

**A Componential Analysis of the Noun *Qatl* in Three
Translations of the Holy Qur'an, with Reference to
Catford's Shift Theory**

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Abstract

In the light of the componential analysis theory and Catford's (1965) translation shift theory, this study aims to investigate the noun *qatl* قَتْل in three English translations of the Holy Qur'an, namely, Abdel Haleem's translation (2004), Marmaduke Pickthall's translation (1930), and the translation of Yusuf 'Ali (2001). The researcher has decomposed the lexemes of the source text and the three target texts into their possible semantic components, and has traced the translation shifts in the three respective translations. From various war terms, the noun *qatl* has been selected because of its diverse morphological occurrences and their obvious translation challenges. The three translators have been chosen from different origins in order that their distinct linguistic awareness of both the source and the target languages would be taken into consideration when analyzing their suggested translations. The study has depended on a theoretical framework of analysis that can be applied to other war terms, whether nouns or verbs, in the Holy Qur'an.

Keywords: Abdel Haleem's translation, Pickthall's translation, 'Ali's translation, semantic bases, level and category shifts.

تحليل المكونات لاسم قَتْل" في ثلاث ترجمات للقرآن الكريم مع الإشارة لنظرية التغيّرات لكاتفورد

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مستخلص

يتناول هذا البحث تحليل اسم "قَتْل" في ثلاث ترجمات للقرآن الكريم؛ وهي ترجمة عبد الحلیم (2004م)، وترجمة بيكتول (1930م)، وترجمة يوسف علي (2001م)، وذلك في ضوء نظرية تحليل المكونات الدلالية ونظرية تغيّرات الترجمة ل (كاتفورد) (1965م). ويهدف البحث إلى تحليل مفردات النص القرآني ومقابلها في الترجمات الثلاث من خلال الوقوف على مكوناتها الدلالية واستكشاف التغيرات التي حدثت أثناء الترجمة. وكان سبب اختيار اسم "قَتْل" من بين مفردات الحرب ذاك التحدي الذي يفرضه تنوع تمظهرات الاسم الموفولوجية في النص القرآني. وقد تم اختيار المترجمين الثلاثة من أصول مختلفة لدراسة تأثير وعيهم اللغوي باللغتين على عملية الترجمة. وقد ارتكزت الدراسة على إطار نظري، يمكن تطبيقه على مفردات الحرب الأخرى في القرآن الكريم، سواء أكانت أسماء أم أفعالاً.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ترجمة عبدالحليم، ترجمة بيكتول، ترجمة علي، قواعد دلالية، تغيرات المستوى.

Romanization

Consonants			
Arabic	Roman	Arabic	Roman
ء	'	ب	b
ت	t	ث	th
ج	j	ح	h
خ	kh	د	d
ذ	th	ر	r
ز	z	س	s
ش	sh	ص	s
ض	d	ط	t
ظ	z	ع	c
غ	gh	ف	f
ق	q	ك	k
ل	l	م	m
ن	n	هـ	h
و	w	ي	y
ا	a	ة	a(t)

Vowels	
Arabic	Roman
وُ	ū
يِ	ī
اَ	ā

Diacritics	
Arabic	Roman
ُ	u
ُن	un
ِ	i
ِن	in
َ	a
َـ	an

Introduction

This paper seeks to analyze the *qatl* قَتْل in three English translations of the Holy Qur'an (SL, henceforth), namely, *The Qur'an: A new translation* by M. A. S. Abdel Haleem (TT1, henceforth), *Meanings of the Holy Qur'an* by Marmaduke Pickthall (TT2, henceforth), and *The Holy Qur'an* by Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali (TT3, henceforth). It is based on two theoretical pillars: (a) the componential analysis, and (b) Catford's (1965) translation shift. It aims at showing the differences and similarities between the three TTs in order to circle out their anomalies and to foreground their strengths. To consider how a native language could influence translation, it selects Abdel Haleem who is a native Arabic translator, Pickthall who is a native English, and 'Ali who is neither an Arabic nor an English. It focuses

on the translations of noun *qatl*, which occurs nine times in the Holy Qur'an (2:191; 2:217; 3:154; 3:181; 4:155; 5:30; 6:137; 17:31, & 33:16), because they arise some linguistic challenges that could hinder the comprehension of the holy text. The application of the componential analysis seeks to show when and why the TTs are different from and/or similar to the ST; the application of Catford's (1965) translation shift detects the styles the translators follow and the shifts they adopt to render the ST.

