

Evaluating the Accuracy and Consistency in Rendering Qur’anic Terms with Overlapping Meanings into English

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Abstract

The Holy Qur’an has many terms that exhibit a great similarity in meaning and may not be easily rendered into another language. The present study attempts to explore the accuracy of the lexical choices used to render the Arabic near-synonyms *ʾfawa*, *ṣafaḥa*, and *ḡafara* into English in three Translations of the Holy Qur’an; namely, Pickthall (1999), Ali (2001), and Al-Hilali and Khan (2018). The researchers carried out a compositional analysis for the Arabic words under study and their English equivalents based on their explanation in different Arabic and English dictionaries and exegeses. The study also investigates whether the translators maintain consistency in translating these words when they occur within the same verse and elsewhere. The findings show that the translators tended to use different English equivalents to the three Arabic words especially when they occur within the same verse, and sometimes failed to reflect the slight differences between them in their translations that they use them interchangeably. With regard to consistency, the study found that the three translators used various English equivalents to refer to the same Arabic word, but Al-Hilali & Khan and Ali were more consistent than Pickthall.

Keywords

Qur'an – translation – consistency – near synonymy – semantics

1 Introduction¹

Lexical semantics is defined as the branch of semantics that deals with word meanings.² It investigates the relations between words such as synonymy, hyponymy, polysemy, meronymy, and homonymy. These relations play an essential role in achieving coherence and cohesion in discourse through the use of related words. Synonymy, which is the main focus of this study, is the relation that exists between different words that have the same or very similar meanings.³ Cruse classifies synonyms into absolute synonyms, cognitive synonyms and near-synonyms.⁴ Absolute synonyms show complete similarity but are very rare or non-existent in languages. Cognitive synonyms are words with the same referent but differ in the non-propositional meaning.⁵ Differences may be in the connotation, effect, register, dialect, general use, specialized vocabulary, or even language.⁶ Collocational range of synonymous words may vary as well. For example, the words *pretty* and *handsome* have the same sense, but are interchangeable as the former collocates with *girl*, while the latter collocates with *man*. Moreover, synonymous words can have different styles or degrees of formality. For instance, the words *obtain* and *provide* are used formally while their synonyms *get* and *give* belong to the informal style, respectively.

Some lexical items may share a few aspects of meaning but differ in others. These are known as near-synonyms or plesionyms. For example, the words *kill* and *murder* are considered near-synonyms because they may contrast in certain contexts, no matter how similar they are. One can be denied while the other is affirmed as in the sentence “he was killed, but he was not murdered”.⁷

Synonyms are mostly used for stylistic purposes, which makes them plentiful in texts with rhetorical language such as the Holy Qur'an. They have

1 Date of Submission: 25.04.2020; Date of Acceptance: 20.07.2020.

2 George Yule, *The Study of Language: An Introduction* (New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 116.

3 John Saeed, *Semantics*, vol. 2, (Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), p. 65.

4 D. Alan Cruse, *Meaning in Language: An Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics*, (Oxford OUP, 2000), pp. 268-270.

5 Ibid, 270.

6 Lynne Murphy, *Semantic Relations and the Lexicon: Antonymy, Synonymy and Other Paradigms*, (Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 144-145.

7 D. Alan Cruse, *Meaning in Language: An Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics*, (Oxford OUP, 2000), Cruse, p. 159.

different functions in different contexts, depending on their meaning and usage.⁸ Although there are proponents and opponents of the existence of synonymy in the Holy Qur'an, this aspect does not lie within the domain of this study. It tackles words that seem to represent cases of near-synonymy.

Transferring synonyms in the Holy Qur'an into another language relies heavily on a deep understanding of the meaning of words.⁹ This makes it a complicated process that requires a great deal of accuracy.¹⁰ What adds to the complexity of the task is the uniqueness of the Arabic language,¹¹ where some words have more than one meaning and some others may be interpreted differently by different translators. Besides, several words have very similar meanings, but upon more in-depth semantic and contextual analysis, they convey relatively different meanings. Some translators may fail to capture all the shades of the meaning of the near-synonymous words and may not be able to reflect the minor differences between them, mainly when they occur in the same context. This, in turn, may hinder the proper conveying and understanding of the exact meaning of the verses of the Holy Qur'an, and therefore, consulting major Qur'anic exegeses and interpretations turns out to be a necessity. As a result, there is a pressing need to examine the translations of synonymous pairs and evaluate their English renderings in the different published translations. Hence, the present study is an attempt to answer the following questions:

- How accurate were the English equivalents used to render the three near-synonymous words *fawa*, *ṣafaḥa*, and *ḡafara* in three well-known English translations of the Qur'an, namely, Pickthall (1999),¹² Ali (2001),¹³ and Al-Hilali and Khan (2018)?¹⁴
- How consistent were the lexical choices of the translators when they rendered these words in the same verse and elsewhere?

8 Belqes Al-Sowaidi, "Textuality in near-Synonyms Translations of the Holy Qur'an into English", (University of the Western Cape, 2011), p. 306.

9 Linda S. Al-Abbas, "Near-Synonyms within the Same Qur'anic Verse: A Contrastive English-Arabic Lexical Analysis", (University of Jordan, 2019), p. 10.

10 Linda S Al-Abbas and Rajai Al-Khanji, "Near-Synonyms within the Same Qur'anic Verse: A Contrastive English-Arabic Lexical Analysis," *International Journal of English Linguistics* 9, no. 6 (2019), p. 133.

11 Thameem Ushama, "Issues in Translation of the Qur'an," *Al-Bayan: Journal of Qur'an Hadith Studies* 9, no. 1, (2011), p. 167.

12 Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an: Text and Explanatory Translation*, (Amana Publications, 1999), pp. 1-768.

13 Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *English Translation of the Holy Quran*, (Lushena Books, 2001), pp. 1-1759.

14 Muhammad Al-Hilali and Muhsin Khan, *Translation of the Meanings of the Noble Quran in the English Language*, (2018), pp. 1-978.

