

## The Satire–Hyperbole Nexus in Qur’anic Interpretation and Translation: Ideological Implications and Strategic Approaches <sup>(\*)</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

At the crossroads of satire and hyperbole, this study delves into the interpretation and translation of Qur’anic discourse, unveiling the complex typologies and communicative functions of speech acts shaped by this potent rhetorical fusion. It engages with the extensive body of interpretative frameworks surrounding hyperbolic and satiric speech acts, exploring the complexities inherent in translating these figurative expressions into English. The data are methodologically analyzed through Sperber and Wilson’s (1986) Relevance Theory, and Nida’s (2003) Theory of Equivalence, employing a qualitative approach to facilitate a rigorous and interpretive analysis of the subject matter. The findings of this study underscore that the figurative language of the Qur’an—specifically the confluence of satire and hyperbole—poses peculiar translational challenges due to both interlingual and intralingual divergences between Arabic and English. Conventional one-to-one or literal translation methodologies prove inadequate in capturing the full semantic and pragmatic nuance. Consequently, alternative translational model, mainly, a syntactic, pragma-cognitive model that unites Relevance Theory with post-modifier adjectival strategies, empowering translators to penetrate the text’s deeper semantic layers and faithfully transmit its rhetorical brilliance.

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## 1.0 Introduction

Islam strongly emphasizes the use of kind and courteous language, considering it a core value rooted in the Qur'an's educational teachings on interpersonal communication. Ethical speech does not reflect only personal character but also religious guidance, which strictly prohibits mocking, insulting, or using offensive language to others. According to Zamakhsyari in Al-Kasshaf, the ideal form of speech is characterized by politeness, refinement, and moral intent expressions that are gentle in tone and constructive in meaning, aiming to promote benefit and righteousness (Lalu et al. 2024).

Satire can be defined as sarcastic (*sukhriyya*) or mockery (*istihza'*) style in conveying an implicit meaning. Satire usually was used in three purposes namely expose hypocrisy, ridicule false belief or practice and criticize the arrogance of disbelievers (Makarim, 2025). While hyperbole may be understood as some sort of metaphor, and is defined as a linguistic expression that describes one thing in terms of another to highlight shared qualities and enhance meaning (Burgers et al. 2016). In the Qur'an, metaphor alongside other rhetorical devices form an integral part of its stylistic richness. Consequently, translators must give due attention to such figurative expressions to preserve the depth and nuance of the original text.

Satire, in particular, is an elaborate rhetorical device that requires high levels of mastery not only of the source and the target languages but also of the historical and situational background of the Qur'anic discourse. Ali defines satire as "versatile and elusive," which certainly puts it at one of the most literally challenging translation tasks. As Hijjo and Kaur (2017) further put it, the intertwined nature of satire with hyperbole makes it an intricate sided phenomenon that cannot be translated at ease. In addition, Sinai (2020) draws attention to the aid that historical criticism gives towards understanding the use of metaphors in sacred texts but queasily cautions that modern day history and scholarship, by excluding the intervening of God, tend to simplify the ideological and theological core of the text.

The intersection of hyperbole and satire is particularly significant in Qur'anic discourse. Satire, which is often linked to hyperbole at the pragma-

contextual level, is commonly perceived as a subgenre of irony, but it differs by employing extreme sarcasm to criticize or ridicule individuals or societal norms

The translation of the Qur'an's rhetorical elements, especially the combination of satire and hyperbole, faces profound linguistic, ideological, and cultural challenges. Ali (2012) aptly remarks on this, claiming that "translating the Holy Qur'an... incurs multiple linguistic-derivational problems," including the differences of lexical, syntactic, and semantic level in analysis between Arabic and English. Even more complex are the hyperbolic satire which is part of the unique rhetorical constructs of the Qur'an because of its deep cultural and theological undertones. This makes the construct defy direct transference of language. Thus, prose translation is likely to ignore the deeper meanings contained within these hyperbolic retorts and tend to give more simplistic interpretations. This unfortunate reality creates distortion, moving increasingly far away from the translators intended meanings.

The central argument of this study posits that a nuanced comprehension of the Qur'an's figurative language and rhetorical eloquence is foundational for the interpretation of the Divine Words within their contextual milieu. Such interpretative clarity can only be achieved through a meticulous exploration of the multi-layered, polysemous meanings embedded in the Qur'an's distinctive linguistic constructs. Theological texts, particularly the Qur'an, are profoundly shaped by the intricate interplay between linguistic choices and doctrinal interpretation.

As the primary focus of this study analysis, the study addresses the complex interrelationships of satire and hyperbole that construct sophisticated meanings undermining traditional speech and interpretive patterns. The study analyzes the (meta)cognitive processes of satirical and hyperbolic discourse within Qur'an's context, constituting a part of its stylistic and theological wealth. Hence, the study analyzes the lexical and pragmatic features of the satire-hyperbole phenomenon/interface within the discourse texts of the Qur'an, focusing on the problems of attaining translational equivalence.

In order to clear the way for this research, pragmatic and interpretive linguistic theories are described as analytical scaffolds to differentiate the Qur'an's rhetorical patterns. Having done that, this study attempts to focus on the cross-cultural aspects of satirical hyperbole and compare its application in Qur'anic Arabic and English. Such a comparison does not only reveal the stylistic complexity of the discursive Qur'an; it also illustrates the complexity of

translating such sophisticated rhetorical devices from one language and culture to another. The study reduces the gap between linguistic and cultural paradigms by showing how satiric and hyperbolic speech is employed as an eloquent means for religious communication in the Qur'an.

