



## Cohesion in the Quran and its Translation:

### Repetition in the Qur'an:

#### Chapter of Yusuf (Q12) as a Case Study

Elalami Mohamed

Ph.D. Researcher and English language teacher

King Fahd School of Translation, Université Abdelmalek Essaadi,  
Tetouan, Morocco

Supervised by Professor Mohammed Mediouni

King Fahd School of Translation, Université Abdelmalek Essaadi,  
Tetouan, Morocco

#### الملخص باللغة العربية:

درس هذه المقالة دور التكرار في بناء النص القرآني وتماسكه وتركز بالأساس على السور القصصية أو التي تروي قصة ما حيث تدرس المقالة التكرار في سورة يوسف وترجمته. وتحاول هذه الورقة البحثية معالجة إشكالية ترجمة أدوات السبك والتماسك القرآنية إلى اللغة الانجليزية والمشاكل التي تطرحها هذه الترجمة. وتهدف الدراسة من جهة أولى إلى تحليل أداة السبك المعجمي في القرآن الكريم ومدى أهميتها ومساهمتها في جمالية النص وفي وحدته وإعجازيته وتأثيره على المتلقي، كما تبغي الدراسة تتبع الترجمة والقرارات التي يتخذها المترجمون بخصوص حالات السبك المعجمي والتكرار المستعملة في سورة يوسف ومدى تمكنهم من الحفاظ على وحدة النص وجماليته وأغراضه البلاغية. ولجعل الدراسة أكثر علمية، تم الاعتماد على نموذج التماسك أو السبك المقترح من قبل هاليداي وحسن والذي قسما فيه أدوات التماسك إلى خمسة يهمنها النوع الأخير وهو التماسك المعجمي والذي يعتمد بشكل أساسي على التكرار بكل أنواعه كأحد أهم عناصره. ولكون اللغة العربية لغة لا تنحلل من التكرار، عكس الانجليزية التي يقال بأنها لغة اقتصاد واختصار، يُعتقد أن للتكرار والتماسك المعجمي دور كبير في سبك النص القرآني وبناء أسسه وتكوين وحدته ولهذا اخترنا هذه الأداة دون الأدوات الأخرى. وتبعاً لهذا، ركزت المقدمة والجانب النظري على التماسك وتعريفه وأنواعه وعلى التماسك المعجمي وأدواته. كما عالج الجانب النظري من الورقة موضوع الترجمة القرآنية وخصائص النص القرآني والاختلافات الملحوظة بين اللغات من خلال اعتمادها على أدوات تماسك مختلفة وميلها لإعطاء



بعضها الأهمية وإهمال البعض الآخر. وبخصوص الترجمات المختارة للتحليل، ارتأينا الاشتغال على ترجمات الهلالي وخان، ويكتهال، ومحمد أسد. أما عن منهجية الاشتغال المعتمدة فهي تعتمد على تحليل الآيات تحليلاً لسانياً لغوياً وتداولياً كذلك لسرد الأدوار البلاغية والتداولية المنوطة بكل حالة تكرار وللتأكد من دورها في تماسك النص. بعد ذلك سيتم وضع الترجمات الثلاث جنباً لجنب لمقارنتها ومعرفة القرارات التي اتخذها المترجمون ومدى تمكن الترجمات أو فشلها في الحفاظ على التكرار أو تجاهله وفي الحفاظ على التماسك النصي والأغراض البلاغية والتداولية المبتغاة من خلفه.

**Abstract:**

This paper studies the role of repetition in the establishment of surface-text cohesion in narrative surahs or chapters of the Qur'an. The study examines repetition roles in the Surah of Yusuf and its translations into English. In this regard, the cohesion model to be followed is the one introduced by Halliday and Hassan. The study analyzes this cohesive device, lists the rhetorical and functional meanings expressed, and explains how it leads to surface text cohesion before moving to analyze the three chosen English translations to see if the same device is maintained. The three translations which are chosen to be studied are Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali & M. Muhsin Khan, Muhammad Asad, and Marmaduke Pickthal's translations. The three English translations shall be compared and analyzed to check if the same cohesive device is used in the analyzed ayahs and to check if the expressed meanings and functions are preserved .

**Keywords:** Lexical cohesion, repetition, Quranic translation, Surat Yusuf, English.



## 1. Introduction

It is believed that cohesion is the most important standard of textuality. It is indeed the standard which makes texts and linguistic chunks stick together and gives them their wholeness and unity. Theorists and scholars mentioned different cohesive devices and tools that lead to the cohesion of a given text.

The most important and famous model of cohesion is the one suggested by Halliday & Hassan (1976) in their book '*Cohesion in English*'. These scholars focused on five cohesive devices that English language, and many other languages, uses. Languages usually demonstrate cohesiveness and texts' unity in different ways and following different methods. Some languages prefer a certain cohesive device to another. The five cohesive devices that Halliday & Hassan introduced, i.e., *reference, substitution and ellipsis, conjunctions, and lexical cohesion*, are not used similarly by all languages. Some languages, like Arabic, are believed to use more repetitions (lexical cohesion) and reference than conjunctions, or substitution which is very rare. On the other hand, English is believed to employ less repetitions and more reference, conjunctions, ellipsis, and substitution.

Due to these languages' preference and differences, translators sometimes find it challenging to deal with a cohesive device and to render it into the target language. Repetition, which is a form of lexical cohesion, usually makes translators' work difficult, especially when translating from Arabic, which prefers it, into English. The task gets more difficult and probably impossible to accomplish if we know that the source text is the Holy Qur'an.

Qur'an relies on different cohesive devices to establish cohesion and connectedness. Abdul Raof (2019) insists, in this regard, that cohesion plays a vital role in the Holy Book's connectedness and sticking together. One of the most used cohesive devices is lexical cohesion. The Qur'an uses repetitions to express different meanings and illocutionary forces which either warn, advise,



inform, admonish, appeal to the emotions, etc. As a result, translations may lead to different losses and voids. Cohesive devices inequivalence is an inescapable result in such cases as Abdul Raof (2017) discusses. Abdul Raof (2017) states that Quranic cohesive devices are Qur'an bound and cannot be rendered without losses as they have different illocutionary forces and rhetorical functions that are almost impossible to maintain.