2 Theoretical Background and Literature Review

According to several researchers, synonymous pairs in the Holy Qur'an are all near-synonyms, and each term has a particular function, meaning, and connotations that cannot be conveyed by another word in the same context.¹⁵ There are many verses that include words with very similar meanings, but the distinction was made clear within the verses themselves. For instance, the words *ra'ina* and *unẓurna* in "yā ayyuhā al-ladīna āmanū lā taqūlū ra'ina wa qūlū unẓurna wa asma'ū" (O ye of Faith! Say not (to the Messenger) words of ambiguous import, but words of respect and hearken (to him)) have a very similar meaning, but the Qur'anic context indicates that Muslims were forbidden to use the former as it is mainly used by Jews.¹⁶

Translating near-synonyms into English is not an easy task since deleting one of the synonymous words will affect the overall meaning of the verse.¹⁷ At the same time, repeating the same word is not a welcome strategy as it is considered a demerit of style in English.¹⁸ This area attracted the attention of many scholars over the years. Similarly, Al-Sowaidi investigated the problems of translating four pairs of near-synonyms namely, *ǧaith* and *maṭar* (rain), *alḥalf* and *alqasam* (swearing), *baḥīl* and *ṣaḥīḥ* (stingy) and *ʿaqer* and *ʿaqīm* (sterile) from Arabic into English with reference to two translations namely, Yusuf Ali and T.B. Irving.¹⁹ The study found that both translators failed to maintain the depth of the Qur'anic message as well as the connotative shades of meanings of the original expression. In the same vein, Al-Jabri examined the problematic areas of translating synonyms related to *ḥawf* (fear) in the Holy Qur'an which include: *rahba*, *ḥašya*, and *faza'* in three translations: Pickthall, Yusuf Ali, and Shakir.²⁰ She followed the componential analysis approach to

15 Belqes Al-Sowaidi, "Textuality in near-Synonyms Translations of the Holy Qur'an into English" (University of the Western Cape, 2011), 303; Adel Hassan, "Readdressing the Translation of near Synonymy in the Glorious Qur'an," *European Scientific Journal* 10, no. 8, (2014), 22.

16 Mohammed Al-šāya', *al-Furūqu al-Luġawiyyatu wa Ātārūhā fī Tafsīri al-Qur'an al-Karīm*, (Riyad: al-Ukaybān Library, 1993), pp. 177-78.

17 Linda S Al-Abbas and Rajai Al-Khanji, "Lexical Analysis of Arabic near-Synonyms in the Holy Qur'an: A Case Study of Sanah and Aam," *International Journal of Linguistics* 11, no. 5, (2019), p. 155.

18 James Dickens et al., *Thinking Arabic Translation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 112.

19 Belqes Al-Sowaidi, "Textuality in near-Synonyms Translations of the Holy Qur'an into English", (University of the Western Cape, 2011), p. iii.

20 Samia Al-Jabri, "Lexical Synonyms in the Holy Qur'an and Their Translations: A Case Study", *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies, (IJAES)* 13, (2012), p. 7.

assess the semantic aspects of the synonymous lexical items. The study proved that there are differences among the related lexical items that were translated inaccurately in terms of choosing the suitable equivalent, except for the word *hawf*. The selected lexical items are usually translated into more general words in the target language. Hassan as well examined four pairs of synonyms in the Holy Qur'an namely, *rayb/šak* (doubt), *ḡaith/maṭar* (rain), *fu'ād/qalb* (heart) and *alḥalf/alqasam* (swearing) in four translations including Ali, Arberry, Irving and Ghali.²¹ The study found that the four translators have limitations in translating the near-synonyms adequately due to being unable to recognize the differences among the words under study, ignorant of the context, or inattentive to most of the linguistic and exegetical works of synonymy. In addition, Al Ghamdi examined the accuracy and consistency of the English translation of near-synonymous root-sharing Divine Names in the Holy Qur'an such as *ḡaffāwar/ḡafūr*.²² The study included five well-known English translations, namely, Pickthall, Yusuf Ali, Arberry, Al-Hilali & Khan, and Abdel-Haleem. He evaluated hundreds of occurrences of the root-sharing Divine Names critically and comparatively. The study revealed that all the five translations did not distinguish between the near-synonymous Names and rendered them inaccurately and inconsistently.

Although many studies tackled the problems of translating different synonyms in the Holy Qur'an, this study is unique as it investigates the only three synonymous words that occurred within the same context. This imposes more challenges in their translation, and further accuracy is needed to render them correctly into English to deliver the intended message behind the verse.

3 Methodology

In this study, three synonymous words are examined, namely, *fawa*, *ṣafaḥa*, and *ḡafara*. These words are chosen in particular as they are the only three successive near-synonyms occurring within the same verse in the Holy Qur'an. These three words are investigated in three well-known English translations, namely Pickthall (1999), Ali (2001), and Al-Hilali and Khan (2018). These translations are selected because they are among the most popular translations of the Holy Qur'an. Pickthall's 'The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an' has at least 27 editions.

21 Adel Hassan, "Readdressing the Translation of near Synonymy in the Glorious Qur'an," *European Scientific Journal*, 10, no. 8, (2014), p. 167.

22 Saleh Al Ghamdi, "Critical and Comparative Evaluation of the English Translations of the near-Synonymous Divine Names in the Quran", (University of Leeds, 2015), p. v.

It is one of the most widely used translations, completed by an English man of letters who accepted Islam and faithfully represented the sense of the original text.²³ Another extremely popular translation is "The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary" by the Indian Muslim scholar Abdullah Yusuf Ali. There are at least 35 editions of his work, and this translation stands out from others as being a highly readable rendering of the Holy Qur'an.²⁴ His translation is widely-known and used in the English-speaking world.²⁵ According to Peachy, "the translation of Yusuf Ali was judged by the Presidency of Islamic Research, Call and Guidance of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to be elegant and close to the meaning of the text".²⁶ The translation of Al-Hilali and Khan "is based on strong semantic meaning, which sometimes, is followed by a brief explanation between brackets in order to clarify the meaning of some vague words to the native speakers of English".²⁷

The data is collected from the Qur'anic Arabic Corpus <http://corpus.quran.com/>. This website offers different translations of the Holy Qur'an in addition to a Qur'an Dictionary. The data is arranged in tabular forms, and the collected near-synonyms are compared and contrasted in the three mentioned translations of the Holy Qur'an. In order to determine how accurate the translators were in rendering near-synonyms into English and how differences in meaning were reflected in their translations, a componential analysis (feature analysis or contrast analysis) is carried out. It is merely about analyzing the meaning of words based on semantic primitives (features or markers). In other words, "the meanings of words are analyzed not as unitary concepts but as complexes made up of components of meaning".²⁸ Since the focus of this study is synonymy, it is worth mentioning that a word can share similar features with their synonymous counterparts. The words under study are given their features after consulting three Qur'anic exegeses, namely, Ibnu 'asūr,²⁹

23 Abdur Rahim Kidwai, "A Survey of English Translations of the Quran," *The Muslim World Book Review* 7, no. 4, (1987), p. 4.