This study seeks to address the aforementioned multifaceted challenges by examining how the translational process navigates the satire-hyperbole interface, focusing on the interplay of linguistic and cultural disparities, historical context, and ideological manipulation. It aims to illuminate the mechanisms through which translation either preserves or compromises the rhetorical and theological integrity of the Qur'anic discourse.

This study holds significant value as it proposes a novel translational and conceptual approach to understanding satiric and hyperbolic expressions within the Qur'an. By examining the intersection of satire and hyperbole at the pragma-semantic level, the research aims to bridge the gap for target language readers, enhancing their comprehension of the complex functions and meanings generated by this rhetorical interface. Furthermore, this study may be the first of its kind to investigate how the interface of satire and hyperbole produces a diverse range of interpretations, contributing to the broader field of translation studies and Qur'anic discourse analysis.

This study aims to a. critically analyse the intricate interface of satire and hyperbole within the rhetorical framework of Qur'anic discourse, emphasizing its semantic, lexical, and pragmatic dimensions, b. to identify and evaluate the translational challenges inherent in rendering hyperbolic and satirical constructs from Arabic into English, particularly in relation to linguistic equivalence and cultural divergence, and c. to explore how ideological and theological considerations shape and influence the translation of these rhetorical devices, with a specific focus on preserving the Qur'an's stylistic and rhetorical integrity in the target language.

## 2. Literature Review

That the Qur'an is a sacred text with meanings regulating Muslims' lives necessitates a careful attention on the part of translators in rendering it from Arabic into other languages( Al Salemet al., 2025). Qur'an translation, can be enriched by paying closer attention to the globally diverse contexts, histories and practices of Qur'anic translation and by approaching the sacred book more assuredly on its own terms (Othman, 2023 ). Otherwise, a huge loss or

impreciseness in meaning might cause controversy in understanding the verses of the Holy Quran. The use of hyperbole as an important rhetorical device dates back to classical Arabic scholars including Ibn Almu'taz (908) and Qudama bin Jafar (1188).

Although some researchers (such as Ryding in 2005) have traced the historical evolution of hyperbole, their work primarily examines its structural and semantic aspects while neglecting its wider pragmatic applications. Hyperbole is typically categorized into three types: Hyperbole can be divided into three forms: notification which presents logically plausible exaggerations alongside exaggeration which involves logically possible but conventionally implausible claims and extreme exaggeration which stands as both logically and conventionally impossible. While these categories help us understand the basic functions of hyperbole they fail to address how exaggerations function within socio-cultural and pragmatic frameworks.

Abuisaac et al., (2020) investigated the multi-emotive ironic types, functions and dissociative thoughts produced by verbal irony interface with other figures of speech in the Qur'anic, and how these were translated by Arberry (1955) The study shows that verbal irony interfaces with other figures of speech including parody, paradox, metonymy, satire, euphemism and pun. Such an interface thus produces many functions ,i.e. social, psychological, socio/psycho-aggressive, theological etc. However, most of these functions are missing in Arberry's translation, making the translation inaccurate.

Abuisaac et al., (2022) examined how culturally-embedded utterances and expressions of the Qur'anic discourse were translated by Arberry (1955). The results demonstrate that the lexicosemantic realization and analysis of the culturally-bound utterances and expressions of the Qur'an are missing in the translation, which distorts the SL meaning and impacts TL readers' understanding. The same thing happens in Arberry's translation of homonymic and polysemic senses (Ali, 2020). To solve this problem, author propose Lexicosemantic Decipherability Strategy for translators to select the target language's lexicosemantic items in different genres with greater accuracy.

All ironic speech acts were literally translated by Arberry, either by using word for word translation or using synonyms. Consequently, there are semantic and pragmatic gaps in the translated target texts. These gaps are due to the unique cultural, lexicographical, contextual and pragmatic aspects that distinguish the metalinguistic system of Arabic from the English one (Abuissac et al., 2020).

Ali (2020) investigated the challenges of translating Qur'anic expressions implying various meanings in respect with the broader issue of semantic multiplicity. In this regard, the translator's selection of target language terms and expressions directly and strongly affects the accuracy of the interpretation. This is an issue very critical when rendering rhetorical devices such as hyperbole and satire, and most importantly the cognitive and pragmatic interface between both figures of speech.

The Qur'an employs a variety of rhetorical strategies to promote harmony, including the use of politeness (Ahmad, 2021), satire, and hyperbole. These rhetorical devices are employed to expose jolt complacency, falsehood, , and reinforce moral lessons through strategically powerful linguistic force.

Hussain (2021) argues that the Quran's unparalleled coherence is constitute a fundamental component of the Holy Message. Semiotic structures and rhetorical figures provide the foundation. They are employed in a potent way, for instance, satire is sharply used to point humor to expose a broad layers of functions and dissociative thoughts. Hyperbole, on the other hand, is a figure of speech that uses exaggeration to convey similar functions to that of satire when they only interface on pragma-contextual level. This demonstrates that the Quran's rhetorical power lies in the elegant harmony and deliberate disruption of its satirical use. in elegant harmony and deliberate disruption.