Having said that, the need to analyze Quranic translations and study the repetition cohesive device is urgent. For this, we decided to tackle the issue to see if there is indeed any sort of inequivalence and untranslatability and if the Qur'an is impossible to translate without major losses and translation victims. Another factor that urged and motivated us to deal with the topic is the scarcity of Quranic translation criticism and studies on the field. There are a few or almost no studies which discuss the issue of cohesion from a Quranic translation point of view. Though Qur'an scholars and linguists keep stating that the Qur'an is untranslatable due to different factors including cohesion, few or no systemic studies were/ are undertaken to examine this untranslatability from a scientifically linguistic point of view. This scarcity encouraged us to undertake this study.

The points that are worth discussing in the current study are mainly related to the functions and illocutionary forces that Quranic repetition has and the effects of these forces on Qur'an addressees. The way translators deal with the repetitions and the decisions they make shall be carefully analyzed and contrasted to check if there is a lexical cohesion equivalence and repetition equivalence. Maintaining the exact repetitions or leaving them out are the most expected decisions to find. Any of the two steps shall, inescapably, lead to changes in the meanings and the expressed illocutionary forces and functions.

When dealing with two different languages, like Arabic and English, and translating the Qur'an, translators tend to demonstrate less freedom and



creativity. This always affects their translation, which sometimes seems to be shocking and strange. The same point shall be examined from a cohesion perspective. Translators shall decide then to stick to the same cohesive devices that the source language uses and prefers and, consequently, shock the target text readers and language, or opt for other cohesive devices that the target language tends to use. Both decisions shall lead to losses and translation victims, especially at the functional level.

### 1.1. Research objective

There are only a few studies about the translation of Quranic cohesive devices and the illocutionary forces and functions that they have into English. The few studies that have been done so far do not follow a well-defined strategy or framework and usually neglect the rhetorical and functional side. For this, this study aims at filling the gap by dealing with the issue following a well-defined method and model (Halliday and Hassan's model of cohesion) and by focusing on the functional characteristics of the Quranic text.

Another point that motivated us to undertake this study is the need to study, in a systemic way, cohesion (mainly repetitions) and their role in Quranic inimitability or *iʿjaz*. Although this inimitability is a major factor of Quranic untranslatability, almost no studies are undertaken to systemically and scientifically check the issue to see if this *iʿjaz* takes place due to the lexical cohesion, and other cohesive devices ties in general, or to any other linguistic or non-linguistics factors.

The chosen Surah shall be analyzed following the suggested model before moving to examine the three suggested translations and contrasting them. Including more than one translation shall provide us with different decisions and equivalences which in turn shall enable us to contrast the translations and



compare them to the original text and to check if the meanings, functions, and forces are maintained or lost in each of the translations.

## 2. Literature Review

Cohesion is referred to as a group of linguistic and semantic tools that help a text appear as one unit and whole. de Beaugrande & Dressler (1981) used *sticking together* as a synonym of *cohesion*. Another synonym is used by another theorist and scholar who chose not to refer to *cohesion* by this name. Teun Van Dijk (1977) used *connectedness* to refer to cohesion.

Cohesion is then a set of relations and ties which make a text stick together. According to Halliday & Hassan (1976), these ties do something more important than making texts stick together. They indeed define what a text is.

The last type of cohesive devices that Halliday & Hassan (1976) included in their list and book '*cohesion in English*' is *lexical cohesion*. Lexical cohesion, which includes, according to Halliday & Hassan, many subparts, is achieved through the use and selection of vocabulary items or lexis. Repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and meronymy are the most important lexical cohesive devices.

Halliday & Hassan differentiate (1976) between reiteration, which is more general, and repetition, which involves the recurrence or restatement of the same word or one of its derivatives. Reiteration, on the other hand, may appear in the form of repetition, synonymy, or a general noun. Our concern in this study is only repetition, not the other forms.

Other linguists used different terms for this '*repetition*'. de Beaugrande & Dressler (1981) used *recurrence* and *partial recurrence*. Recurrence is, according to them, the direct repetition of the element. This repetition or recurrence is always used for a good rhetorical and functional reason. In most cases, repetitions express affirmation and certainty.



Arabic, in general, is believed to use more lexical repetition. This repetition is used even if there is no need for that. Mona Baker (1992) discusses the issue and adds that English, on the other hand, tends to use lexical cohesion only to avoid ambiguity.

Dealing with the Qur'an always makes such differences and gaps wider. Quranic repetition is used for different purposes and illocutionary forces. The Qur'an is generally believed to use performative sentences with different pragmatic effects. Such effects have perlocutionary and illocutionary forces. Abdul Raof (2017) addresses the point by affirming that the Qur'an the Quran is communicated to affect the reader or listener in terms of feelings, attitudes, actions, etc. The Quranic illocutionary forces include admonition, affirmation, reward, punishment, oath, warning, reminding, exhortation and intimidation, etc.

Abdul Raof (2017) states that the Qur'an tends to prefer lexical cohesion to other cohesive devices. According to him, reiteration is a dominant cohesive device in the Qur'an. He adds that English does not employ or prefer the same devices that are preferred by Arabic. Therefore, cohesion devices equivalence and translatability may make translators attempts difficult or impossible to accomplish. This is what we are going to discover when analyzing the translations and checking translators' decisions and most used equivalents.





### 3. Methodology

The surah to be analyzed is the 12<sup>th</sup> in the Qur'an. The original or source text is Arabic then. The 12<sup>th</sup> surah is named 'Yusuf' and is the only one which tells, in a restrictive way, the story of Yusuf and his brothers from the beginning until the end. The surah does not tell any different story, nor is this story told or mentioned in any other surah. For this, Yusuf is the best surah which represents narrative surahs and chapters as it includes a complete story and does not discuss any other issues. Cohesive devices shall, then, be of great importance.