24 Samia Al-Jabri, "Lexical Synonyms in the Holy Qur'an and Their Translations: A Case Study" *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies, (IJAES)* 13, (2012), p. 11.

25 Ibid, p. 11.

26 Davut WS Peachy, "English Translations of the Qur'an and the Roles of Why, by Whom, for Whom and How," *Al-Bayan: Journal of Qur'an Hadith Studies*, 11, no. 2, (2013), p. 38.

27 Othman Al-Darraj, "An Investigation of Some Micro Level Differences in the Translation of Quran: A Comparative Study of Two English Translations of Surat Al-Fajr (the Dawn) by Mohsin Khan and Talal Itani at Semantic, Syntactic, and Stylistic Levels," *AL-Mukhtar Journal for Human Science* 31, (2015), p. 8.

28 Ruth Kempson, *Semantic Theory*, (Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 18.

29 Muhammad Ibnu 'asūr, *Tafsīru Al-Tahrīri Wa Al-Tanwīri*, (Tunisia: Dār Shahnun li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi', 1997), pp. 1-9700.

Al-Nasafi,³⁰ and Al-Bayḍāwī,³¹ and referring to two Arabic dictionaries, namely, *Lisānu Al-‘arabi* “The Arab Tongue”,³² and *Al-Kulliyātu: Mu‘jamun Fi Al-Mustaḥāḥātī Wa Al-Furūqi Al-Luḡawiyati* “A Glossary of Terminology and Linguistic Differences”.³³

4 Analysis

In order to carry out a componential analysis and determine the semantic features/ markers of the words under study, the researchers examined the meanings of *fawa*, *ṣafaḥa*, and *ḡafara* in Qur’anic exegeses (Table 1) and Arabic dictionaries (Table 2). After consulting the three different exegeses of the Holy Qur’an mentioned in the Methodology section, the researchers found that the three examined words are similar but have some slight differences as Table (1) shows.

TABLE 1 The meaning of the three investigated words in Qur’an exegeses

Word	Ibnu ‘asūr	Al-Nasafi	Al-Bayḍāwī
‘fawa	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Ignoring punishment for sin after being ready for it but reprimanding is possible.– Forgetting about people’s misdeeds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Realizing enmity but not acting in the same way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Giving up punishment.
Ṣafaḥa	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Ignoring punishment for a sin that someone committed without reprimanding.– Overlooking a misdeed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Ignoring reprimanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Ignoring and not blaming.
Ġafara	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Concealing and not revealing a sin.– Covering, veiling, and concealing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Concealing a sin.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Concealing a sin.

30 Abdullah Bin Ahmad Al-Nasafi, *Madāriku Al-Tanzīli Wa Ḥaqā’iqu Al-Ta’wīli*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kalim al-Tayyib, 1998), pp. 1-1600.

31 Nasir al-Dīn Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwāru Al-Tanzīli Wa Asrāru Al-Ta’wīli*, (Beirut: Dar Al-Fikr, 1963), pp. 1-1984.

32 Mohammad Ibn Manzūr, *Lisānu Al-‘arabi*, (Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1988), vol. 5, pp. 1-3534.

33 Abu Al-Buqa’ Al-Kaffawi, *Al-Kulliyātu: Mu‘jamun Fi Al-Mustaḥāḥātī Wa Al-Furūqi Al-Luḡawiyati* “a Glossary of Terminology and Linguistic Differences”, (Damascus/Beirut: Resalah Publishing, 1998), pp. 1-1226.

The words are also looked up in the two Arabic dictionaries mentioned above, namely, “The Arab Tongue”, and “A Glossary of Terminology and Linguistic Differences” as Table (2) shows.

Based on the two tables above, the researchers selected five features that distinguish these words from others, namely, ignoring punishment, reprimanding, concealing, obliterating, and rewarding. The semantic components of the investigated Arabic lexical items are shown in table (3).

TABLE 2 The meaning of the three words in two Arabic Dictionaries

Word	The arab tongue	A glossary of terminology and linguistic differences
ʿfawa	Ignoring the sin and punishment.	– Giving up punishment and blame and one is not necessarily rewarded. – It is used for the servants.
Şafaḥa	Ignoring the sin.	Şafaḥa is stronger than ʿfawa because it entails ignoring misdeeds as if they did not occur.
Ġafara	– Concealing the sin. – The etymology of the triliteral verb is to veil and conceal.	– Ġafara requires giving up punishment and obtaining a reward. – It is used for the believers who deserve it. – It also means ignoring any punishment and concealing the sin to avoid any shame or scandal.

TABLE 3 Componential analysis of the examined Arabic lexical items

Investigated Lexical items	The Semantic components				
	Ignoring punishment	Reprimanding	Concealing	Obliterating	Rewarding
ʿfawa	+	+	–	+	–
–					
May happen before or after punishment					
Şafaḥa	+	–	–	+	–
Ġafara	+	–	+	–	+

As Table (3) demonstrates, the three words involve giving up punishment. However, the act of “forgiveness” that is attached to *ʔawa* may happen before or after punishment. In terms of reprimanding, only *ʔawa* entails blaming and rebuking after giving up punishment. Regarding the committed sin, the word *ġafara* indicates concealing and not revealing it to others. However, the other two words involve wiping out the sin as if it was not committed in the first place. Only the word *ġafara* entails getting rewards from Allah which makes it particularly associated with Him and is not usually used with humans.

4.1 *ʔawa, ʂafaha, and Ġafara within the Same Verse*

There were five occurrences where at least two of the three words under study were mentioned within the same verse (Table 4). The three words, *ʔawa*, *ʂafaha*, and *ġafara*, were mentioned in the same verse twice; chapter 64 (verse 14) and chapter 24 (verse 22). In chapter 64, the three words were successively mentioned. However, in the other verse, *ʔawa* and *ʂafaha* occurred in a row, while *ġafara* was mentioned three words later. Two of the three investigated terms were used in the same verse three times; *ʂafaha* and *ʔawa* were mentioned in chapter 2 (verse 109) and chapter 5 (verse 13). *ʔawa* and *ġafara* were mentioned within the same verse one time in chapter 2 (verse 286).

In order to show how the translators differed in their lexical choices, the equivalents of *ʔawa*, *ʂafaha*, and *ġafara* given by each are listed in the tables below. In verse (14) of Sūrat Al-Taġabun, the words *ʔawa*, *ʂafaha*, and *ġafara* occurred successively (Table 5).