1. Review of the Literature

Many studies tackle one of the two theoretical bases, suggested in the present study. As for the componential analysis, Belfarhi (2013), Dewiyanti and Suryani (2017), and Al-Abbas and Khanji (2019) analyzed significant lexemes into their possible semantic units for various research purposes. Belfarhi (2013) applied the tools to literary English texts in order to make a small dictionary, with some componential analysis approach. Dewiyanti and Suryani (2017) compared the semantic components of five Indonesian dish names to their English translations, and presented the statistical findings to recommend the closest English translation. Al-Abbas and Khanji (2019) attempted the terms *'āṁ* *عالم* and *sana(t)* *سنة* in the respective verses of the Holy Qur'an and in five selected translations, highlighting the appropriate TT. As for Catford's translation shift theory, Altwaijri (2019) and Rezvani and Nouaey (2014) are among good examples; for the former chose the legal translation of the English terms of "the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)" into Arabic, whereas the latter picked up the religious translation of Yusuf surah into English. To study the effects of translation shifts on TTs, both identified the shifts employed by the TTs, classified them into level and category shifts, and measured their rates. Altwariji (2019) even justified the importance of the theory, as it should preserve the SL meanings and effects when rendered in TL. He added that it is the only perspective that allows interlingual communication between two texts in a definite situation. The importance of the present study is that the componential analysis and the translation shift theories are both incorporated into

the theoretical framework of analysis to firstly investigate the ST and TTs from within and then to compare them on the grounds of translation appropriateness.

2. Method

The study is based on both the componential analysis and the translation shift theories. The systematic framework of analysis starts with the noun *qatl* in the ST Holy Qur'an, then it moves on to tackle the suggested equivalents in the three selected. Considering the results of the componential analysis and counting the fewest number of translation shifts occurred, the researcher seeks to identify the translation that is more similar to the ST meaning than the others are.

Firstly, the componential analysis is a branch of the semantic studies that is applied in both English and Arabic languages. Lyons (1995) discussed that it should analyze the meanings of the lexemes into their semantic components, relate them together, and classify them into sets of semantic features (pp. 107-115). It combines these sets according to the dominant semantic features of the lexemes, which he called *semantic bases*, in order to explain their internal and external relations. Lyons (1977) also argued that the process of extracting the dominant semantic features could be based on some principles, such as "binarism" that categorizes the semantic features into a couple of completed or contrasted relations (pp. 322-333). Extracting could also be based on the "universalism" principle, whereby a word would dominate its counterpart on accounts of the universal culture. Following Noam Chomsky's (1972) framework of generative grammar, Catford (1965) marked the values of dominant semantic features through a system of minus-plus notation.

Secondly, Catford's translation shift theory compares the translated terms to the ST in terms of the shifts occurred during the translation process. Catford (1965) identified the shifts as the "departures" of the equivalence and/or correspondence between the SL and the TL (pp. 70-83). He classified them into two types: (a) level shifts, and (b) the category shifts. Level shifts are concerned with the linguistic

changes of ST items when rendered into the TT, such as those from the grammatical level into the lexical level, and vice versa. Category shifts are divided into four sub-shifts: (a) the class, (b) the unit, (c) the structure, and (d) the intra-system. The rank¹ scale of the ST and TT items is always below the level of sentences, that is, clauses, phrases, words, and morphemes levels. Class shifts take place when the class of the ST words (e.g., nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, or pronouns) is differently translated in the TT. Unit shifts happen as a result of changing such ST ranks as sentences, clauses, phrases, words, and morphemes. Structure shifts are related to sentence forms and their grammatical features, such as word-order, voice and tense of verbs, and nominal-verbal word groups. Intra-System shifts happen when the translator employs some changes on the lower level of the language system, including those of singular-plural, definite-indefinite, and masculine-feminine oppositions. Catford added that the researcher should explain the contextual causes of the shifts to show if they are obligatory or optional in order that a researcher could explain their effects.