The analyzed ayahs or verses are taken from different parts of the surah which includes 111 ayahs. The chosen ones are the most important ones and the ones in which repetition is used to express different functions and has plenty of illocutionary forces. In addition, some of the chosen ayahs are probably hard and challenging to translate due to rhetorical and aesthetic functions that shall be seen later. The ayahs that shall be analyzed are ayahs: 3, 4, 5, 36, 43, 59, and 70. It is also important to mention that most of these words and roots are repeated in other ayahs and other positions. Since it is impossible to mention all these instances, we tried our best to select the most important ones.

Different underlines are to be added to the bold style to differentiate the repetition groups and avoid any possible ambiguity or confusion.

#### 3.1. Source texts

The source text is as follows:

نَحْنُ نَحْنُ نَفْسِي عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْفَقِصِي بِمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ وَإِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الْعَافِلِينَ

٣

إِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَأَيْتُهُمْ لِي سَاجِدِينَ ٤



قَالَ يَبْنَئِي لَا تَقْصِيصِي رُغْيَاكَ عَلَىٰ إِخْوَتِكَ فَيَكِيدُوا لَكَ كَيْدًا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ ٥  
 وَدَخَلَ مَعَهُ السِّجْنَ فَتَيَانٍ قَالَ أَحَدُهُمَا إِنِّي أُرِنِّي أُعْصِرُ خَمْرًا وَقَالَ الْآخَرُ إِنِّي أُرِنِّي أُحْمَلُ فَوْقَ  
 رَأْسِي خُبْرًا تَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْهُ نَبْنُّنَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِ إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ٣٦

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ إِنِّي أُرِي سَبْعَ بَقَرَاتٍ سِمَانٍ يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعٌ عِجَافٌ وَسَبْعَ سُنبُلَاتٍ خُضْرٍ وَأُخَرَ يَابِسَاتٍ ٤٣  
 يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ أَفْتُونِي فِي رُغْيَايَ إِن كُنْتُمْ لِلرُّغْيَا تَعْبُرُونَ ٤٣  
 وَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُم بِجَهَازِهِمْ قَالَ أئْتُونِي بِأَخٍ لَكُمْ مِّنْ أَبِيكُمْ ٥ أَلَا تَرَوْنَ أَنِّي أُوْفِي الْكَيْلَ وَأَنَا خَيْرُ  
 الْمُنزِلِينَ ٥٩

فَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُم بِجَهَازِهِمْ جَعَلَ السَّقَايَةَ فِي رَحْلِ أَخِيهِ ثُمَّ أَذِنَ مَوْلَانِ أَيُّهَا الْعَيْرُ إِنَّكُمْ لَسَّرْتُمْ ٧٠

These ayahs demonstrate that some roots are repeated and used in different ayahs. These roots are *qasṣa*, which is repeated three times in these ayahs, *raḥa* (10 times in 5 ayahs), *jahhaza* (four times in two ayahs), and *ḥaḍḍana* (once in the 70<sup>th</sup> ayah). These lexical cohesion items that we shall analyze are in bold. To make things clear, each of the roots is distinguished by a different underline.

### 3.2. Target texts

The target texts are three: Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali & M. Muhsin Khan's translation (The Noble Qur'an) , Muhammad Asad's work (Message of the Quran), and Marmaduke Pickthal's translation (The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'ân).

Since the focus is only on the repetitions and lexical cohesion devices, we shall only show the equivalents that these translators chose for these cohesive items instead of copying the whole translations of the ayahs.

The equivalents are as follows:



Table 1. Target Texts

Ayah number	English translations		
	Al Hilali & Khan	Asad	Pickthal
3	<p>We <u>relate</u> unto you (Muhammad صلى الله عليه و سلم) the best of <u>stories</u> through Our Revelations unto you, of this Qur'ân. And before this (i.e. ....)</p> <p>(Al Hilali &amp; Khan 1996: 304)</p>	<p>In the measure that We reveal this Qur'an unto thee, [O Prophet,] We <u>explain</u> it to thee in the best possible way, seeing that ere this thou .....</p> <p>(Asad 1980: 362)</p>	<p>We <u>narrate</u> unto thee (Muhammad) the best of <u>narratives</u> in that We have inspired in thee this Qur'an, ....</p> <p>(Pickthal 1969: 71)</p>
4	<p>I <u>saw</u> (in a <u>dream</u>) eleven .... - I <u>saw them</u> prostrating ....</p>	<p>I <u>saw</u> [in a <u>dream</u>] eleven stars, ....: I <u>saw them</u> prostrate .....</p>	<p>I <u>saw</u> in a <u>dream</u> eleven ....., I <u>saw them</u> prostrating ....</p>
5	<p>Relate not <u>your vision</u> to your brothers, ..... an open enemy!</p>	<p>Do not relate <u>thy dream</u> to thy brothers ..... man's open foe!</p>	<p>Tell not thy brethren of <u>thy vision</u>. ..... an open foe.</p>
36	<p>"Verily, I <u>saw myself</u> (in a <u>dream</u>) ....." The other said: "Verily, I <u>saw myself</u></p>	<p>"Behold, I <u>saw myself</u> [in a <u>dream</u>]...." And the other said: "Behold, I</p>	<p>I <u>dreamed</u> that ..... The other said I <u>dreamed</u> ....., for we see thee ....</p>



	(in a dream) ....., we <b>think</b> you are...	<b>saw myself</b> [in a dream] ..... Verily, we <b>see</b> that thou .....	
43	Verily, I <b>saw</b> (in a dream) seven fat cows, ..... <b>my</b> <b>dream</b> , if it be that you can interpret <b>dreams</b> ."	Behold, I <b>saw</b> [in a dream] ....my <b>dream</b> , if you are able to interpret <b>dreams</b> !"	I <b>saw</b> in a dream seven fat kine ..... <b>my vision</b> , if ye can interpret <b>dreams</b> .
59	And when he <b>had furnished them</b> <b>with their provisions</b> <b>(according to their</b> <b>need)</b> , he said: "..... ’	And when he <b>provided them with</b> <b>their provision</b> he said: ..... 59	And when he <b>had provided them</b> <b>with their provisions</b> , he said: "[.....’ 59
70	‘So when he had furnished them forth with their provisions, he ..... Then <b>a crier</b> <b>cried</b> : "O you (in) the caravan!	And when he provided them with their provision, he ..... and then <b>a</b> <b>crier cried</b> : O camel riders!	‘And [later,] when he had provided them with their provisions, he ..... And [...] <b>a herald</b> <b>called out</b> :