As Table (5) shows, each of the three translators used different English equivalents in order to avoid repetition. Al-Hilali & Khan used “pardon”, “overlook”, and “forgive”; Pickthall selected “efface”, “overlook” and “forgive”; while Ali opted for “forgive”, “overlook” and “cover up”. The translators were consistent in using “overlook” for *ʂafaha*. However, this was not the case for the other two words. On the one hand, Al-Hilali & Khan and Pickthall used “forgive” for *ġafara*, while Ali used another phrasal verb, which is “cover up”. On the other

TABLE 4 The occurrences of the investigated words within the same verse

Chapter/ Sūrat	Verse	<i>ʔawa</i>	<i>ʂafaha</i>	<i>ġafara</i>
Chapter (24) Al-Taġabun “Mutual Loss and Gains”	14	X	X	X
Chapter (24) Al-Nūr “The Light”	22	X	X	X
Chapter (2) Al-Baqarah “The Cow”	109	X	X	
Chapter (5) Al-Māidah “The Table spread with Food”	13	X	X	
Chapter (2) Al-Baqarah “The Cow”	286	X		X

TABLE 5 The occurrence of *fawa*, *ṣafaḥa*, and *ġafara* in chapter (64)

Chapter (64) al-Taġabun “Mutual Loss and Gain” ”يا أيها الذين آمنوا إن من أزواجكم وأولادكم عدوا لكم فاحذروهم وإن تعفوا وتصفحوا وتغفروا فإن الله غفور رحيم (14)”			
“Yā ayyuhā al-ladīna āmanū inna min azwāġikum wa awlādikum adūwan lakum fawḥḍarūhum wa in taʿfū wa tasfaḥū wa taġfirū fainna Allāha ġafūrun raḥīmun (14)”			
Word/Translator	<i>fawa</i>	<i>ṣafaḥa</i>	<i>ġafara</i>
Al-Hilali & Khan	pardon	overlook	forgive
Pickthall	efface	overlook	forgive
Ali	forgive	overlook	cover-up

hand, Ali used “forgive” for *fawa* while Al-Hilali & Khan and Pickthall selected “pardon” and “efface” respectively. The use of different English equivalents in the translation of the three words in this verse could stem from the translators’ need to vary the terms as they occurred in a row. Such variation contributes to the cohesion of the text as repetition is not a welcomed feature in English .

Similarly, in verse (24) of Sūrat Al-Nūr, the three words under study were present as Table (6) shows.

TABLE 6 The occurrence of *fawa*, *ṣafaḥa*, and *ġafara* in chapter (24)

Chapter (24) Al-Nūr “The Light” ”ولا يأتل أولو الفضل منكم والسعة أن يؤتوا أولي القربى والمساكين والمهاجرين في سبيل الله وليعفوا وليصفحوا ألا تحبون أن يغفر الله لكم والله غفور رحيم (22)”			
“Wa lā Y’tali ūlū al-faḍli minkum wa al-sa’ti an yu’tū ūlī al-qurbā wa al-masākīna wa al-muhāġirīna fī sabīli Allāhi wa līaʿfū wa līaṣfaḥū alā tuḥibbūna an yaġfira Allāhu lakum wa Allāhu ġafūrun raḥīmun (22)”			
Word/Translator	<i>fawa</i>	<i>ṣafaḥa</i>	<i>ġafara</i>
Al-Hilali & Khan	pardon	forgive	forgive
Pickthall	forgive	show indulgence	forgive
Ali	forgive	overlook	forgive

In this verse, only two of the synonymous words were mentioned in a row, namely, *fawa* and *ṣafaḥa* while the present form of the verb *ḡafara* formed part of another clause. This imposes less restriction on the translators to use the same English word for the investigated terms. For example, the word “forgive”, which seems to be the most preferred equivalent to the three words under study, was mentioned to refer to *fawa* and *ḡafara* by Pickthall and Ali and to *ṣafaḥa* and *ḡafara* by Al-Hilali & Khan. It is noticed that the three translators were all consistent in using “forgive” as an equivalent to *ḡafara*. However, they varied their selection of the English equivalents to the first two words; *fawa* and *ṣafaḥa*. Pickthall and Ali were consistent in using the word “forgive” for *fawa* while Al-Hilali & Khan used the same word as an equivalent to *ṣafaḥa*. By examining the translations of the previous two verses, it is clear that Al-Hilali & Khan were consistent in using “pardon” for *fawa* and “forgive” for *ḡafara*. Consistency is also apparent in the translation of Ali, who used “forgive” for *fawa* and “overlook” for *ṣafaḥa*. Pickthall showed no consistency in the selection of words except for the word *ḡafara*, which was translated as “forgive” in both verses.

In verse (109) of Sūrat Al-Baqarah, only *fawa* and *ṣafaḥa* occurred and were successive (Table 7).

TABLE 7 The occurrence of *fawa* and *ṣafaḥa* in chapter (2)

Chapter (2) al-Baqarah “The Cow”

”ود كثير من أهل الكتاب لو يردونكم من بعد إيمانكم كفارا حسدا من عند أنفسهم من بعد ما تبين لهم الحق فاعفوا واصفحوا حتى يأتي الله بأمره إن الله على كل شيء قدير (109)”

“Wadda kathīrun min ahli al-kitābi law yaruddūnakum min ba’di Īmānikum kuffawarāan ḥasadāan min ‘indi anfusihi min ba’di mā tabayyana lahumu al-ḥaqqu fawa’fū wa aṣṣaḥū ḥattā ya’tiya Allāhu bi’āmrihi inna Allāha ‘alā kulli šay’in qadīrun (109)”

Word/Translator	<i>fawa</i>	<i>ṣafaḥa</i>	<i>ḡafara</i>
Al-Hilali & Khan	forgive	overlook	x
Pickthall	forgive	be indulgent	x
Ali	forgive	overlook	x

Unlike verse (22) of Sūrat Al-Nur, where the translators opted for “forgive” to translate *ġafara*, the three used it here as an equivalent to *ʔawa*. This may be due to the non-occurrence of *ġafara* in the verse, i.e. when *ġafara* appears in the verse, “forgive” would be the first choice for the translators. Going through the translations of the first two verses discussed above, it can be observed that Ali is the only one who kept consistent in his use of “forgive” as an equivalent to *ʔawa*. Regarding *ṣafaḥa*, Ali, and Al-Hilali & Khan used “overlook” here. This indicates that Ali maintained some degree of consistency in his selection of words as he used “forgive” for *ʔawa* and “overlook” for *ṣafaḥa* in the three verses. Al-Hilali & Khan, on the other hand, used “pardon” for *ʔawa* in the previous two verses, and “forgive” in the third. He also used “overlook” for *ṣafaḥa* in verse 14 of chapter 64 and here while “forgive” in verse 22 of chapter 24. Pickthall proved to be the least consistent in the choice of words as he comes up with almost different translations each time the words occurred in sequence. For *ṣafaḥa*, he used “overlook”, “be indulgent”, and “show indulgence”. For *ʔawa*, the words “efface” and “forgive” were used, with the latter occurring in two verses.