Bhat (2020) claim that the broad range of strategies employed by translators, including footnotes, literal translations, and explanatory notes, highlight that successful Qur'anic translation requires more than just cognitive or linguistic accuracy. But it also requires rhetorical sensitivity crucial to conveying complex literary devices like hyperbole and satire or both without altering or manipulating their intended meaning.

A few research has focused on hyperbole in the Qur'an, for instance, Hussin et al., (2021) said that hyperbole is widely used in the delivery of holy texts such as the Quran and Hadith. Hussin et al., (2021) argues that hyperbole is used to express something more effective and make an impact on the listener.

Traditional literary analysis of hyperbole (e.g., Gibbs, 1994; Graesser et al., 1996) focuses on structural and grammatical elements and usually overlooks the essential pragma-social context needed to understand speaker intent. The research of Yus (2012) investigates hyperbole through semantic analysis alongside lexical and syntactic examination. These studies fail to examine the pragmatic

functions of hyperbole and do not investigate how hyperbolic expressions create meaning within social, psychological, and ideological contexts.

Some authors have worked on some other figures of speech in the Qur'an, Al Aqad et al., (2019), for instance, investigated how 'pun' as a figure of speech was translated by Arberry and Pickthall. Authors concluded that Arberry and Pickthall translation is less accurate in maintaining the rhetoric and linguistic features of pun in their rendering of the Holy Quran into English. It is argued that mistranslation and misunderstanding of pun meaning occur in translating semantic and linguistic features due to the cultural gap and inaccuracy in choosing the right equivalence, as the Quranic language has its own lexicons, which is culturally bound.

Scholars conduct major discussions about the characteristics of figurative language such as hyperbole within the Qur'an. Figurative language contains inherent deception according to many Western scholars who claim that it deviates from actual reality. However, this perspective has been faced by Islamic scholars seeing hyperbole as a deliberate and strategic rhetorical device in the Qur'an. Abdel Haleem (2004), for instance, emphasizes that hyperbolic utterances in the Qur'an are not mere embellishments but are deeply integrated into its theological and ideological framework.

Hand by hand with Haleem's perspective, this study strongly argues that hyperbole is a central rhetorical device in the Qur'an, used strategically to achieve specific stylistic effects and convey complex theological and ideological messages.

Mohamad and Sahad (2021), for instance, demonstrate how orientalist translations often distort the intended nuances of Quranic meanings, while the current study investigates how the Quran's use of satire and hyperbole actively addresses such misinterpretations through the figurative and rhetorical power of the divine Message. In translation studies, the absence of a direct equivalent for hyperbole in Arabic poses additional challenges. Terms such as *itnāb* (verbosity), *ighrāq* (intensification), and *ghulū* (overstatement) partially capture the essence of hyperbole but fail to convey its full rhetorical impact. Existing translations often dilute the intensity of hyperbolic expressions, as noted by Al-Badawi (2012), who critiques classical translations for their inability to preserve the Qur'an's rhetorical force. This underscores the need for innovative translation strategies, such as the proposed *post-modified adjectival translation strategy*, which prioritizes functional and rhetorical equivalence.

While Abuisaac et al. (2021) demonstrate the Qur'anic use of irony to expose how irony as head of figures of speech acts, especially those function at the pragma-rhetorical level, this study specifically investigates the strategic deployment of *satire* and *hyperbole* that both serve as strongly divine rhetorical weapons. This is because of the fact that satirical expressions in the Qur'an often draw on both direct and indirect forms of criticism, as discussed by Ibrahim (2008) and Hodgart. This study further explores how satire functions in Qur'anic texts, using rhetorical devices to challenge societal norms and beliefs.

According to Relevance Theory, the interpretation of satirical and hyperbolic utterances is not merely a matter of decoding or encoding, but involves a dynamic process of inferential understanding, shaped by the relationship between the speaker and the hearer. The theory is particularly useful for analyzing how satiric and hyperbolic expressions convey indirect meaning, often through a mocking or contemptuous attitude toward societal beliefs or norms. Wilson (2013) further elaborates on the importance of contextual factors in interpreting such utterances, which aligns with the Qur'anic use of hyperbole and satire to convey complex theological and ideological messages.

The present study also engages with the work of Taha (2012), who identified various functions of satire and hyperbole in literary texts. These include the socio-aggressive function (where satire and hyperbole are used to indirectly harm the addressee), the evaluative function (where satire and hyperbole are used to praise at the locutionary level but undermine at the illocutionary level), and the emotional function (where these figures of speech manipulate emotions to effect change). These functions are particularly relevant to understanding how hyperbole and satire are employed in the Qur'an, not only as rhetorical devices but as instruments of social, ideological, and emotional influence.

This study adopts a unique methodology that combines a pragmatic framework with the analysis of hyperbolic and satirical elements. As indicated by Gibbs & Colston (2007), linguistic and extra-linguistic elements are vital to understanding hyperbole therefore this research will show that Qur'anic hyperbolic and satiric expressions deliver varied meanings and perform diverse functions at multiple levels. The analysis covers social and psychological aspects as well as ideological dimensions that traditional methods tend to ignore.

The present study bridges the gap between theoretical and practical approaches to translating hyperbolic and satiric expressions in the Qur'an. By integrating linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural dimensions, this research provides



a comprehensive framework for analyzing these rhetorical devices. It challenges the structuralist focus of previous studies, demonstrating that hyperbole and satire in the Qur'an are not merely stylistic devices but are instrumental in shaping its ideological and theological discourse.