The study relates the two theories together through a definite framework in two stages that show which TT achieves the highest extent of the ST meaning and performs the least extent of shifts during the translation. In the first stage, it applies the componential analysis theory to both the ST and the TTs, as it explains the meanings of the significant noun and gives a hint of its context. Then, it extracts the semantic components and their dominant semantic bases of the ST before attempting the same steps with the TTs and foregrounding the nearest one to the ST meaning. The second stage checks the translation shifts of the TTs in terms of their types, places in the contexts, and effects on the quality of the designated TT. The researcher uses the comparative analysis to measure the accuracy of the TTs through the result rates of the two stages to recommend the closest. Finally, the noun *qatl*, along with its diverse morphological tokens, is traced in all the respective verses

¹ Some relevant studies of translation shifts interchangeably use the terms “rank” and “level” to refer to Catford’s level shifts, but the present study keeps the term “rank” to the lower level of analysis, typical of the shift from a word into a phrase, clause, or sentence.

of the Holy Qur'an and in their counterpart specific TTs in order for the researcher to reach overall concluding remarks about the translation challenges concerned. Furthermore, war terms, other than *qatl*, are referred to as a suggestion for future research work.

3. Analysis

For the brevity of the present study, the analysis focuses on one significant sample whose conclusions are compared to the other occurrences of the noun *qatl* in the entire Holy Qur'an. The analysis is based on the theoretical framework as follows.

Table 3.1

***Qatl* in 'Āli C'imrān 154 and its Three TTs:**

ST	TT 1	TT 2	TT3
<p>ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ بَعْدِ الْعَمِّ أَمَنَةً تُعَاسَا بِعُشَى طَائِفَةٍ مِّنْكُمْ وَطَائِفَةٍ قَدْ أَهَمَّتْهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ عَجَبًا الْحَقِّ ظَنَّ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَقُولُونَ هَلْ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ قُلْ إِنَّ الْأَمْرَ كُلَّهُ لِلَّهِ يُخْفُونَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ مَا لَا يُبْدُونَ</p>	<p>“After sorrow, He caused calm to descend upon you, a sleep that overtook some of you. Another group, caring only for themselves, entertained false thoughts about God, thoughts more appropriate to pagan ignorance, and said, ‘Do we get a say in any of this?’ [Prophet], tell them ‘Everything to do with this affair is in God’s hands.’ They conceal in their hearts things they will not reveal to</p>	<p>“Then, after grief, He sent clown security for you. As slumber did it overcome a party of you, while (the other) party, who were anxious on their own account, thought wrongly of Allah, the thought of ignorance. They said: Have we any part in the cause? Say (O Muhammad): The cause belongeth wholly to Allah. They hide within themselves (a thought) which they reveal not</p>	<p>“After (the excitement) of the distress He sent down calm on a band of you overcome with slumber while another band was stirred to anxiety by their own feelings moved by wrong suspicions of God suspicions due to ignorance. They said: “What affair is this of ours?” say thou: “indeed this affair is wholly God’s.” They hide in their minds what they dare not reveal to thee. They say (to themselves): “If</p>