In verse (13) of Sūrat Al-Māidah, as in the previous verse, only *ʔawa* and *ṣafaḥa* occurred and were successive (Table 8).

TABLE 8 The occurrence of *ʔawa* and *ṣafaḥa* in chapter (5)

Chapter (5) Al-Māidah “The Table spread with Food”			
”فَمَا تَقْضِيهِمْ مِّثْقَالَهُمْ لَعْنَاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَاسِيَةً يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ وَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى خَائِنَةٍ مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاصْفَحْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (13)”			
“Fabimā naqḏihim mītāqahum la’nnāhum wa ġa’alnā qulūbahum qāsiyatan yuḥarrifūna alkalima ‘an mawāḏi’ihi wa nasū ḥaẓẓan mimmā ḏukkirū bihi wa lā tazālu taṭṭali’u ‘alā ḥā’inatin minhum illā qalilan minhum <i>fa’fu</i> ‘anhum <i>waṣfaḥ</i> inna Allāha yuḥibbu almuḥsinīna”			
Word/Translator	<i>ʔawa</i>	<i>ṣafaḥa</i>	<i>ġafara</i>
Al-Hilali & Khan	forgive	overlook	x
Pickthall	bear with them	pardon	x
Ali	forgive	overlook	x

In verse (13) of Sūrat Al-Māidah, the words *fawa* and *ṣafaḥa* occurred without *ḡafara* just like the previously investigated verse. Al-Hilali & Khan and Ali were consistent in their use of the words “forgive” and “overlook” for *fawa* and *ṣafaḥa* respectively. In this verse, Pickthall opted for two words he did not use before, namely “bear with them” and “pardon”. This again demonstrates that Pickthall was not consistent in his choice of the English equivalents to the words under study.

In verse (286) of Sūrat Al-Baqarah, only *fawa* and *ḡafara* occurred (Table 9).

Table (9) demonstrates that the word *fawa* was followed only by *ḡafara* without the occurrence of *ṣafaḥa*. In this verse, Ali, who was consistent in using “forgive” for *fawa* in all the previous verses, used the phrasal verb “blot out” that was not used before neither by him nor by the other translators. Al-Hilali & Khan used “pardon” for *fawa* here, and this is the third time for them to use this word in the five previously discussed verses. What is noticeable here is that Al-Hilali & Khan tended to use “forgive” for *fawa* when the word *ḡafara* is not present in the verse. However, when it occurs within the sequence of the three words, they opted for “pardon”. Regarding Pickthall, as observed in the previous verses, he comes up with a different word each time he translates *fawa* into

TABLE 9 The occurrence of *fawa* and *ḡafara* in chapter (2)

Chapter (2) Al-Baqarah “The Cow”

“لا يكلف الله نفسا إلا وسعها لها ما كسبت وعليها ما اكتسبت ربنا لا تؤاخذنا إن نسينا أو أخطأنا ربنا ولا تحمل علينا إصرا كما حملته على الذين من قبلنا ربنا ولا تحملنا ما لا طاقة لنا به **واعف** عنا **واغفر** لنا وارحمنا أنت مولانا فانصرنا على القوم الكافرين (286)”

“lā yukallifu Allahu nafsan illā wus‘ahā lahā mā kasabat wa ‘alayhā mā iktasabat rabbanā lā tu’āḥiḍnā in nasīnā aw aḥṭ’nā rabbanā wa lā taḥmil ‘alaynā iṣran kamā ḥamaltahū ‘alā alladīna min qablinā rabbanā wa lā tuḥammilnā mā lā ṭāqata lanā bihi wa *fu* ‘nnā *waḡfir* lanā warḥamnā anta mawlānā fanṣurnā ‘alā alqawmi alkāfirīna”

Word/Translator	<i>fawa</i>	<i>ṣafaḥa</i>	<i>ḡafara</i>
Al-Hilali & Khan	pardon	x	grant us forgiveness
Pickthall	pardon	x	absolve us
Ali	blot out	x	grant us forgiveness

English, making his translation the least consistent. Moreover, Ali and Al-Hilali & Khan used “grant us forgiveness” for *ġafara*. Nevertheless, Al-Hilali & Khan proved to be more consistent than Ali. In the three occurrences of *ġafara*, they, Al-Hilali & Khan, used “forgive” twice and the third was a different derivation of the same word being “forgiveness”. Ali, on the other hand, varied the English equivalents to the three occurrences of *ġafara* being “cover up”, “forgive”, and “grant us forgiveness”. As in the previous verses, Pickthall used a different word for *ġafara*, which is “absolve us” and it is introduced for the first time in the translation of the five verses.

4.2 *The Occurrence of ʿfawa, Ṣafaḥa, and Ġafara in Different Qur’anic Verses*

In order to answer the research regarding the consistency of the lexical choice of the English equivalents to the investigated words when they occurred in the same verse and elsewhere, the researchers examined the translations of all occurrences of *ʿfawa*, *ṣafaḥa*, and *ġafara* in the Holy Qur’an.

4.2.1 ʿfawa

The trilateral root of the Arabic word *ʿfawa* was mentioned 35 times in the Holy Qur’an in different forms. These include the form I verb (27 times); nouns (7 times), and active participle (once). In this part, only the incidents of *ʿfawa* as a verb are examined. Examining the English equivalents in the 27 incidents of *ʿfawa*, we observed that 13 different verbs were used as Table (10) shows.