Furthermore, this study argues that the pragmatic functions of hyperbole and satire—such as critiquing societal norms, evoking emotional responses, and conveying ideological messages—are central to understanding their role in Qur'anic discourse. By adopting the *Post-Modifier Translation Strategy*, this research may propose a novel lens for interpreting these rhetorical devices, highlighting their dynamic interplay with context and audience perception.

### 3. Method

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to investigate the interplay between satire and hyperbole in the Qur'anic discourse and its English translation. The methodology is divided into four key sections: research design, data samples, analytical frameworks, and translational strategies. Each section is meticulously designed to ensure a comprehensive and systematic examination of the research problem.

#### 3.1 Research Design

Given the intricate nature of the study, a qualitative research approach is deemed most appropriate. This method enables a nuanced exploration of the rhetorical, pragmatic, and translational dimensions of the Qur'anic texts. It facilitates an in-depth investigation of how satire and hyperbole converge to produce layered meanings and the extent to which these meanings are preserved or altered in translation. The qualitative design also supports the cognitive and contextual analysis required to uncover the subtleties of discourse in both the source and target texts.

#### 3.2 Data Samples

The study focuses on five Qur'anic texts that exhibit both satirical and hyperbolic elements. These texts were selected based on the following criteria:

1. The presence of normative rhetorical meanings,
2. The dynamics of the addresser-addressee relationship,
3. The intended meanings derived from the cognitive and conceptual interplay of discourse variables,
4. The manifestation of illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, and

5. Compliance with felicity conditions essential for effective communication.

To ensure the suitability of the texts for analysis, a bilingual professional translator assessed their relevance, interpretability, and investigability. These examples represent diverse rhetorical and pragmatic contexts, providing a robust foundation for analyzing the complexities of satire and hyperbole in Qur'anic discourse and their translation into English.

### 3.3 Analytical Frameworks

The pragmatic analysis is grounded in Sperber and Wilson's (1988) Relevance Theory, which serves as a cognitive framework for interpreting human communication. Relevance Theory emphasizes the inferential processes involved in decoding meaning, particularly in contexts where language carries rhetorical and pragmatic complexity.

This framework allows the study to analyze how Qur'anic satire and hyperbole convey multi-layered meanings through echoic use and contextual references. The theory's focus on the speaker's intentions and the audience's interpretive efforts is particularly effective in unraveling the nuances of hyperbolic-satirical expressions, including their socio-cultural and situational implications. To interpret these satiric and hyperbolic expressions, this study adopts Sperber and Wilson's (1981, 1986) Relevance Theory, which offers a framework for understanding the inferential and referential processes involved in human communication.

#### 3.3.1 Taha's (2012) Framework of Satirical Functions

To complement Relevance Theory, Taha's (2012) model is employed to categorize the functions of satire into socio-aggressive, evaluative, and emotional dimensions. This dual-framework approach provides a comprehensive lens through which the rhetorical and pragmatic features of Qur'anic satire and hyperbole can be understood and analyzed.

#### 3.3.2 Translational Strategies

##### *Theory of Translational Equivalence*

The translational analysis is guided by Nida and Taber's (2003) Theory of Equivalence, which evaluates the extent to which Arberry's English translation

preserves the rhetorical and pragmatic intricacies of the original Qur'anic texts. This framework considers:

- a. The fidelity of lexical and syntactic correspondence,
- b. The adequacy of pragmatic equivalence in capturing illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, and
- c. The translator's handling of the historical and situational contexts embedded in the source text.

### 3.3.3 Proposed Post-Modifier Adjectival Translation Strategy

As a supplementary new proposed analytical tool, the post-modifier adjectival translation strategy is utilized to assess how adjectival modifiers can effectively convey the implicit nuances of hyperbolic-satirical expressions. This strategy is particularly relevant in cases where Arberry's translation falls short of capturing the full rhetorical and pragmatic depth of the original text.

The post-modifier adjectival strategy is evaluated for its ability to retain the Qur'anic discourse's stylistic density, cultural resonance, and communicative intent. By integrating this strategy, the study bridges the gaps in translational equivalence, ensuring a more accurate and faithful representation of the source text's rhetorical essence.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Text 1:

#### a) Arabic Version

وَقَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِي نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ إِنَّكَ لَمَجْنُونٌ

B) Transliteration: wa qālū yā ayyūhā al-ladhī nuzzila ‘alayhi al-dhikru innaka la majnūn

#### 3) English translation by Arberry (1955)

b) 15:6 *"They say: 'Thou, upon whom the Remembrance is sent down, thou art assuredly possessed!'"*

#### 4.1.1 Pragma-semantic and translational analysis of the text

The verse “وَقَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِي نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ إِنَّكَ لَمَجْنُونٌ” offers a rich interplay of rhetorical and pragmatic dimensions. Pragmatically, the utterance operates as a satirical assault on the Prophet’s claims of divine revelation. The mocking tone in “يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِي نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ” addresses the Prophet directly with feigned reverence, only to undermine it with the climactic assertion “إِنَّكَ لَمَجْنُونٌ”, which hyperbolically labels him as insane. This ridicule challenges both the credibility of the Prophet and the plausibility of the Qur’an’s divine origin. Speech act analysis reveals a declarative illocutionary act with a dismissive intent, implying that the Prophet’s declarations are the product of delusion rather than revelation.