## 4. Discussion and findings

### 4.1. The repetition of ‘qaṣṣa’

Table 2. Equivalents of *qaṣṣa*

Root/ repetition	English translations		
	Al Hilali & Khan	Asad	Pickthal
نَقَصَّ	relate	explain	narrate
الْقَصَص	stories	0	narratives
لَا	relate not	Do not relate	tell not
تَقْصُصْ			

In the third ayah, Allah the Almighty affirms that the story He is telling is the best of stories. The employment of the same word as a verb and a noun made the ayah convincing, attracting, and beautiful as there is a repetition of the word and of the sounds *ṣad* and *sin* which are close to each other: ‘*nahnu naquṣṣu ḥalaika aḥsana al qaṣaṣi*’. The repetition of the word and the sounds attracts readers and expresses affirmation that the Qur’an tells the best stories.

The receiver, Muhammed PBUH, Quraish disbelievers, and mankind in general, are convinced that Yusuf’s story is the best and that it deserves hearing or reading. The occurrence of the repetition at the beginning of the surah highlighted it and made it important. Whoever reads the Qur’an shall be attracted by this affirmation and shall be curious to discover the story.

In the fifth ayah, *Yaḥquub* (Jacob) orders Yusuf using the same verb *qaṣṣa* (*la taqṣuṣ...*). This shift from using the declarative affirmative mood (*naquṣṣu*) to the imperative one (*la taqṣuṣ*) and in the identity of speakers and addressees (from Allah the Almighty to *Yaḥquub* and from Muhammed to Yusuf) are highlighted. This multi-dimensional shift plays different roles and leaves some



effects on receivers and readers. These perlocutionary effects prepare readers to hear the story and attract them to it as it appeals to their emotions and alerts them.

The repetition of that root helped in sticking the ayahs and story together and in informing readers and addressees that the surah tells the best story that can be found in any books. The same word is repeated for the fourth and final time in the last ayah (ayah 111) where Allah the Almighty affirms that ‘their story’ is a lesson and admonition for mankind and that it (the story) is a revelation from Allah and not made up by Muhammed PBUH. Employing the word at the very beginning and at the end show how the surah is linked together is a strong way. Surface text cohesion is well established through repetition as well as through the previously discussed devices.

The translations show that the repetitions are not maintained, and most, or probably all, the related functions and illocutionary forces and roles are lost. The repetition of *qassa* in three different morphological versions: ‘*naquṣṣu*, *al qaṣaṣi*, and *la taqsus*’ is not maintained. Translators tried to keep the same repetitions, but due to languages difference and to the Arabic verbs ability to accept attached pronouns and particles, the process did not work. Al Hilali & Khan used 2/3 repetitions. They chose *stories* as an equivalent of ‘*al qaṣaṣi*’ and ‘*relate*’ as a translation of both ‘*naquṣṣu*’ and ‘*taqsus*’. Since English does not have the same verbs prefixes and suffixes system, the speakers and mood shifts are weaker or lost.

Asad chose to change the structure which ended in losing the three repetitions. The translator used ‘*explain*’ as an equivalent of ‘*naquṣṣu*’ and did not translate ‘*al qaṣaṣi*’. The word he chose for ‘*taqsus*’ is different from ‘*explain*’. He employed the same verb that Al Hialali & Khan employed (*relate*). As a result, all the repetitions are left out.

In the last translation, two of the three repetitions are used. Pickthal chose ‘*narrate*’, ‘*narratives*’, and ‘*tell*’ as equivalent of ‘*naquṣṣu*’, ‘*al qaṣaṣi*’, and



'*taqsus*' respectively. It is true that Pickthal's translation looks more faithful to the source text, the inability to maintain the third repetition resulted in weakening the affirmation and in losing the speaker and mood shifts.

Although Pickthal, and Al Hilali & Khan tried to keep the same or most of the repetitions, all the translations failed to maintain the repetitions. This weakened the shift we talked about and stripped the text of its beauty and attractiveness. The Quranic ability to attract readers and to highlight the importance and beauty of the story that the surah is going to tell is lost in all the translations. All the related effects and perlocutionary forces are lost as well.

#### 4.2. The repetition of *raʔa*

Table 3. Equivalentents of *raʔa*

Root/ repetition	English translations		
	Al Hilali & Khan	Asad	Pickthal
رَأَيْتُ	I saw (in a dream)	I saw [ <u>in a dream</u> ]	I saw in a dream
رَأَيْتُهُمْ	I saw them	I saw them	I saw them
رُؤْيَا	Your vision	Your dream	Thy vision
*2 أَرَانِي	I saw (in a dream)* 2	I saw myself [ <u>in a</u>	I dreamed that
نَرَاكَ	we think you are	dream]	We see
أَرَى	I saw (in a dream)	We see	I saw in a dream
رُؤْيَايَ	my dream	I saw [ <u>in a dream</u> ]	my vision
لِلرُّؤْيَا	dreams	My dream	dreams
أَلَا تَرَوْنَ	see you not	Dreams	See ye not
		Do you not see	



As far as the second repetition is concerned (i.e., *raʔa* and its derivatives), These ayahs include different repetitions. The most important one is the one of the root '*raʔa*' which is repeated ten times in the **4, 5, 36, 43, and 59<sup>th</sup>** ayahs. The repetitions appear in different forms and derivations of the root. In most cases, the repeated words take the form of a verb as in *Raʔaytu*, *Raʔaytuhum*, *naraaka*, *ʔarani*, *ʔara*, etc. The verb is repeated seven times. The noun *ruʔyaa*, which is derived from the same verb (or the other way around), is repeated three times.

In the third ayah, the used verbs '*raʔaytu*' and '*raʔaytuhum*' are put in the past. In the 36<sup>th</sup> and 43<sup>rd</sup> ayahs, the verbs are put in the present continuous. Following this, the actions or visions in the latter ayahs look longer and take more time. The actions or visions are lengthened by speakers as they were describing their visions. The employment of those verbs gave us the impression that those addressers were revisualizing things and describing them as they were taking place at that moment. This may suggest also that the speakers have seen the visions more than once. Since literature does not suggest any explanation and since no exegetical note is written or added about the issue, we shall conclude that the present is maybe used to show that the actions are longer and to suggest that the speakers were expressing wonderment or surprise. Grammarians suggest that this form of retelling a past tale using present affirms the story or the vision and expresses wonder or exclamation.