TABLE 10 The different translations of *ʿfawa* by the three translators

Verb	Al-Hilali & Khan	Pickthall	Ali
Forgive	14	13	15
Pardon	7	7	2
Pass over	2	X	2
Forego	3	3	X
Remit	X	X	4
Blot out	X	X	2
Others	1	4	2
Total	27	27	27

Table (10) shows that “forgive” is the most used equivalent to *ḥawa* with an average of 52% of the overall number of the used words. The translators used “forgive” with similar percentages; Al-Hilali & Khan 52%, Pickthall 48%, and Ali 56%. “Pardon” along with its derivatives, is occasionally used by Pickthall and Al-Hilali & Khan (both used it 7 times), and rarely selected by Ali (2 times). Though Pickthall and Al-Hilali & Khan used “pardon” equally, they used it 6 times in their translation of different verses. The only verse that the two translators used “pardon” as an equivalent to *ḥawa* was 286 of chapter 2. “Pass over” was used twice by both Ali and Al-Hilali & Khan, where the two interpreters used them in the same verses; namely 149 and 66 in chapters 4 and 9 respectively. Al-Hilali & Khan and Pickthall used “forgo” three times; again in the same verses. “Remit” and “blot out” along with their derivatives are only used by Ali 4 and 2 times respectively.

4.2.2 Ṣafaha

The trilateral root of the Arabic verb *ṣafaha* occurred 8 times in two derived forms; as a verb (6 times) and noun (2 times). In this part, the incidents of *ṣafaha* as a verb are thoroughly examined (Table 11).

The most predominantly used equivalent to *ṣafaha* is “overlook” with an average of 56% of overall times. Taking each translator separately, Ali used it the most with a percentage of about 83%, followed by Al-Hilali & Khan, who used it about 67%. Pickthall used it only once with an average of 16.6% of all occurrences. In fact, Pickthall proved to be the least consistent as he used 5 different forms, namely, be indulgent, pardon, forgive, bear with, and overlook. “Forgive” is used once by Al-Hilali & Khan in verse 22 of chapter 24 although they were

TABLE 11 The different translations of *ṣafaha* by the three translators

Chapter	Verse	Al-Hilali & Khan	Pickthall	Ali
64	14	overlook	overlook	overlook
5	13	overlook	pardon	overlook
15	85	overlook	forgive	overlook
2	109	overlook	be indulgent	overlook
24	22	forgive	show indulgence	overlook
43	89	turn away from them	bear with them	turn away from them

TABLE 12 Translation of verse 85 of chapter 15

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَآتِيَةٌ فَاصْفَحَ الصَّفْحَ الْجَمِيلَ	
“wa mā ḥalaqnā assamāwāti wa al’alrḍa wa mā baynahumā illā bilḥaqqi wa inna assā’ata la’ātiyatun <i>ṣaṣfaḥi alṣṣaḥḥa alḡamil</i> ”	
Pickthall	“We created not the heavens and the earth and all that is between them save with truth, and lo! the Hour is surely coming. So forgive , (O Muhammad), with a gracious forgiveness .”
Ali	“We created not the heavens, the earth, and all between them, but for just ends. And the Hour is surely coming (when this will be manifest). So overlook (any human faults) with gracious forgiveness .”
Al-Hilali & Khan	“And We created not the heavens and the earth and all that is between them except with truth, and the Hour is surely coming, so overlook (O Muhammad SAW), their faults with gracious forgiveness . [This was before the ordainment of Jihad holy fighting in Allah’s Cause].”

almost consistent in using “overlook”. This may be due to the presence of the other two investigated words, namely, *ṣawa* and *ḡafara*. In that verse, Al-Hilali & Khan tended to use “forgive” for both *ṣafaḥa* and *ḡafara* as they were not sequenced, and the latter was part of a different clause.

In verse 85 of chapter 15, Pickthall used *forgive* for *ṣafaḥa* as a kind of over-generalization since the words share the meaning of *forgiveness* (Table 12).

As table (12) shows, *ṣafaḥa* appeared in two forms in the verse; a verb (*ṣafaḥa*) and a noun (*ṣaḥḥ*). Pickthall used the different derivations of “forgive” with the two forms. The other two translations, Al-Hilali & Khan and Ali, used “overlook” for *ṣafaḥa*, and *forgiveness* for the noun *ṣaḥḥ*. Using a word with one of its derivations is preferable in Arabic. It is part of the eloquent style that the Holy Qur’an makes use of. However, this is not the case of the English language; where having two derivations of the same word does not sound rhetorical since repeated words result in a weak style of writing.

4.2.3 ḡafara

The trilateral root of the Arabic verb *ḡafara* occurs 234 times in the Qur’an; 65 of them are in the form I verb. In order to check whether the three translators

TABLE 13 The different translations of *ġafara* by the three translators

Chapter	Verse	Al-Hilali & Khan	Pickthall	Ali
2	286	grant us forgiveness	absolve us	grant us forgiveness
4	137	forgive	Pardon	forgive
7	151	forgive	have mercy on me	forgive
36	27	has forgiven	hath pardoned	granted me Forgiveness
47	34	forgive	pardon	forgive
71	7	forgive	pardon	forgive
64	14	forgive	forgive	<i>cover up</i>
63	6	<i>X</i>	forgive	forgive

were consistent in their translation of the verb *ġafara*, the researchers checked all of the 65 occurrences in different verses. The three translations under study used “forgive” as an equivalent to *ġafara* in almost all occurrences except for the ones mentioned in Table (13).

Table (13) shows that the most predominantly used equivalent by the three translators to *ġafara* is “forgive”. Al-Hilali & Khan used “forgive” (or one of its derivatives) to translate *ġafara* all the time and opted for deletion in one incident (see Table 14 below). Similarly, Ali used “forgive” as an equivalent to *ġafara* 64 times. Pickthall proved to be the least consistent in translating *ġafara* using 3 English equivalents other than “forgive”; namely “pardon” four times, “absolve” once, and “have mercy” once. Ali selected “cover up” to translate *ġafara* in verse 14 of chapter 64. In this particular verse (as discussed above), the other two investigated words (*fawa* and *ṣafaḥa*) occurred along with *ġafara*. This entailed the use of a different word for *ġafara* which is “cover up” as “forgive” was used as a translation of *fawa*. In verse 6 of chapter 63, Al-Hilali & Khan opted for not using an equivalent to the present form of the verb *ġafara* at all. This is justified by the fact that in this particular verse, two forms of the triliteral root “*ġayn fawa rā*” are mentioned; namely, *istaġfara* and *ġafara*. The former was used twice, and the latter once. Pickthall used the same root “forgive” with different derivations three times; while both Ali and Al-Hilali & Khan twice; the former (Ali) with *istaġfara* and *ġafara* and the latter (Al-Hilali & Khan) with *istaġfara* as Table (14) shows.