Relevance Theory highlights a deliberate violation of the maxim of quality, as the speakers knowingly distort the truth to provoke doubt among the audience, thereby amplifying their disbelief. From Taha’s framework, this utterance fulfills theological, aggressive, and psychological functions: it aims to reject the divine message, discredit its messenger, and intensify the social hostility faced by the Prophet.

In Arberry’s translation, “*they say, 'Thou art assuredly possessed!'*”, the essence of the mockery is preserved through the term “possessed,” but its cultural depth is somewhat diluted. While “possessed” captures the theological implications of insanity in the Arabic context, it does not fully convey the layered insult implied by “إِنَّكَ لَمَجْنُونٌ”, which carries connotations of madness and irrationality. Additionally, the intensifier “إِنَّكَ” in the Arabic text, which underscores the emphatic tone of the accusation, is understated in the translation. A term like “madman” might have more effectively mirrored the intended ridicule while maintaining the cultural nuance.

#### 4.1.2 Analysis and translation using the post-modifier translation strategy

*Phase 1: Transposition of premodified adjectival phrase into post-modified adjectival clause*

The phrase “لَمَجْنُونٌ” (translated as “possessed” in Arberry’s version) will be restructured into a post-modified adjectival clause to preserve its rhetorical and cultural connotations.

- a. Original: “إِنَّكَ لَمَجْنُونٌ”
- b. Initial Translation: “You are undoubtedly insane.”
- c. Transposed Version: “You are a man who is insane.”

This restructuring shifts the emphasis from the direct predicate to a descriptive clause, making it more specific and stylistically intense.

### *Phase 2: Insertion of an Adverb to Intensify the Meaning*

To reflect the emphatic tone of "إِنَّكَ", an adverb of intensity is added. Thus, the revised translation is "You are a man who is utterly insane." The adverb "utterly" captures the force of the Arabic intensifier "إِنَّكَ" and aligns with the satirical and hyperbolic tone of the original.

### *Phase 3: Use of present tense to add more figurative power*

The figurative strength of the original will be emphasized by using present-tense constructions and introducing a relative clause that mirrors the dynamic rhetorical power of the Arabic. This leads to:

### **Recommended English translation:**

*And they said, 'O you to whom the Reminder has been sent down, you are a man who is utterly and relentlessly insane.*

To sum, this translation captures the ongoing nature of the accusation and adds rhetorical intensity, aligning with the layered meaning of the original Arabic. This is achieved by:

- Replacing the simple adjectival structure of "insane" with a post-modified clause to highlight its descriptiveness.
- Adding adverbs to match the intensifying elements in the original Arabic ("إِنَّكَ").
- Maintaining the rhetorical power and cultural depth through a figurative yet faithful representation of the original text.

## **4.2 Text 2**

### **a) Arabic Version**

b) جَعَلَ الْآلِهَةَ إِلَٰهًا وَاحِدًا إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجَبٌ

**Transliteration:** Aja'ala al-ālihah ilāhān wāḥidan, inna hādhā lashay' 'ujāb.

### **c) English translation by Arberry (1955)**

38:5 What, has he made the gods One God? This is indeed a marvellous thing.

### **4.2.1 Pragma-semantic and translational analysis of the text**

The verse "أَجْعَلِ الْإِلَهَةَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجَابٌ" encapsulates a rhetorical rejection of monotheism through satire and incredulity. The rhetorical question, "أَجْعَلِ الْإِلَهَةَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا", is laced with sarcasm, portraying the unification of deities into one God as both illogical and absurd. This incredulity is heightened by the emphatic phrase "إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجَابٌ", which hyperbolically labels the concept as not only strange but utterly marvellous in its perceived implausibility.

Pragmatically, the verse functions as a mockery of theological innovation, leveraging the audience's attachment to polytheistic traditions to cast doubt on monotheism. The speech act here combines exclamatory sarcasm with an implicit challenge to the credibility of Islamic theology.

Relevance Theory reveals how the speakers violate the maxim of quality to provoke a cognitive reassessment of the theological shift introduced by Islam, emphasizing the perceived strangeness of monotheism. In Taha's framework, the verse serves a theological function by rejecting monotheism, an aggressive function by ridiculing the Islamic message, and a psychological function by sowing doubt and resistance.

Arberry's translation, "What, has he made the gods One God? This is indeed a marvellous thing," effectively conveys the rhetorical question's incredulity through the exclamatory "What," but the term "marvellous" underplays the negative connotations of "عَجَابٌ". A more fitting translation might use terms like "strange" or "absurd," which better capture the disdain and ridicule in the original Arabic. Additionally, while the translation retains the rhetorical structure, it could benefit from a stronger emphasis on the speakers' sarcastic tone to fully convey the verse's pragmatic intent.

#### 4.2.2 Analysis and translation using the post-modifier translation strategy

*Phase (1): Transposition of premodified adjectival phrase into post-modified adjectival clause*

The emphatic phrase "إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجَابٌ" (rendered as "This is indeed a marvellous thing" in Arberry's version) is restructured to shift focus from the predicate to a descriptive clause.

- a. Original: "إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجَابٌ"
- b. Initial Translation: "This is a marvellous thing."
- c. Transposed Version: "This is something that is marvellously strange."