This is not the case at the beginning of the surah where Yusuf explained what he saw to his father. Yusuf used '*raʔaytu*' and '*raʔaytuhum*' and did not use '*inni ʔara*' or '*ʔarahum*'. The form used is unmarked as it is the most expected way of telling or describing a past event or a vision. The shift from the past form to the present, and the meanings and functions it plays, is highlighted through these repetitions. The tense shift from '*raʔaytu*' to '*ʔara*' is marked and highlighted here as it takes us from a past event to a more vivid one. The shift





alerts readers and helps them visualize the vision and imagine the cows, colours and the numbers that the king mentions in his dream.

There is another shift in the first ayah in which Yusuf describes his vision. There is a pronoun shift as the Qur'an moves from using the singular past simple pronoun *tu (raʔaytu)* to the plural form (*raʔaytuhum*). This shift expresses strong affirmation and shows that Yusuf did see that vision. The affirmation expressed through the repetition and shift prepare readers and the addressee (*Yaʕquub*) to hear the rest of the story (*raʔaytuhum li saajidiin*) which may be shocking or surprising.

In addition to these shifts, the repetitions also highlight another shift. This shift is a speaker one as there is a movement from using the *ta* (past+ first person singular) and *ni* (present continuous+ first singular speaker particle) to *naraaka* which indicates that the speaker is a plural group. This shift from *ʔarani+ ʔarani* to *naraaka* express affirmation and highlight the two men request and strengthen it. These two men described their visions or dreams individually and asked Yusuf to interpret them using one request that employs plural speaker and singular addressee's pronouns. The shift shows and affirms the urgency of the request.

A similar shift is highlighted and emphasized by the repetition of the noun *roʔya* which appear in three different forms: *roʔyay*, *roʔyaka*, and *roʔya*. The first one is attached to the *ya* of first-person singular speaker while the second shows that the addresser (Yusuf) is a singular masculine second person. In the third case, the word is general and is not attached to any pronoun. The shift that we mentioned earlier is highlighted by this repetition as well as there is a movement from employing the *kaf (roʔyaka)* to indicate that the father is ordering and warning his son, Yusuf, against telling his brothers about his vision. The *ya*, on the other hand, shows that the speaker is talking about his own vision, and it is the king who speaks in this ayah. The last word highlights another shift from talking about specific visions to mentioning visions in general and the ability to



interpret them in general. The shifts and repetitions help readers connect events and analyze the narrative. They involve them and help them feel that they are active participants and readers as they appeal to their emotions and get rid of boredom and redundancy.

After having discussed the shifts that these repetitions demonstrate and strengthen, we shall move to show how the repetitions contribute to the surface text cohesion and textuality. The repetitions contribute to the text cohesion as there is a continuity of using the verb and its derivations. There is also a strong link between these visions, which are mentioned in different parts of the surah, and their interpretations which are discussed in many ayahs and in various positions in the surah. These visions and their corresponding interpretations attract readers and make them look and wait for the interpretation. They also use their minds and think of potential interpretations before reaching the part which shows or tells what the interpretation is. This attracts readers to the story and encourages them to read the whole surah. The employment of *ra?aytu* and the other verbs and nouns show readers and addressees that there is a continuity in subject matter and there is a smoothness in the way the surah and story is told.

The repetitions also show how beautiful the Qur'an is. It shows that repetition does not necessarily lead to redundancy and boredom. In these ayahs, repetitions are a strong way of cohesion and an attracting factor that makes reading the Qur'an enjoyable and that helps readers understand what is going on and expect the coming things or events. The repetitions we talked about, and also the sounds and letters repetitions, strongly connect the surah and help develop the narrative. The words which are repeated in different sections of the surah (the beginning, middle and the end) keep the narrative united and interconnected. The repetition of the *ra*, *nun*, and *sin* sounds, in these ayahs, attract readers and make the text beautiful. These repetitions are not used at the expense of meaning or smoothness of information and development of the



narrative. Both sides (i.e., the sound congruity and informativity) are highlighted and perfectly demonstrated. The question that we need to ask here is centered around the translators' ability to maintain the repetitions without affecting the flow of information and narrativity of the surah.

The first remark about the translations is that none of them managed to maintain the repetitions. The second important remark is centered around the inability to employ the same root in verbs and nouns as translators used completely different words: *saw*, and *dreams/visions*, for example. In the first analyzed ayah (ayah 4), the three translations use the same equivalents and maintain the two repetitions (verbs). All the translators employed *saw* and *saw them* as equivalents of *raʔaytu* and *raʔaytuhum*. Though translators managed to use the most expected and appropriate equivalent, they were obliged to add 'in a dream' to help English readers understand that what Yusuf was describing was a dream or vision. This was not the case in the original text as the verb *raʔaytu* makes the ellipsis of *roʔya* or *fi l manami* possible and necessary. In English, the verb *saw* does not help in keeping the same ellipsis and brevity. For this, translators maintained the repetitions without maintaining the same succinctness and smoothness.

In the fifth ayah, things got changed as they used a noun that is not derived from *see* or *saw*. Al Hilali & Khan, and Pickthal used 'your/thy vision' as an equivalent of *roʔyaka*. Asad, on the other hand, chose to use 'thy dream'. In both cases, the original text repetition and derivation of *raʔaytu* (*roʔyaka*) is not maintained. The strong cohesive tie is broken and lost in this ayah and the coming ones where repetitions are not preserved.

In the 36<sup>th</sup> ayah, Al Hilali & Khan, and Asad use again the verb *see* as they employ 'I saw myself' as an equivalent of 'ʔarani'. They are obliged to insert 'in a dream' each time they use the verb 'saw' to avoid confusion and ambiguity. This shows how different the verb *raʔa* or *ʔara* is from 'see' or any other



equivalent. The used equivalent is a past simple verb, not a present one as in the source text.

