

# Unity of Form and Content in Translations of Arabic Classical Texts

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**Abstract.** This paper presents a detailed analysis of the form and content of translations of Arabic classical texts. It explores the work of translators of Surah al-Mulk, based on the 20th-century Uzbek translations by Mawlavi Hindistani, Altynkhan Tor, Sheikh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf, Alauddin Mansur, and Sheikh Abdulaziz Mansur. The issues of unity and harmony between form and content occupy a special place in the analysis of the Uzbek translation of Surah al-Mulk.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Every piece of art is a dialectical unity of form and content. Consequently, the task of the translator is not only to convey the original content in the target language but also to find an appropriate form. This process undoubtedly demands significant skill and care from the translator. However, we maintain that the essence of the work comes first, followed by the form.

To clarify, we are not suggesting that the content should be prioritised and the form neglected. Rather, we are proposing that a translator should first seek to understand what the author is trying to convey, comprehend its meaning, and then attempt to find a suitable form in the target language.

We would like to highlight that significant differences can be noted between a translation by someone who concentrates on this process and another who does not pay much attention, merely aiming for a direct translation from start to finish. Should we examine the translations of the Surah "Mulk" into Uzbek, we would find that this process has not been followed in some instances. These variances in the translation process might lead the reader to ponder on a particular verse, to seek further information to understand the

meaning, or even to refer to other translated texts, and, as a result, they might gain unexpected insights.

Mavlavi Hindiston, for example, translated it as: "He created the seven heavens one after the other. You do not see any defect in God's creation of the heavens. So, look again at the sky, do you see any cracks or holes in it?" [Sheikh Muhammadjon is the son of Mullah Rustam. (2022)].

## 2 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the translation, the form is well-preserved, but the phrase "made by the people" hinders achieving complete adequacy. The issue lies in the fact that the phrase "the people did" cannot convey the intended meaning of the Arabic word in the contemporary language. The phrase might resonate with a specific audience but for the masses, the universally understood word "created" should be employed instead. This translator masterfully linked verses 13-14 of this surah, making the meanings of the two verses comprehensible, except for a small interpretative note added in between. As any translation invariably incorporates elements of interpretation, translation can be regarded as interpretation to a certain degree.

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“Whether you speak openly or secretly, Allah knows best. Indeed, Allah is Wise (Knower) of the heart's hidden secrets. After all, does He who created the heart not know its secrets? Indeed, Allah knows the truth of everything and is aware of it” [Sheikh Muhammadjon is the son of Mullah Rustam. (2022)].

The ending of verse 13 and the beginning of verse 14 are well-crafted to complement each other in terms of meaning. If we translate while strictly preserving the form of these parts, our sentence would appear incomplete, like a sentence cut off prematurely. It is precisely to avoid this potential deficiency that the translator uses the word “heart” again as a filler. While it is crucial that the flow of meaning in the translation should complement each other, this translation cannot be deemed fully adequate. If the phrase “Whether you speak publicly or secretly, Allah knows” were removed from this translation and the remaining sentence combined with the next translation, uniformity of form would have been maintained.

Let's examine how these verses are depicted in Sheikh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf's translation.

“{13} Whether you keep your words in secret or speak openly, surely, He knows what is in the hearts.  
{14} Doesn't the Creator know? However, He is the All-Knowing and the Aware” [Sheikh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf. (2007).].

This translation can be considered congruent with the original, both in terms of form and content. There are no extra explanatory words in the translation, and its semantic structure mirrors that of the original.

The translations by Sheikh Abdulaziz Mansur and Alauddin Mansur are almost identical, presenting form and content that closely align with the original.

Altinkhan Tora (Sayyid Mahmud ibn Sayyid Nazir al-Tarazi al-Madani) translated these verses without altering the placement of any words, i.e., preserving their form.

“{13}(O people), hide your words or reveal them, for He knows all the secrets of the hearts!  
{14} Oh, don't you know that Allah created and He is the knower of secrets and aware of everything?” [Sayyid Mahmud ibn Sayyid Nazir al-Tarazi Al-Madani. (2002)].

In this translation, each word is presented separately, even the interrogative pronouns, and the reflexive pronouns, which are inseparable in Arabic, are isolated, all the while maintaining their original placement. Implementing the translation in this manner somewhat draws the reader's attention to the narrative, but it is inevitable that this method presents numerous challenges and potential misunderstandings concerning comprehension.

"Oh, are you certain that Allah in the sky will follow you? So, at that moment, he is moving".

"Or are you convinced that Allah in the sky will send you a storm of small stones, then you will quickly realise that My threats are not idle" [Sayyid Mahmud ibn Sayyid Nazir al-Tarazi Al-Madani. (2002)].

In these verses, each word retains its original position, forming the sentences therein. However, the translation was somewhat unclear because the sentence structures of Arabic and Uzbek are distinctly different.