The transposition introduces a more vivid descriptive structure, emphasizing the rhetorical and sarcastic tone.

*Phase (2): Insertion of an adverb to intensify the meaning*

To reflect the intensity of the Arabic "لَشَيْءٍ عَجَابٌ", an adverb has to be used to heighten the sarcasm and ridicule implied in the original. This results in this translation "this is something that is utterly and marvellously strange". This addition amplifies the incredulity and hyperbolic disdain conveyed by the speakers.

*Phase (3): Use of present tense to add more figurative power*

The rhetorical structure of the verse is emphasized using a present-tense construction for immediacy and relevance, along with terms that better capture the sarcastic tone of "عَجَابٌ". This version maintains the rhetorical question's exclamatory nature, aligns with the layered mockery, and intensifies the emotional charge with stronger descriptors like "absurd." This leads to

**Revised English translation**

*What! Has he made all the gods into one God? This is something that is utterly absurd and marvellously strange., and*

This recommended translation can be achieved by:

1. Shifting and adding the post-modified adjectival clause (something that is..) to capture the richness of the Arabic structure and mirrors the rhetorical force.
2. Emphasizing the adverbs "utterly" and "marvellously" align with the hyperbolic sarcasm of the original text.
3. Emphasizing the figurative power by adding "absurd" to reflect the disdainful tone of "عَجَابٌ" more accurately than "marvellous" better resonating with the cultural and rhetorical intent of the original Arabic.

**4.3 Text 3**

**a) Arabic Version**

أَفْ لَكُمْ وَلِمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

**b) Transliteration:** Uffin lakum wa limā ta'budūn min dūni Allāh, afalā ta'qilūn

**c) English translation by Arberry (1955)**

21:67 “Fie upon you and that you serve apart from God! Do you not understand?”

#### 4.3.1 Pragma-semantic and translational analysis of the text

The verse “أَفَلَا لَكُمْ وَلِمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ” is a potent expression of contempt and critique against idol worship. The phrase “لَكُمْ أَفَ” is a direct exclamation of scorn, denouncing both the audience and their idols with unambiguous disdain. This is followed by “وَلِمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ”, which explicitly targets the futility of their worship practices, linking their idolatry to irrationality.

The rhetorical question “أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ” intensifies the critique by questioning their capacity for reason, implying that their actions lack both logic and spiritual insight. Pragmatically, this verse combines satire and hyperbole to challenge deeply ingrained beliefs, using contempt as a tool to provoke self-reflection and critique. The speech act functions as a condemnatory declaration, with an implicit call for the audience to abandon idolatry and embrace monotheism. Relevance Theory highlights how this verse violates the maxim of relevance by employing exaggerated contempt to prompt a reassessment of idol worship, while Taha’s framework underscores its theological function of rejecting polytheism, its aggressive function of undermining idol worshippers, and its psychological function of expressing frustration and urgency.

Arberry’s translation, “Fie upon you and that you serve apart from God! Do you not understand?”, captures the disdain well, but the phrase “Fie upon you” feels archaic and may not resonate with modern audiences. A contemporary equivalent such as “shame on you” or “Woe to you” might better convey the scorn. Additionally, while the rhetorical question “Do you not understand?” effectively reflects the critique of irrationality, it could be strengthened by emphasizing the frustration and urgency inherent in the Arabic text.

#### 4.3.2 Analysis and translation using the post-modifier translation strategy

*Phase (1): Transposition of premodified adjectival phrase into post-modified adjectival clause*

The core phrase “أَفَ لَكُمْ” is restructured into a post-modified construction to capture the layered contempt.

a. Original: “أَفَ لَكُمْ وَلِمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ”



- b. Initial Translation: "Shame on you and on what you worship apart from God!"
- c. Transposed Version: "Shame on you and on those things that you worship apart from God!"

This restructuring introduces a more explicit focus on the objects of worship, enhancing the clarity and impact.

*Phase (2): Insertion of an adverb to intensify the meaning*

To convey the intensity of the scorn in “ف” an adverb is added to amplify the contemptuous tone.

*Phase (3): Use of present tense and addition of figurative power*

The rhetorical question “أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ” will be rephrased to enhance its urgency and frustration. A dynamic present-tense structure is used to reflect immediacy. This leads to:

### **Recommended English translation**

*Shame deeply on you and on those things that you persistently worship apart from God! Can you not see the foolishness of your actions?*

*This recommended translation adheres to the post-modifier strategy by:*

**Phase (1):** restructuring the phrase, the critique more effectively targets both the idol worshippers and the objects of their devotion.

**Phase (2):** emphasizing the adverbs "deeply" and "persistently" reinforce the scorn and emphasize the futility of idolatry.

**Phase (3):** adding more figurative power by rephrasing the rhetorical question explicitly and highlighting the irrationality and frustration intended in the original Arabic, resonating more powerfully with modern audiences. This translation seeks to preserve the theological, aggressive, and psychological dimensions of the verse, ensuring that the layered contempt and urgency remain intact.

#### **4.4 Text (4)**

- a. **Arabic Version**

"قَالُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا وَمَا أَنْزَلَ الرَّحْمَنُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا تَكْذِبُونَ"

b) **Transliteration:** Qālū mā antum illā basharun mithlunā wa mā anzala al-Raḥmānu min shay'in in antum illā takdhibūn.

c) **English translation by Arberry (1955)**

36:15 "They said, 'You are naught but mortals like us; the All-merciful has not sent down anything. You are speaking only lies'".