The third translator, i.e., Pickthal, chose to use the verb '*dreamed*' instead of employing '*saw myself*'. This choice, which dispensed him of adding the '*in a dream*' note repetitively and maintained, to some extent, source text brevity, weakened his translation and questioned equivalent consistency and repetition cohesion. The translator used '*saw*' in ayahs 4 and 43 and decided to shift to '*dreamed*' in ayah 36. This led to losing almost all repetitions including the verb ones that were maintained by other translators. Pickthal's decision (i.e., using '*dreamed*' instead of '*saw in a dream*') would be of great importance and value if he continued using it during all the ayahs. Absence of consistency weakened the lexical cohesion ties and contributed to interrupting meaning and losing source text smoothness. As a result, the translation readers may understand that the Qur'an uses different verbs for those different equivalents: '*I saw*' and '*I dreamed*'.

The last repetition in this ayah (the verb *naraaka*) is translated differently. Al Hilali & Khan used '*think*' while Asad and Pickthal chose '*see*'. Al Hilali & Khan's decided to give the priority to the meaning and forget about the form and repetition. Their translation appears logical as '*think*' or '*consider*' may be the most appropriate equivalent of the verb *nara* in this context. Yet, meaning is not the only important thing here. The repetitions and sound congruity are a major cohesive device that Al Hilali & Khan sacrificed to convey meaning that could be conveyed by using '*see*' that Pickthal and Asad employed.

Pickthal's choice does not contribute to the lexical cohesion we are talking about because he chose to employ '*dreamed that*' instead of '*saw myself*'. So, the verb '*see*' is different from the one used at the beginning of the ayah (i.e., '*dreamed*'). This led to losing the repetitions and the functions they demonstrate and highlight.



On the other hand, Asad used the same verb that he used to quote the two men description of visions: *saw myself*, *saw myself*, and *see*. Asad's suggestion strongly connected the ayah and maintained some extent of lexical cohesion at least at the level of the ayah. Asad is, then, the only translator who used the same verb three times. He maintained the same within-ayah cohesion without being able to convey the same meanings and to keep the same succinctness as he inserted the explanatory note '*in a dream*'.

The last ayah repetitions are similar to the ones in ayah 5. These repetitions are not maintained as translators do not have nouns that can be derived from the verb '*to see*' and which mean '*dream*' or '*vision*'. For this, all the translators used *saw* as an equivalent of the verb *ḥara* and shifted to *vision/dream* which are equivalents of the noun '*roḥya*' which is used twice. Pickthal is the only one who used two different equivalents of the same noun. He used *my vision* and *dreams* as equivalent of '*roḥyay*' and '*roḥya*'. In the other two translations, '*my dreams*' and '*dreams*' are employed. Pickthal's suggestion emphasizes the shift from specific to general more than the other two translations though it leaves the repetition out.

Pickthal used each time different and unexpected equivalents. Probably, he used such equivalents as he was sure that no matter how excellent he tries to be, he would never manage to maintain the same repetitions (verbs and nouns of the same root) without affecting meaning and narrativity. For this, he tried to give priority to the meaning or brevity sometimes. The same thing is done by Al Hilali & Khan when they used '*think*' instead of '*see*'. They probably understood that it is impossible to take care of both sides (meaning and form) and sacrificed one of the two.

Before discussing the translation losses, let us mention the number of translations that these translators managed to preserve and use. AL Hilali & Khan managed to maintain all the verbal repetitions and left out the nominal ones. They preserved 5/9 repetitions. In these ones, they were obliged to add the explanatory



note ‘*in a dream*’ each time they use the verb *saw*. Asad kept 6 out of the nine ones. Again, this translator was obliged to insert explanatory notes like ‘*in a dream*’ and ‘*how to interpret dreams*’. The last translator, i.e., Pickthal, maintained only 4/9 repetition. Most of the used repetitions are accompanied by explanatory notes or additional pieces of information like the ones we have just mentioned.

Since it is almost impossible to find an equivalent in English that has the same meaning and plays the same roles that the verb *raʔa* has, translators could not, possibly, find any other solutions or alternative that can enable them to maintain the same repetitions and related functions. The inequivalence in the ability to derive many other verbs and nouns from the same root obliged translators to use different nouns and leave out the repetitions. Translators were given the choice to preserve either meaning or form and sound congruity and repetition. The translations show that translators sacrificed form and lexical cohesion and tried to maintain the meaning. Nevertheless, it was impossible for them to maintain and convey those meanings without additional information and explanatory note. This took place due to the magical verb *raʔa* (*ʔara/ raʔaytu/ roʔya...*) which is used in these ayahs to mean ‘*see/saw in a dream*’, ‘*consider/think of*’, ‘*dream/vision*’, etc. The English equivalent (*see*) does not convey the same meanings and does not have a derived noun, which is derived from it, that means ‘*roʔya*’. As a result, translators preferred to use other roots like ‘*dream*’, *think*, ‘*vision*’, etc. This resulted in weakening the text lexical cohesion and interrupted the narrativity and smoothness of the story. It also gives, sometimes, the wrong impression that the ayah or the story talks about different dreams or visions each time a new vocabulary item is used (*vision/ dream*).

In addition, this complexity and failure in finding an appropriate equivalent led to the insertion of additional words that made the translations wordy and redundant. Source text brevity and ellipsis, which as we said attract



readers and urge them to read the story, are lost. Readers may feel that the text is sometimes unnatural.

The source text beauty, sound congruity, and dominance of some sounds like *raʔ*, *nun*, and *yaʔ*, are not maintained due to the inability to maintain the same repetitions. Target texts do not establish lexical cohesion in the same way. As a result, the related shifts and illocutionary forces and effects on readers are not the same. The most important shift that no translator could preserve is the one from past to present (from Yusuf's '*raʔaytu*' and '*raʔaytuhum*' to the two prisoners words '*ʔarani*' and the king's '*inni ʔara*'). These shifts are lost as all translators were consistent in using past simple in all the verbs (*saw*, *saw myself*, and *saw*). This has negatively affected the expressed meanings and functions and weakened the text. It also stripped the text of an affective weapon (shift) that alerts readers and attracts their attention. The marked shift is lost here and, thus, the vividness that we talked about earlier is not preserved as readers shall not notice any difference and shall not feel that the king's vision of cows and green and yellow colours is more vivid and lengthy. Readers shall not be alerted, attracted, and encouraged to visualize and imagine the vision while reading or hearing the ayah.