The translations by Mahjuri, the son of Muhammad Khan Mulla Ishaq Qari, were undertaken expansively with the translator aiming to convey the essence of the Qur'an. While focusing on the content, attention was not only paid to the meaning of the specific word, but also to the intended meaning behind that word, approaching it in depth.

{16} "Oh, you who disbelieve in Allah and His commandments, have you become complacent that if you do not submit to the command of Allah, who sends His rule to the heavens, He will swallow the earth in His wrath? As the earth swallows those who are angry, it shakes, engulfing them within and annihilating them in punishment. If He wishes, He will do so. (For instance, during the time of Prophet Musa, Qarun incurred His wrath and was swallowed by the earth)".

{17}“Or have you become assured? Are you not afraid that when the wrath of the Almighty, whose power and anger persist in the sky, comes, it will rain stones upon you? Can't you imagine this? For instance, He rained stones upon the people of Prophet Lut. This is easy for the Almighty Allah. If He becomes angry, He may send the same catastrophe upon you, O disbelievers. If such a catastrophe befalls you, then you will understand how terrifying my punishment can be at that time. But He says that what you come to know will not benefit you. (This did not benefit Pharaoh)” [4-5].

In translating the verse, the translator aimed to provide a comprehensive and detailed rendition, drawing on his knowledge and interpretations. Although the translated form diverges from the original, the translator has not strayed from the scope of the core content expressed by the original form in his broad and detailed translation.

Upon comparing how Sheikh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf, Sheikh Alauddin Mansur, and Sheikh Abdulaziz interpreted the aforementioned verses - that is, verses 16-17 - and how they translated the words **إِنَّا** and **أَمِنْتُمْ** in verse 16, and the words **أَمْ أَمِنْتُمْ** in verse 17, it becomes evident that Sheikh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf's interpretation of verse 16 is as follows:

{16} "Did you find solace when Allah in heaven swallowed you up on the earth, writhing in torment?" and verse 17:

{17} "Or were you spared when Allah in heaven sent a tormenting wind your way? Consequently, you will surely understand the nature of the warning" [5, 617]. He interpreted the word as an adjective related to the earth, and in both verses translated it as "are you safe?".

{16} "(O disbelievers of Makkah), are you calm (are you not afraid) that the One in the sky will swallow you up on the earth, and suddenly (the earth) will shake (destroy you)?", and verse 17 {17} "Or are you at ease with the 'heavenly' being raining stones upon you?! Yet (when the tribulation comes), you will understand the nature of my warning!" [6, 767]. He translated the word **إِنَّا** in verse 16 as "suddenly".

Sheikh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf's translation is distinct, while the translations of Sheikh Abdulaziz Mansur and Sheikh Alauddin Mansur bear a striking resemblance to each other. This similarity between the latter two translators' renditions is evident in the fact that both of them translated the word **إِنَّا** as "suddenly" and "shelter" - terms with similar meanings - and the other terms as "peaceful". In contrast, Sheikh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf's translation of the word **إِنَّا** as a determinant deviate not only from the translations of the other two translators but also from all the meanings of **إِنَّا** we have encountered so far. Moreover, assigning the term the meaning of "to be calm" rather than "to be safe" effectively elucidates the sentence's intended meaning.

Simultaneously, Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf's translation of the word in verse 17 as a "wind of torment" significantly diverges from the subsequent two translations. Sheikh Abdulaziz Mansur and Sheikh Alauddin Mansur translated this word as "stone". Upon examining the dictionary definition of this word, it signifies a "strong storm, strong wind", and concurrently, the verb form of this word also implies "to throw stones". The interpretation of this verse in "Tafsiri Jalalain" is given as [7],

The translation of this tafsir is as follows: "Preventing a wind that hurls stones at you, that is, it rains stones upon you." Based on this, it could be inferred that the translators approached this sentence with a more generalised interpretation. This is because both a rain of stones and a fierce wind are equally distressing for people.

### 3 CONCLUSION

The translations of Shaykh Abdulaziz Mansour and Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf nearly align with the form and content of the original. The use of the term "nearly" is due to the universal consensus among Islamic scholars that no translation, regardless of its sophistication, can ever replace the original text of the Quran. Consequently, while the translations are expertly crafted, they can be considered close to, rather than identical to, the original.

Shaykh Alauddin Mansur's translation almost matches in form and content to Shaykh Abdulaziz Mansur's version; the difference lies in that some words are elucidated in brackets within the translations.

In Mahjuri's translation, the primary focus is on the interpretation, causing the form to considerably deviate from the original. The content, however, is very comprehensive and detailed.

In the translations of Mawlawi Hindistani, the explanation is rendered in simple language to ensure it is easily comprehensible and rapidly assimilated by the populace.

In the translations by Oltinkhan Tora, the verses are translated verbatim, with the sentence structure of the original language and the translated language being

identical. Consequently, it can be challenging for the average person to understand the translation. Nevertheless, such "literal translations can be procured exclusively in the verses of the Quran, i.e., translations provided along with the original, and can yield practical benefits in Quranic studies. However, it is impossible to derive a word-for-word translation without the original" [6, 3].

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