<p>لَكَ يَقُولُونَ لَوْ كَانْنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ مَا قُتِلْنَا هَاهُنَا فَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ لَيُرَزَّ الَّذِينَ كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَتْلُ إِلَى مَضَاجِعِهِمْ وَلِيَبْتَلِيَ اللَّهُ مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ وَلِيَجْصَخُنَّ مَا فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِدَاتِ الصُّدُورِ". (3: 154)</p>	<p>you. They say, 'If we had had our say in this, none of us would have been killed here.' Tell them, 'Even if you had resolved to stay at home, those who were destined to be killed would still have gone out to meet their deaths.' God did this in order to test everything within you and in order to prove what is in your hearts. God knows your innermost thoughts very well." (Abdel Haleem, 2004, pp. 45-46)</p>	<p>unto thee, saying: Had we had any part in the cause we should not have been slain here. Say: Even though ye had been in your houses, those appointed to be slain would have gone forth to the places where they were to lie. (All this hath been) in order that Allah might try what is in your breasts and prove what is in your hearts. Allah is Aware of what is hidden in the breasts (of men)." (Pickthall, 1930, p. 84)</p>	<p>we had anything to do with this affair we should not have been in the slaughter here." Say: "Even if you had remained in your homes those for whom death was decreed would certainly have gone forth to the place of their death"; but (all this was) that God might test what is in your breasts and purge what is in your hearts: for God knoweth well the secrets of your hearts." ('Ali, 2001, pp. 167-168)</p>
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'Al-'Ālūsī (الألوسي, 1994, Vol. 4, pp. 93-98) interpreted that God punishes the hypocrites, who disapprove of the war and the *qitāl* with the believers, by uncovering their disbeliefs and letting them to face their destiny of the *qatl* even if they are at home. The act of *qatl* would be performed by the believers following God's orders during the war or without any fighting.

As for the first stage of analysis, the study begins with the ST, then moves on to the three TTs. In the ST, the term *qatl* means taking the life of someone (see الدامغاني, 1983, إصلاح الوجوه والنظائر في القرآن الكريم, بيروت, دار العلم للملايين, pp. 370-371; & هارون, 2018, معجم ألفاظ القرآن, القاهرة, مجمع اللغة العربية, p. 876). Fulfilling God's commands during the state of war, the believers would end the hypocrites' lives on purpose while causing them to suffer and feel physical pains, so

the dominant semantic bases are [Purpose] and [Pain]. They would deaden them after violent fighting with some tools, and that would result in bloodshed, so [Bloodshed], [A Tool], and [Violence] are also dominant semantic bases. Since the fighting would result in a murderer party and a murdered party, then [Murderer] and [Murdered] are conventionally dominant semantic bases. Thus, the ST *qatl* denotes the dominant semantic bases: [Purpose], [Pain], [Bloodshed], [A Tool], [Violence], [Murderer], and [Murdered].

In TT1, Abdel Haleem (2004) translated the ST term into the non-finite phrase “to be killed.” He used the infinitive verb “to be” here because he preceded it by the passive verb “were destined.” He used the verb “kill” as a hyperonym¹ of the term *qatl* in order to superordinate all its possible ways. The verb “kill” means to cause someone’s death and to torture them physically or mentally because of being extremely angry (see Collins, 1987, *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary*, London, pp. 795-796). The believers would carry out God’s order and cause the disbelievers’ death on purpose because the latter hide their disbelief, so the dominant semantic base here is [Purpose]. The murderer would violently torture and hurt the murdered with some weapons, causing them pain and resulting in bloodshed. Accordingly, the dominant semantic bases here are: [A Tool], [Pain], [Bloodshed], [Violence], [Murdered], and [Murderer]. After the war, the disbelievers become sure that they would be punished by God and by the believers, so they would be psychologically exhausted and would have mental pains while waiting for their punishment; the dominant semantic base here is [Pain]. The TT1 term “kill,” then, denotes the semantic bases: [Purpose], [A Tool], [Bloodshed], [Murderer], [Murdered], [Violence], and [Pain].

In TT2, Pickthall (1930) translated the ST term into the non-finite phrase “to be slain.” The term “slay” presents one way of the *qatl* action that is committed by directing a sharp tool to the necks, so he

¹ Cruse (2000) argued that *hyperonymy* refers to the superordinate class of a definite group of the vocabularies (p. 150).

subordinated one of its class, and used its hyponymy¹. He used the infinitive verb “to be” because he preceded it by the participle “appointed.” The term “slay” means to violently butcher an animal or a person (see Johnson, 1756, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, W. Strahan for J. & P. Knapton, London, Vol. 1). The believers would violently butcher the disbelievers with knives or swords as tools, causing them a great pain and would result in bloodshed. As a result, the dominant semantic bases here are: [Violence], [A Tool], [Bloodshed], and [Pain]. Cutting the necks of the murdered would be done on purpose by the murderers following God’s order; hence, the dominant semantic bases here are: [Murderer], [Murdered], and [Purpose]. Generally, the TT2 term “slay” denotes the semantic bases: [A Tool], [Bloodshed], [Pain], [Violence], [Murderer], [Murdered], and [Purpose].