TABLE 14 Translation of verse 6 of chapter 63

<p>سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَسْتَغْفَرْتَ لَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ لَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ (6)</p>	
<p>“Sawā’un ‘alayhum ’astagfarta lahum am lam tastaḡfir lahum lan yaḡfira Allahu lahum; inna Allaha lā yahdi alqawma alfawasiqīna”</p>	
Pickthall	“Whether thou ask forgiveness for them or ask not forgiveness for them is all one for them; Allah will not forgive them. Lo! Allah guideth, not the evil-living folk.”
Ali	“It is equal to them whether thou pray for their forgiveness or not. Allah will not forgive them. Truly Allah guides not rebellious transgressors.”
Al-Hilali & Khan	“It is equal to them whether you (Muhammad SAW) ask forgiveness or ask not forgiveness for them. Verily, Allah guides not the people who are the Fasiqin (rebellious, disobedient to Allah)”

5 Discussion

In the previous section, the researchers examined the lexical choices of different Qur’an Translations in rendering the Arabic near-synonyms *ḥawa*, *ṣafaḥa*, and *ḡafara* into English when they occur within the same verse. The researchers also investigated whether the translators maintain consistency in translating these words when they occur within the same verse and elsewhere.

Beginning with the findings of part 1 in the analysis section (when the words occur within the same verse), the researchers found that although the translators avoided repetition and tended to include different equivalents to the three Arabic words when they occurred within the same verse, they did not reflect the slight differences between them in their translations, and sometimes used them interchangeably. Nine different equivalents were used in the translations of the three words under study as table (15) shows.

TABLE 15 The translators' selections of the three investigated words

Word	<i>fawa</i>	<i>şafaḥa</i>	<i>ğafara</i>	Total
Frequency	15	12	9	36
Forgive	8	1	7	16
Pardon	4	1		5
Overlook		8		8
Indulge		2		2
Efface	1			1
Bear with them	1			1
Bolt out	1			1
Absolve			1	1
Cover up			1	1
Total	15	12	9	36

Table (15) shows that “forgive” is the only word that was used as an equivalent to all three words under study. The three translators used it 16 times; 8 for *fawa*, 1 for *şafaḥa*, and 7 for *ğafara*. However, this does not mean that “forgive” was used mostly with *fawa* bearing in mind that *ğafara* was only mentioned 9 times when compared to *fawa*, which occurred 15 times. Since the words under investigation were not mentioned the same number of times, it is recommended to consider the normalized rather than raw frequencies.³⁴ Normalized frequencies per a hundred tokens can be calculated as follows:

Frequency per a hundred words =

*Raw frequency of the equivalent/ number of occurrences of each of the investigated words (fawa, şafaḥa, and ğafara) *100*

Based on this, it is apparent that “forgive” was used as an equivalent to *ğafara* about 78%; *fawa* about 53%, and *şafaḥa* about 8%. When looking at Table (15) vertically, it can be observed that “forgive” was the most used equivalent to

34 Ahmad S Haider, “A Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis of the Arab Uprisings: Evidence from the Libyan Case” (University of Canterbury, 2016), 58.

TABLE 16 The frequency of equivalents in the three investigated translations

Word/Translator	<i>ʔawa</i>		<i>ʃafaḥa</i>		<i>ġafara</i>	
Ali	Forgive	4	Overlook	4	Forgive	2
	Blot out	1			Cover up	1
Al-Hilali & Khan	Pardon	3	Overlook	3	Forgive	3
Pickthall	Forgive	2	Forgive	1		
	Forgive	2	Overlook	1	Forgive	2
	Efface	1	Indulgent	2		
	Pardon	1	Pardon	1	Absolve	1
	Bear with them	1				

ʔawa (about 53%) followed by “pardon” (27%). It is worth noting that “pardon” was used as an equivalent to *ʃafaḥa* one time only.

“Overlook” was the most frequently used equivalent to *ʃafaḥa* where it occurred 4 times (about 67%) followed by “indulge” which was used twice (about 17%). “Efface”, “bear with them”, and “bolt out” were used once with *ʔawa*. The same is applicable to “absolve” and “cover up” which were used once with *ġafara*.

Regarding consistency within the same verse, as Table (16) shows, it appears that Ali was the most consistent, followed by Al-Hilali & Khan, who achieved almost the same level of consistency. Pickthall was the least consistent (Table 16).

As Table (16) shows, Ali used 2 equivalents to *ʔawa*, namely “forgive” (4 times), and “blot out” (1 time), and it is worth noting that he used “forgive” as an equivalent to *ġafara* in that particular verse. Ali used only one equivalent to *ʃafaḥa*, which is “overlook”, and 2 to *ġafara*, namely “forgive” (2 times), and “cover up” (1time). The latter was used when “forgive” is used as an equivalent to *ʔawa*. Similarly, Al-Hilali & Khan used 2 equivalents to *ʔawa*, namely “pardon” (3 times), and “forgive” (2 times), and 2 equivalents for *ʃafaḥa*, namely “overlook” (3 times), and “forgive” (1 time) with the latter being used twice in the same verse; one to *ʃafaḥa* and the other to *ġafara*. Al-Hilali & Khan used one equivalent to *ġafara*, namely “forgive”. Pickthall was the least consistent as he selected 4 different equivalents to the 5 occurrences of *ʔawa*; 3 to the 4 occurrences of *ʃafaḥa*, and 2 to the 3 occurrences of *ġafara*.

After examining the consistency in translating the words under investigation when they occurred in different verses, the study has two main findings. First, while the three translators used various English equivalents to refer to the same Arabic word; Al-Hilali & Khan and Ali were way more consistent than Pickthall. Second, the translators were more consistent in their translation of *ġafara* when compared to the other two words.

Beginning with *fawa*, Al-Hilali & Khan used 5 equivalents, while Pickthall and Ali used 7 different words to translate it. Concerning *şafaḥa*, Ali used 2 equivalents, Al-Hilali & Khan 3, and Pickthall 5. With respect to *ġafara*, Al-Hilali & Khan used one equivalent, Ali 2, and Pickthall 4. This indicates that Al-Hilali & Khan are the most consistent, followed by Ali, and Pickthall proved again to be the least consistent.

Based on the analysis part, it appears that “overlook” is the most frequently used equivalent to *şafaḥa*, and “forgive” to *ġafara*. However, different equivalents were used to translate *fawa*; mainly “forgive” and then “pardon” as Table (17) shows.

TABLE 17 The most frequently used English equivalents to the words under study

Word	Al-Hilali & Khan	Pickthall	Yusuf Ali
‘fawa (27 times)			
Forgive	14	13	15
Pardon	7	7	2
Forego	3	3	
Remit			4
Pass over	2		2
Şafaḥa (6 times)			
Overlook	4	1	5
Ġafara (65 times)			
Forgive	64	59	64
Pardon		4	

In order to find the most appropriate equivalents to the words under study, the researchers consulted different sources retrieved from <https://www.definitions.net>, namely Princeton's WordNet, Webster Dictionary, Freebase, Wiktionary, and Chambers 20th Century Dictionary. The researchers also looked up the used equivalents in two English dictionaries, namely Cambridge and Oxford, as Table (18) shows.