#### 4.4.1 Pragma-semantic and translational analysis of the text

The utterance "مَا أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا" translated as "you are naught but mortals like us" illustrates, based on their violated expectations, that the unbelievers' rejection of the divine truth revealed to Prophet Muhammad. In this case, the expectation is that divine revelation would not be bestowed upon an individual from their own social sphere. The expression thus functions to ridicule the Prophet's role and status, creating an implicit denial of his legitimacy and the divine message he bears.

The speech act is framed through an ironical or satirical lens, wherein the denouncement of the Prophet's humanity directly contrasts with the divine truth he represents, and this dissonance is heightened through hyperbole, which amplifies the sense of exaggeration in their rejection. The illocutionary force here is one of rejection and scorn, undermining the Prophet's legitimacy by asserting that he is merely a human, as opposed to the divinely chosen messenger.

In Taha's framework, the satire-hyperbole interface generates theological and social functions. Theologically, the unbelievers mock the notion of divine revelation. Socially, their denial reflects resistance to the societal change proposed by the Prophet. Their statement, "مَا أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا", hyperbolically reduces the Prophet and his companions to ordinary mortals, underscoring their disbelief in divine legitimacy. The repeated particle "إِنْ إِلَّا" adds emphasis to their accusations, creating dissociative meanings that undermine the credibility of the Messengers.

Nida's *Translational Equivalence* theory emphasizes the need for semantic and syntactic fidelity while adapting the text for the target language audience. Arberry's translation retains much of the original message but introduces several structural shifts, notably in the rendering of the Arabic particle "إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا تَكْذِبُونَ" as "you are speaking only lies." This shift, while grammatically correct, fails to fully capture the satiric and hyperbolic nuances of the original. The translation employs a grammatical *transposition* technique by converting a

nominal phrase into a verbal phrase, yet the *pragmatic* layer of satire—especially the ironic denial of the truth—remains less explicit in the English version. The translation does not fully carry over the intensity of the rejection, which in the Arabic version conveys a deeply scornful tone. Thus, the pragmatic implications of sarcasm and hyperbole in the original text are somewhat diminished.

#### 4.4.2 Analysis and translation using the post-modifier translation strategy

*Phase (1): Transposition of premodified adjectival phrase into post-modified adjectival clause.*

In this phase, we take the verb phrase "like us" and turn it into a post-modified adjectival clause "who are just like us".

- *Original: "مِثْلَنَا" ("like us") is the verb clause implicitly functioning as adjectival phrase.*
- *Post-modification: Convert the premodifying phrase into a relative clause to make it a more descriptive, post-modified adjectival phrase. So, "مِثْلَنَا" ("like us") becomes "who are just like us". Now, the sentence becomes "post-modified sentence" "you are naught but mortals who are just like us." This change gives a fuller description, shifting from a simple premodifier "like us" to a more descriptive relative clause.*

*Phase (2): Add an adverb of certainty within the adjectival phrase*

In this phase, the adjectival phrase is intensified by adding an adverb. This is to make the rejection more forceful. The adverb chosen in this case could be "absolutely" or "truly" to heighten the intensity of the statement. The phrase "just like us" could be intensified by adding "absolutely" before it, indicating the strong, unyielding rejection of the Prophet's legitimacy.

*Phase (3): Use a proper tense to add more figurative power*

In this phase, there is more focus on the tense to capture the ongoing nature of the rejection. Since the disbelievers are consistently and continuously rejecting the Prophet's legitimacy, the present tense works best. The present tense is used to highlight that this rejection is not a one-time event but a continuing denial. The phrase already has a strong present tense verb in "are" which reflects the ongoing nature of the disbelievers' attitude. Thus, this lead to:

### Recommended English version:

*"You are absolutely naught but mortals who are absolutely just like us."*

#### 4.5 Text (5)

##### a) Arabic version

“وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ”

b) Transliteration: “Wa’idhā Qīla lahum lā tufsidū fī al-‘arḍi qālū innamā naḥnu muṣliḥūn”

##### c) English translation by Arberry (1955):

2:11 “When it is said to them, 'Do not corruption in the land', they say, 'We are only ones that put things right.'”

#### 4.5.1 Pragma-semantic and translational analysis of the text

In this text, the Qur’ānic verse reveals a satiric speech act embedded in the context of the speakers’ dissociative thoughts. The dialogue reflects a scenario in which the speakers assert a morally corrupt position while simultaneously claiming to uphold righteousness. The phrase “إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ” translated as “we are only reformers” represents a hyperbolic contradiction to the earlier stated corruption (cf. 2:10, “they are speaking lies”).

The satiric function arises from the juxtaposition between their self-perception as reformers and the actual corruption they propagate, a function further emphasized by the adverbial particle “إِنَّمَا,” which stresses the exclusivity of their claim to be “reformers,” while in reality, they contribute to corruption and destruction.

According to Sperber and Wilson’s *Relevance Theory*, the dissociation between the speakers’ beliefs and actions creates a *cognitive* contradiction, which in turn generates *conversational implicature*—i.e., the intended meaning is inferred by the hearer through context, revealing the inherent satire. Their claim to be “putting things right” is a clear violation of truthfulness and thus, it leads to the production of rhetorical hyperbole. This creates a paradox where the speakers present themselves as “reformers” even though their actions are inherently corrupt.