In TT3, 'Ali (2001) translated the ST term into “death,” which means the loss of someone’s life after the stopping of all the body functions (see Collins, 1987, *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary*, London, pp. 361-362). As a result of their disbelief, the disbelievers would lose their lives as a punishment by God in the afterlife or by the believers in the time of war, and would have a great pain. The dominant semantic bases of the TT3 term “death” are [Pain] and [Murdered]. The dominant semantic bases of the ST noun, the TT1 phrase, the TT2 phrase, and the TT3 noun can be presented in a tabular form as follows.

¹ Cruse (2000) argued that the term *hyponymy* means to subordinate one class of a definite group of the vocabularies (p. 150).

Table 3.2
Componential Analysis of Rendering *Qatl* in 'Āli Āimrān 154:

	ST	TT1	TT2	TT3
Purpose	+	+	+	-
Pain	+	+	+	+
Bloodshed	+	+	+	-
A Tool	+	+	+	-
Violence	+	+	+	-
Murderer	+	+	+	-
Murdered	+	+	+	-

This table shows that the seven semantic bases of the TT1 and TT2 translations are identical to those of the ST term: [Violence], [Purpose], [A Tool], [Bloodshed], [Murderer], [Murdered], and [Pain]. TT3 translation, on the other hand, conforms to ST term in only two semantic bases: [Pain], and [Murdered]. The shared rates are as follows.

Table 3.3
Rates of Componential Analysis Results:

	TT1	TT2	TT3
Semantic bases	7	7	2
Rate	100%	100%	28.5%

The table shows that TT1 and TT2 present one hundred percent of the ST semantic meaning, while TT3 keeps only twenty-eight and half percent. Accordingly, TT1 and TT2 stand higher than TT3 in the componential analysis rates. TT1 “kill” proves to be a hyperonym of the ST *qatl*, as it renders a more general meaning than that of TT2 “slay.” As a result, the TT1 equivalent is the closest to the ST meaning.

As for the second stage of analysis, the study compares the ST noun to its three translations according to Catford’s (1965) translation shift theory. Firstly, the TT1 verb phrase consists of an auxiliary passive verb “to be” as a pre-modifier and the main verb “killed” as the head. Abdel Haleem (2004) changed the unit of the ST word rank into a phrase rank, such that a unit shift made its way to the TTs

sentence. Secondly, the non-finite TT2 phrase contains an auxiliary passive verb “to be” as a pre-modifier to the main past participle verb “slain.” A unit shift occurred when Pickthall (1930) changed the ST word rank into a TT phrase. Finally, 'Ali (2001) in TT3 rendered the ST abstract definite noun into the abstract indefinite noun “death,” as an intra-system shift took place because of changing the inner grammatical system. Taibi and Qadi (2016) argued that, generally, Arabic abstract nouns are used in the definite form, whereas English abstract nouns are put in the indefinite form (pp. 55-56). The study presents all these results in the following table.

Table 3.4

TTs Translation Shifts of *Qatl* in 'Āli ^Cimrān 154:

	Category Shift				Level Shift	Number
	Unit Shift	Structure Shift	Class Shift	Intra-System Shift		
TT1	+	-	-	-	-	1
TT2	+	-	-	-	-	1
TT3	-	-	-	+	-	1

The table shows that each one of TT1 and TT2 equivalents contains only one unit shift and that TT3 equivalent is marked by only one intra-system shift. TT1 and TT2 do not include any class, structure, intra-system, or level shifts; TT3 does not show any structure, class, unit, or level shift. As a result, the three translations are equal in the number of translation shifts.