Based on Table (18), and other definitions from different sources, the semantic components of the used equivalents (English translations) to the investigated Arabic lexical items are shown in Tables (19, 20, and 21). The 5 components (features) used in the componential analysis for the 3 Arabic words in Table (3) are applied on the English equivalents which included ignoring punishment, reprimanding, concealing, obliterating, and rewarding. Beginning with *fawa*,

TABLE 18 The meaning of the used words in the translation in two English-English dictionaries

Word	Cambridge dictionary	Oxford dictionary
Forgive	“To stop blaming or being angry with someone for something that person has done, or not punish them for something”	“To stop feeling angry with somebody who has done something to harm, annoy or upset you; to stop feeling angry with yourself”
Pardon	“To forgive someone for something they have said or done; if someone who has committed a crime is pardoned, that person is officially forgiven, and their punishment is stopped”	“To officially allow somebody who has been found guilty of a crime to leave prison and/or avoid punishment”
Forgo	“To give up or do without; to not have or do something enjoyable”	“To decide not to have or do something that you would like to have or do”
Remit	“To reduce a period of time that someone must spend in prison”	“To cancel or free somebody from a debt, duty, punishment, etc.”
Pass over	To ignore or not give attention to someone or something	“To ignore or avoid something”
Overlook	“To forgive or pretend not to notice something”	“To see something wrong or bad but decide to ignore it”

TABLE 19 Componential analysis of the used English equivalents to *fawa*

	Ignoring punishment	Reprimanding	Concealing	Obliterating	Rewarding
'fawa	+	+	-	+	-
	-				
	<i>May happen before or after the punishment</i>				
Forgive	+	-	-	-	-
	+	-	-	+	-
	-				
Pardon	<i>May happen before or after the punishment</i>				
Remit	+	-	-	-	-
	-				
Pass over	+	-	-	+	-
Forgo	+	?	-	?	-

the researchers carried out a componential analysis for the most frequently used 5 equivalents to it (Table 19).

All of the used equivalents involve giving up punishment. In common with *fawa*, the act of “forgiveness” that is attached to “pardon” and “remit” may happen before or after the punishment. In terms of reprimanding, none of the used equivalents entails blaming and rebuking after giving up punishment. Regarding concealing the committed sin, none of the used equivalents indicates so. Only “pardon” and “pass over” involve wiping out the sin as if it was not committed in the first place. Based on this, it appears that “pardon” is the most appropriate equivalent to *fawa*.

With regard to *ṣafaḥa*, the most commonly and frequently used equivalent was “overlook”. Accordingly, the researchers carried out a componential analysis for it, as Table (20) shows.

Table (20) demonstrates that the Arabic word *ṣafāḥa* and the English equivalent “overlook” share the same features. This justifies why the three translators used it for *ṣafāḥa* frequently and to some extent consistently.

Finally, “forgive” was dominantly used as an equivalent to *ḡafara* followed by “pardon”. Table (21) contains a componential analysis for these two equivalents.

As table (21) shows, “forgive” involves ignoring punishment, while the same act relating to “pardon” may happen before or after the punishment. In common with *ḡafara*, the two words do not indicate reprimanding. There is no indication in the definition of the two words in different sources that involves concealing the sin or getting rewards. Finally, as shown above, only “pardon” involves wiping out the sin as if it was not committed in the first place. It appears that “forgive” is the most appropriate equivalent to *ḡafara*.

TABLE 20 Componential analysis of the used English equivalents to *ṣafāḥa*

	Ignoring punishment	Reprimanding	Concealing	Obliterating	Rewarding
<i>ṣafāḥa</i>	+	–	–	+	–
Overlook	+	–	–	+	–

TABLE 21 Componential analysis of the used English equivalents to *ḡafara*

	Ignoring punishment	Reprimanding	Concealing	Obliterating	Rewarding
<i>ḡafara</i>	+	–	+	–	+
Forgive	+	–	–	–	–
Pardon	+	–	–	+	–
–					
<i>May happen after the punishment</i>					

6 Conclusion

The study revealed that the translators varied their lexical choice when they rendered *fawa*, *ṣafaḥa*, and *ġafara* into English in order to avoid repetition as it is disfavored in the English language. This goes in line with Dickens et al. who stated that repetition is not a welcomed style in English.³⁵ In some cases, the same English equivalent was used to render the three words, although the componential analysis showed that they exhibit differences in meaning. Therefore, it can be said that the three translations were not accurate as they failed to reflect the distinction in meaning between the synonymous words. This lends support to some scholars who all agreed on the translators' inadequate rendering of near-synonyms in the Holy Qur'an.³⁶ The study revealed that the word *ġafara* is best rendered as "forgive", *ṣafaḥa* as "overlook", and *fawa* as "pardon".

Regarding consistency in the lexical choice, it is not easy to determine which translation achieved better results. Al-Hilali and Khan proved to be more consistent in rendering the word *fawa* than Pickthall and Ali. In translating *Ṣafaḥa*, Ali was the most consistent that he used only two equivalents. With respect to *ġafara*, Ali was the most consistent that his lexical choice was limited to "forgive". All in all, Pickthall was the least consistent in his rendering of the three words.

The present study recommends translators to read available Arabic exegeses of the Qur'an to be able to translate it appropriately and adopt some strategies to improve both the accuracy and consistency of future translations of the Holy Qur'an.

For future researchers, it is recommended that they examine synonymy different languages other than English. They may also investigate the same phenomenon in other English translations, or they may look into other lexical relations such as antonymy, hyponymy and hypernymy.

35 James Dickens et al., *Thinking Arabic Translation*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 112.

36 Saleh AS Al Ghamdi, "Critical and Comparative Evaluation of the English Translations of the near-Synonymous Divine Names in the Quran", (University of Leeds, 2015), pp. 273-274; Linda S Al-Abbas, "Near-Synonyms within the Same Qur'anic Verse: A Contrastive English-Arabic Lexical Analysis", (University of Jordan, 2019), p. 157; Samia Al-Jabri, "Lexical Synonyms in the Holy Qur'an and Their Translations: A Case Study", *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies*, (IJAES) 13, (2012), pp. 16-17.

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