The other shifts are also weakened as English do not use attached pronouns and as English verbs do not show number and gender via such pronouns. The shifts from singular first to second persons (from *raʔaytu* to *roʔyak*) and from plural first person (*naraaka*) back to singular first person (*roʔyay*) are weaker as repetitions are lost (especially of nouns) and as additional words and notes are inserted.

To sum up, translators decisions maintained only half of the repetitions we have in the source text. They were even obliged to change the tense, sometimes, and add explanatory notes that made their translations redundant. In addition, all the related functions and acts are either lost or weakened due to the inability to maintain the same shifts and the tense affirmation that the repetitions express and demonstrate.



### 4.3. The repetition of *jahazza*

Table 4. Equivalents of *jahazza*

Root/ repetition	English translations		
	Al Hilali & Khan	Asad	Pickthal
ولما جَهَّزَهُمْ بِجَهَّازِهِمْ	So, when he had furnished them forth with their provisions (according to their need)	when he provided them with their provision *2	And when he had provided them with their provisions *2
فَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُمْ بِجَهَّازِهِمْ	When he had furnished them forth with their provisions		

In this section, we are dealing with the recurrence of *wa/ fa lamma jahhazahum bi jahazihim* which is used twice. In the first time, the conditional sentence is used after the coordinator *wa*. In the second time, the conjunction used is different as the *fa* is employed. Concerning the difference between the *fa* and the *wa*, we shall just mention that in the first ayah actions and events take place at a normal pace unlike in the second ayah where the *fa* is used. The *fa* suggests that the second sentence and action (the second ayah) took place after some time. In that ayah, the second event (the result of the condition) takes place very quickly so that the brothers could not discover the plot.

The word *jahhaza* is repeated twice in each of the two ayahs. In both cases, the word is attached to the plural masculine pronoun *hum*. This makes the ayah





beautiful and leads to a sort of sound congruity that makes the text attractive. Any reader or listener would love to hear these ayahs thanks to that sound congruity and repetition of the word and of the *jim*, *zay* and *ha?* sounds. These repetitions make reading enjoyable and help readers visualize what was happening. They also help in developing the narrative and in establishing surface text cohesion.

Employing two different words (a verb and a noun) which are derived from the same root makes the repetitions beautiful and probably hard to translate. The verb *jahhaza* and the noun *jahaz* are used next to each other and this makes the image and repetition more beautiful. The repetition also highlights a shift from a verb to a noun in a smooth way. What led to this beauty and smoothness is the use of a one-letter particle (*bi*) that is attached to the noun. This one-letter particle did not interrupt the smoothness and shift. It also maintained the sound congruity and beautifulness of the repetition. As readers, when we read the ayahs we do not even notice the *ba?* particle and we feel attracted to the repetition of the *ha?*, *jim*, and *zay*. The repetition leads also to Qur'an succinctness as there are only two repeated words that are placed next to each other each time the sentence is repeated. All the elements of the sentence are either prefixes or suffixes (pronouns and the particle *bi*) that led to this brevity.

Concerning the repetition, two out of the three translations use the same repetition in both ayahs. Asad and Pickthal chose to employ the same sentence. On the contrary, AL Hilali & Khan made some changes. They added one word and omitted a short explanatory note in the second ayah. The translators added '*forth*' when repeating the sentence: '*when he had furnished them forth with their provisions*'. They also omitted the note that they inserted between parentheses '*(according to their need)*'. The unexpected step broke the source text beauty and attractiveness. The added word and the omitted note suggest that the Qur'an do not use the same sentence in two different parts of the surah. This breaks and weakens the affirmation characteristic of the source text.



Al Hilali & Khan's translation uses many more words than the original text. Translators could not find equivalents for the attached pronouns and particles. For this, Qur'an succinctness and brevity are lost here as 12 words are used to translate three (*lamma + jahhaza + bijahazihim*). The same thing can be said about the other two translations though they maintained a sort of consistency and kept the same sentence in both positions. Asad used 7 words while Pickthal employed 8. This inescapable step led to losing the Qur'an succinctness and destroyed the beauty and attractiveness of the source text as there is no sound congruity equivalence. The strength and beauty of the *jim*, *ha?*, and *zay* are impossible to maintain.

Asad and Pickthal used almost the same translation. The only difference is tense as Asad employed past simple and Pickthal chose past perfect: '*when he provided them with their provision*' and '*when he had provided them with their provisions.*' Translators' decisions neglected and overlooked the importance of the *wa* to *fa* shift that is emphasized in the source text. The difference between the two contexts, though the same expressions and words are used, is left out due to the inability to maintain the repetitions and use different and more appropriate equivalents for the *wa* and the *fa*.

#### 4.4. The repetition of *ʔaḏḏana*

Table 5. Equivalents of *ʔaḏḏana*

Root/ repetition	English translations		
	Al Hilali & Khan	Asad	Pickthal
أَدَّنَ مُؤَدِّنٌ	a crier cried	A crier cried	a herald called out

In this repetition, we have also a verb and a noun that are placed next to each other. This time, nothing stands between the two which are derived from the same root. The repeated words are: '*ʔaḏḏana muʔaḏḏinun*'. This repetition, which



demonstrates a sort of sound congruity, leaves a strong effect on readers and attracts them to the text. It also leads to the same results and functions that we discussed in the previous paragraphs. The used verb '*ʔaḏḏana*' has different meanings although it usually means '*to call for prayer aloud*'. This mission is done, in most cases, by a man called '*muʔaḏḏinun*'. This job involves calling aloud and telling the '*ʔaḏaan*' or '*Salat reminder*'. In this ayah, the verb and noun are used in a more general sense that we, as Arabic language speakers and readers, did not expect. The expression means '*to shout and call out for something or somebody aloud.*' '*Muʔaḏḏinun*' refers, then, in the ayah to an announcer or caller. This employment and the different expressed meaning strongly attract readers attention.