According to the results of the componential analysis and translation shift, each equivalent of TT1 and TT2 carries one hundred percent of the ST meaning and one translation shift; TT3 equivalent presents twenty-eight and half percent of the ST meaning and one translation shift. As a result, TT1 and TT2 prove closer to the ST meaning; yet, the TT1 “kill” is the closest because it is as general as the ST *qatl*, for both do not imply a particular way of performing the act. The remarkable notice in the three TTs is that

two of which (viz., TT1 & TT2) shift the ST word into a verb phrase each.

The term *qatl* is repeated eight more times in the Holy Qur'an (2:191; 2:217; 3:181; 4:155; 5:30; 6:137; 17:31, & 33:16), which are differently translated, such as verbs, gerunds, nouns, and phrases. The study follows them to show the translators' styles, and the results are arranged in the table ahead.

Table 3.5
Frequency Rates of *Qatl* in the Holy Qur'an and the three TTs:

ST	TT1	TT2	TT3
(2: 191) القتل	killling	slaughter	slaughter
(2: 217) القتل	killling	killling	slaughter
(3:181) قتلهم	their killling	their slaying	their act of slaying
(4: 155) قتلهم	killling	their slaying	they slew
(5: 30) قتل	to kill	the killling	the murder
(6: 137) القتل	to kill	the killling	the slaughter
(17: 31) قتلهم	killling	the slaying	the killling
(33: 16) قتلهم	slaughter	killling	slaughter

This table shows that in TT1 Abdel Haleem (2004) followed a translation pattern, as he repeated "kill" seven times, and "slaughter" once. In TT2, Pickthall (1930) proved that did not stick to a pattern: He employed "kill" four times, "slay" three times, and "slaughter" just once. In TT3, 'Ali (2001) did not set a pattern, for he made use of "slaughter" four times, "slay" twice, and "murder" and "kill" once each. The results of the componential analysis generally show that the term "kill" is the nearest to the ST meaning; therefore, TT1 suggests the nearest equivalent to the ST noun *qatl* in the entire Holy Qur'an.

Among the interesting points of the results, the stylistic use of "slaughter" needs to be highlighted. It is suggested in TT1 of (33:16), TT2 of (2:191) and TT3 of (2:191; 2:217; 6:137, & 33:16) to add the meaning of extremely violent action, performed in groups.

Abdel Haleem (2004), in particular, chose to break his translation pattern once in order to foreground that meaning.

4. Results and Discussion

The study selected one sample of the nine occurrences of noun *qatl* in the Holy Qur'an and attempted to analyze it in the light of the componential analysis theory and the translation shift theory. The analysis revealed that Abdel Haleem's (2004) translation in TT1 was the closest to the ST meaning in both the selected sample and in the other respective occurrences. The theoretical framework of the analysis used proved to be applicable to scope of the study, and was hence recommended for tackling the war terms in the Holy Qur'an. The analysis proved valid and applicable, as the componential analysis theory and Catford's translation shift theory foregrounded the similarities and the differences of the designated translations. It also affirmed the significance of the linguistic approach to translation studies in general.

Conclusion

This study analyzed the noun *qatl* as an example of the war terms in order to show how to apply a semantic theory and another theory of translation studies, and relate them together in a systematic framework. Through this framework, the study decomposed the lexemes of the three translations and compared them to the ST terms, then it identified the translation shifts to mark out, through counting the least number of shifts, the closest translation(s) to the ST. It found out that TT1 was the closest translation to the ST in the selected sample and in the other examples of the noun *qatl* in the entire Holy Qur'an. It selected this noun in particular to discuss its respective translation challenges and the way it could misrepresent the holy text. Accordingly, it picked out three translators from different origins to measure the awareness of the ST meaning and the different ways to transfer it into the TT. The suggested framework here can be applied also to the translations of war terms in the Holy Qur'an in general, regardless of their word classes. The

present study, however, is limited in its scope of application, as it analyzed one noun of the war terms. For future research work, the researcher aspires to apply the present theoretical framework to the analysis of the translation of war terms in the Holy Qur'an on a wider scale of research.

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