, and he tarried among them **a thousand years, all but fifty;** so, the flood seized them, while they were evildoers (Arberry).

وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ ۖ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَبْتِمَ الرِّضَاعَةَ ۗ وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۗ لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۗ لَا تُضَارَّ وَالِدَةٌ بَوْلِهَا وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ لَهُ بِوَالِدِهِ ۗ وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ ۗ فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا ۗ وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ تُسَنِّضُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَا اتَّيَمُّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۗ وَعَلِّمُوا أَنْ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

(البقرة) 233

walwa:lida:tu jurdʕiʕna ʔaula:dahunna haulaini ka:mileini li man ʔara:da ʔan jutimma rradʕa:ʕa

- The mothers shall give suck to their children for **two whole years**, (that is) for those (parents) who desire to complete the term of suckling, but the father of the child shall bear the cost of the mother's food and clothing on a reasonable basis. No person shall have a burden laid on him greater

than he can bear. No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of her child, nor father on account of his child, and on the (father's) heir is incumbent the like of that (which was incumbent on the father). If they both decide on weaning, by mutual consent, and after due consultation, there is no sin on them. And if you decide on a foster suckling-mother for your children, there is no sin on you, provided you pay (the mother) what you agreed (to give her) on reasonable basis. And fear Allah and know that Allah is All-Seer of what you do (Hilali and Khan).

- The mothers shall give such to their offspring for **two whole years**, if the father desires to complete the term (Yusuf Ali).
- Mothers shall suckle their children for **two whole years**; that is for those who wish to complete the suckling (Pickthall).
- Mothers shall suckle their children **two years completely**, for such as desire to fulfill the suckling (Arberry).

ووصينا الانسان بوالديه احسانا حملته امه كرها ووضعته كرها وحمله وفصاله ثلاثون شهرا حتى اذا بلغ أشده وبلغ أربعين سنة قال رب أوزعني أن أشكر نعمتك التي أنعمت علي وعلى والدي وأن أعمل صالحا ترضاه وأصلح لي في ذريتي إني تبت إليك وإني من المسلمين

Ahqaf 46: 15

wa hamluhu wa fis^l:luhu: θal:aθu:na fahra

And we have enjoined on man to be dutiful and kind to his parents. His mother bears him with hardship. And she brings him forth with hardship, and the bearing of him, and the weaning of him is thirty months, till when he attains full strength and reaches forty years, he says: "My Lord! Grant me the power and ability that I may be grateful for Your favor which you have bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and that I may do righteous good deeds, such as please you, and make my offspring good. Truly, I have turned to You in repentance, and truly, I am one of the Muslims (Submitting to Your Will)." (Hilali and Khan)

قال إني أريد أن أنكحك إحدى ابنتي هتين على أن تأجرني ثمانى حجج فان أتممت عشر ا فمن عندك وما اريد أن أشق عليك ستجدني ان شاء الله من الصالحين

(27القصص)

qa:la inni: uri:du ?an unkihaka ihda ibnatajja ha:taini ?ala ?an ta?dzurani: θama:nija hidzadzjin

- On condition that you serve me for eight **years** (Hilali and Khan).
- On condition that thou serve me for eight **years** (Yoosuf Ali).
- On condition that thou hirest thyself to me (for the term of) eight **pilgrimages** (Pickthal).
- On condition that thou hirest thyself to me for eight **years** (Arberry).

Word/translator	sana	aam	haul	hijaj
Al Hilali and Khan	years	years	years	years
Yusuf Ali	years	years	years	years
Pickthal	years	years	years	pilgrimage
Arberry	years	years	years	years

Table 1

The translations of the words *sana, aam, haul* and *hijaj* in the four translations.

Investigated lexical items	The semantic components			
	Time duration	Lunar year	Drought	Ease and abundance
Sana	+	-	+	-
Aam	+	+	-	+
Haul	+	+/-	∅	∅
Hijaj	+	+	∅	∅

Table 2

Componential Analysis of *Sana, Aam, Haul* and *Hijaj*

Conclusion

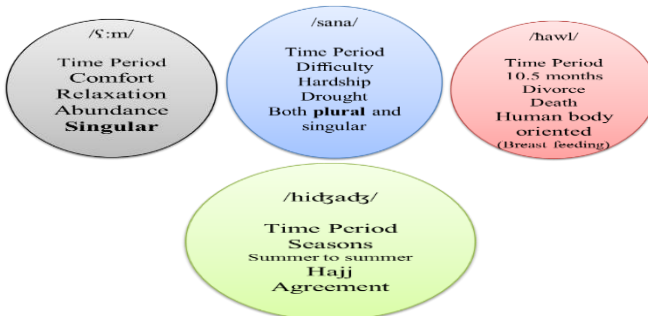
The translation of the Quran into modern languages has always been a difficult issue in Islamic theology. It is argued that the Quranic text should not be isolated from its true form to another language or written form, at least not without keeping the Arabic text with it. Furthermore, an Arabic word, like a Hebrew or Aramaic word, may have a range of meanings depending on the context – a feature present in all Semitic languages when compared to English, Latin, and Roman languages – making an accurate translation even more difficult. According to Islamic theology, the Quran is a revelation very specifically in Arabic, and so it should only be recited in Quranic Arabic. Translations into other languages are necessarily the work of humans and so, according to Muslims, no longer possess the uniquely sacred character of the Arabic original.

The task of translating the Quran is not an easy one, especially in terms related to time; some native Arab speakers will confirm that some Quranic passages are difficult to understand even in

the original Arabic script. A part of this is the innate difficulty of any translation; in Arabic, as in other languages, a single word can have a variety of meanings. There is always an element of human judgment involved in understanding and translating a text. This factor is made more complex by the fact that the usage of words has changed a great deal between classical and modern Arabic. As a result, even Quranic verses, which seem perfectly clear to native Arab speakers accustomed to modern vocabulary and usage, may not represent the original meaning of the verse.

The original meaning of a Quranic passage will also be dependent on the historical circumstances of the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) life and the early community in which it originated. Investigating that context usually requires detailed knowledge of hadith and prophetic era, which are vast and complex. This introduces an additional element of uncertainty that cannot be eliminated by any linguistic rules of translation.

Sana has the meaning of bad, difficulty, tiredness, hardship and density. This term occurred in situations like drought time, scarcity of water and rainless season. This term always comes with adverse conditions and incidents. *Aam* has the meaning of goodness. This term occurred in Quran in all contexts with a positive meaning. This term always comes with positive things like harvesting fruits, the rainy season, and good times. *Hawl*: The term doesn't mean a complete year; haul means 10 months and half. The term *hijaj*, it is seasonal, means birth to birth period of sheep, which is twice a year, a period of annually practiced hajj, once at a year, which is happening annually, and starts from the month of Dul Hijja, the 12th month of Hijra Calender. Term also means seasons, summer to summer, winter to winter and birth to birth.



This study has revealed that the term year has synonyms in the holy Quran. It is found that it is not equivalent to the term year and has different meanings for each one. The translators rendered the meaning of these terms almost same without

enough meaning. Those meanings are not complete and clear. The frame semantic approach helped to understand more from exegesis other than the authentic dictionary meanings and Quran translations. This analysis through Fillmore's frame semantic approach is the best method to analyze all the related concepts and find the exact meaning.

Endnotes

¹ George Lakoff. 2004: 15

² *The meanings of the Holy Quran* (1934) by Ali (1872-1953).
Interpretations of the meanings of the Noble Quran (1977) by Al-Hilali (1895-1990) and Khan (1925).
The Holy Quran with English Translation (1930) by Pickthal (1875-1936) and
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