In line with Taha’s framework, the primary functions are: 1) a psychological denial of the truth (their inability to recognize their corruption),

and 2) a theological denial of their actions as harmful (their false self-assessment as reformers).

In the English translation, the phrase “لَا تُفْسِدُوا” is rendered as “do not corruption,” which is a grammatically incorrect rendering in English. The verb “تُفْسِدُوا” is more accurately translated as “corrupt,” and the correct noun is “corruption.” The mistranslation alters the original meaning, as it distorts the grammatical relationship between the verb and its object. Additionally, the term “إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ” is translated as “we are only ones that put things right”. The noun “مُصْلِحُونَ” is transposed into the verb phrase “put things right,” and the post-modifier “right” is introduced to emphasize the reformers’ self-assessment. This shift alters the function of the translation, as it weakens the hyperbolic tone of the Arabic text. The adjective “right” implies a more neutral or positive action than the Arabic term, which carries a more pejorative connotation. The translation also fails to capture the satiric nature of the original utterance, where the self-proclaimed “reformers” are, in reality, agents of corruption. The pragmatic force of hyperbole, as conveyed by the Arabic particle “إِنَّمَا,” is softened in English, reducing the impact of the satire.

#### 4.5.2 Analysis and translation using the post-modifier translation strategy

*Phase (1): Transposition of the adjectival phrase into a post-modified adjectival clause*

The premodifier adjectival phrase in the original Arabic is “مُصْلِحُونَ” (reformers), translated by Arberry as “we are reformers” is replaced with a **post-modified adjectival clause** “we are those who claim to put things right”. This gives it a more descriptive structure, emphasizing and highlighting their self-assessment and self-proclaimed role as reformers rather than their self-perception allusion.

*Phase (2): Insertion of an adverb to intensify the meaning*

An adverb of certainty is added to convey a stronger contradiction. The adverb “only” is already present in the translation, but we could intensify the satire with adverbs like “absolutely” or “utterly”. The addition of “absolutely” may strengthen their claim, highlighting their sole focus on reform despite the underlying contradiction. The use of “absolutely” emphasizes the corrupted leaders’ unwavering self-assessment, making their rejection of corruption even more intense, while the “claim to put things right” clarifies the dissonance between their self-image and actual actions.

*Phase (3): Use of present tense to add more figurative power*

The present tense is already in use with “we are”, indicating that the claim is ongoing. The present tense works well in this context because the speakers' self-assessment as reformers is continuous, and the contradiction in their actions is an ongoing issue. This leads to:

**Recommended English translation**

When it is said to them, 'Do not corrupt the earth,' they say, 'We are absolutely those who claim to put things right.'

This is achieved by:

- a. *Transposing* “مُصْلِحُونَ” (reformers) into the post-modified clause: “those who claim to put things right.”
- b. *Addition* “absolutely” to intensify the speakers' claim of being reformers.
- c. Using of the present tense “we are” in both the Arabic and the modified translation, which reflects the ongoing, continuous nature of the speakers' actions and self-assessment.

## 5. Conclusion

This study has examined how satire interfaces with hyperbole to emphasize the role of situational context, pragmatic shades of meaning, discourse variables, and historical-cultural context in interpreting the multilayered meanings of satiric hyperbolic utterances. The findings highlight that these factors are indispensable in fully grasping the intended meanings embedded within such utterances.

The application of Relevance Theory proves to be essential in interpreting rhetorical speech. This theory effectively handles the complexities of interrelated figures and tropes, such as the interplay of satire with hyperbole, paradox, and pun, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding such nuanced expressions.

However, the study identifies significant gaps in the cognitive and pragmatic-associative meanings of satiric hyperbolic utterances within the Qur'ān, especially when conveyed in English. These meanings are often constrained by semantic limitations, where connotative representations diverge significantly from

denotative ones. This results in English equivalents that fail to capture the richness of the original, leading to misunderstandings among target readers. The non-identical and non-interchangeable nature of satire and hyperbole across contexts further complicates accurate translation, underscoring the challenges of conveying the intended meaning.

To address these challenges, this study advocates for *a post-modifier adjectival translation strategy* as an effective tool for translating the interface of satire and hyperbole at the (para-linguistic) level. This strategy is particularly useful in capturing the figurative power of the original Arabic, preserving the ironic contradiction between words and actions, and enhancing the satirical impact of the text. The proposed diagram outlines the mechanisms of this strategy, offering practical insights into how to translate satiric hyperbolic expressions in the Holy Qur'ān into English with greater fidelity.

This study sheds light on the translational shortcomings of Arberry's rendering of the Qur'an, particularly in its treatment of satire and hyperbole—two rhetorical forces central to the text's cognitive and emotive depth. By remaining tethered to literal equivalence, Arberry's version often dilutes the rich pragmatic force and cultural nuance of the original Arabic. To remedy this, the study proposes a synergistic syntactic, pragma-cognitive model that unites Relevance Theory with the proposed Post-Modifier Adjectival Strategies, enabling translators to access deeper layers of meaning and preserve the text's rhetorical vibrancy. Such an approach paves the way for a more faithful and resonant translation of divine discourse. Future research is urged to develop this cognitive-pragmatic framework further, offering fresh pathways to interpret the Qur'an's most elusive rhetorical features and to sustain both its semantic fidelity and pragmatic impact.

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