The abovementioned repetitions express, in addition to the functions we talked about earlier, affirmation. The actions and events are affirmed through such repetitions.

As far as the repetition of '*ʔaḏḏana*' is concerned, Al Hilali & Khan, and Asad used the same equivalents: '*a crier cried*'. Pickthal chose meaning over beauty and form as he employed '*a herald called out*'. From a meaning and sense point of view, Pickthal's translation is the most faithful as it helps readers understand what is happening, assists them visualize what took place, and cater for cultural differences between languages and audience. On the other hand, from a form and repetition perspective, this translation is not faithful at all and led to different translation losses. The most important loss is the attractiveness and beauty of the message and repetition. In addition, affirmation and succinctness are also victims.

Al Hilali and Khan, and Asad's translation (*a crier cried*) are not faithful to the source text as they do not convey the same meaning and translate the same image and event. The used equivalents are general and do not suggest what the original repetition suggests. Yet, repetition is maintained. The translators maintained the repetitions without being able to transform the expressed



meanings and the related functions. The maintained repetitions may also shock readers as, probably, no English receiver do expect to read something like ‘*a crier cried*’. The translators tried to prioritize form at the expense of meaning and functionality. Nevertheless, the result was not a similar affective repetition that readers may admire and get attracted to.

To conclude, dealing with these two repetitions shows that it is almost difficult to deal with such repetitions, especially if the repeated words are placed next to each other. It is also more difficult if there is some kind of rhyming or sound congruity that can never be maintained. In addition, the situation gets worse if these repeated words are attached to any particles or attached pronouns. These translations left many losses like succinctness, weaker shifts and lexical cohesion, no or weaker affirmation, and other ones.

#### 4.5. Findings

The abovementioned paragraphs show that repetition plays a vital role in Quranic surface text lexical cohesion. This cohesion, which is smoothly established through the repetition of those words and roots, makes the text stick together and helps in developing the narrative and creating the wholeness and unity of the text.

As expected, when translating such cohesive devices, translators were obliged to make some unexpecting decisions that led to various translation losses. Most of these losses are related to the functional and rhetorical characteristics or sides of the text. The illocutionary effects that the repetitions have on source text readers and addressees are not maintained here. The most important lost functions are affirmation and succinctness.

The affirmation characteristic that most of the repetitions have is either weakened or lost due to the inability to find appropriate equivalents and to maintain the same repetitions. The verb *raʿa* and the noun *roʿya* and their



equivalents *see* and *think*, and *dream* or *vision*) demonstrate this. This verb and its used equivalents also highlight how succinctness is easily broken due to the lack of an appropriate equivalent that can dispense translators of adding explanatory notes each time to tell readers that the speakers are describing a vision or dream, not reality. This weakened target texts and made them repetitive or redundant.

The aesthetic function that sounds congruity plays is another victim of these translations. This loss is resulted from the inability of translators to find verbs and nouns which are derived from the same root. The example that demonstrated this is, in addition to the *raʔa* one, the sentence '*lamma jahhazahum bi jahazihim*': *jahhaza* (verb)+ *hum* (pronoun) + *bi* (particle)+ *jahazi* (noun) + *him* (pronoun). This, which is composed of four words, took translators between 9 and 14 words to translate. The translations led to losing the sound congruity and also the repetition of the word. These examples show that the target texts are weaker and do not play the same roles and have the same functional characteristics and perlocutionary and illocutionary effects on readers. In addition, in some cases meanings are not maintained too.

## 5. Conclusion

**This study, which aimed at showing how repetitions contribute to the Qur'an inimitability and uniqueness and demonstrating how repetitions and lexical cohesion play major roles in establishing surface text cohesion, proved that there is almost no perfect translation that maintains meaning, form, and render the same cohesive devices.**

**The lexical cohesion chains and repetitions' relationships that strongly linked the original surah parts and strengthened the source text, and expressed different meanings and rhetorical functions are not mentioned due to the factors that we mentioned earlier. This point confirms our**



hypotheses about the impossibility to maintain translations and the functions they have or contribute to. In most cases, the repetitions are either completely left out or weakened because of the lack of appropriate equivalents or the inability of the used equivalents to convey all meanings and functions.

The study also supports the idea that the Quranic cohesion devices are among the inimitability or *isjazz* keys and factors. These factors make the Qur'an impossible to translate. This does not suggest that the translation process can never take place. It instead proves that any translation attempt will lead to various losses and translation victims that can result in changing the meanings, weakening the texts, and leaving out many of, or probably all, the rhetorical functions of the text. Such functions are essential elements of the Quranic text as the Book is sent down to affect addressees and warn, order, admonish, or do similar acts.

Such a study that addresses one aspect of lexical cohesion and analyzes one surah of the Qur'an is not enough and can never be employed to make final decisions about Quranic cohesion and its role in inimitability and inequivalence from one point of view, and about the faithfulness and quality of the translations. More studies should be undertaken on nonnarrative surahs and maybe shorter ones to see if repetitions play similar effective roles in Quranic unity and cohesion and in making translators job hard to accomplish without losses.



## References:

- [1] Abdul-Raof, H. (2017). *New Horizons in Qur'anic Linguistics: A Syntactic, Semantics and Stylistic Analysis*. Routledge.
- [2] Abdul-Raof, H. (2019). *Text Linguistics of Qur'anic Discourse: An Analysis*. Routledge.
- [3] Al-Hilali, M. T., & Khan, M. M. (1996). *The Noble Quran: Transliteration in Roman Script with Original Arabic Text (Mushaf Al-Madinah) and English Translation of the Meanings*. King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an.
- [4] Asad, M. (1980). *The Message of the Qur'an*. Dar al-Andalus.
- [5] Baker, M. (1992). *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*. Routledge.
- [6] De Beaugrande, R., & Dressler, W. U. (1981). *Introduction to Text Linguistics*. Longman Publishing Group.
- [7] Halliday, M., & Hasan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English*. Routledge.
- [8] Pickthall, M. (1930). *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran: An Explanatory Translation*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- [9] Van Dijk, T. A. (1977). *Text and Context: Explorations in the Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse*. Longman Publishing Group.