

Demarcating the Use and Misuse of Epistemic and Deontic Modality Operators in Some Translated Verses of Surah Al-Kahf: A Systemic Functional Approach

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Abstract

The meager Arabic literature on modality was one of the pivotal impediments that challenged non-Arab translators when interpreting Qur'an verses. That being so, this study attempts to highlight some epistemic and deontic modality bloopers in some translated verses in Surah Al-Kahf (18:1-21). This modality investigation was carried out within the theoretical framework of the values and realizations of English and Arabic modality systems set by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) and Anghelescu (1999). The results showed that, first, translators should not use English epistemic possibility modals with low values when rendering Arabic verbs in the subjunctive mood. Second, some Arabic conjunctions such as “أو” ‘or’ convey a degree of possibility that requires an English epistemic possibility adjunct modal to be there in the target text. Third, Arabic verbs with emphatic affixes are better translated with an English modal expressing high degree of inclination.

Keywords: Epistemic Possibility, Deontic Modals, Modality, Proposition, Subjunctive and Jussive Moods.

1. Introduction

Modality assumes a significant function in the production and reception of natural languages; however, it has hitherto received scanty attention in theoretical Arabic linguistics and in instructional grammar. Modality, on the other hand, has created such a massive literature in European languages that the subject appeared to be over-studied (Palmer 1990; Nuyts 2001; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004; Narrog 2005; Shakirova 2016; Al Khalaf 2018). The scant literature on Arabic modality has been unsystematic and reductionist, providing little assistance to language learners, teachers, and translation trainers. This is corroborated by other linguists, for whom this category is a relatively uncharted territory (Abdul-Fattah 2011; Kahlaoui 2015).

The fact that no Arabic counterpart for modality or modal marker has been agreed upon thus far illustrates the extent to which this operation has been overlooked in grammatical research (Khalil 1990; El-Hassan 1990; Aziz 1992). Only when Arabic is viewed through the lens of another language, such as in translation and learning/teaching, can the pedagogical gap become apparent. Unlike Arabic linguists, English researchers and scholars examined modality in detail. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) presumed that language is used to perform three meta-functions: ideational, interpersonal and textual. The ideational

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function means that language is used to organize, understand, and convey the speaker's impressions of the environment (Kortmann, Givón, and Givon 1995; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004; Rhee 2016). The textual function signifies that the lexical items are employed to correlate what is uttered or written to the real world and to other linguistic aspects, such as the theme and the rheme (Givon 1994; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004).

Language is employed in the interpersonal function to enable the speaker to get engaged in communicative activities with other individuals, to assume roles, and to express or misunderstand sentiments, attitudes, and judgments (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004; Xu 2012; Su 2018). The mood structures and modalities are involved in this function. As a verbal interaction between the encoder and the decoder, mood structures express interactional meanings such as what the proposition is doing. Mood elements and residue elements make up mood structures. Mood refers to the quality of the sentence verb that conveys the speaker's attitude towards a subject. English includes four basic moods: indicative, interrogative, subjunctive, and imperative. Modality refers to the speaker's attitude toward the outside world. By using modal expressions, a speaker can express certainty, permission, possibility, disapproval, willingness, politeness, obligation, permission, refusal, necessity, inability and ability (Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan 1999; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004; Kim 2009; Berry 2012).

The scant Arabic literature and the rich English literature on modality have challenged some non-Arab translators on interpreting Qur'an verses. That being so, this study attempts to spotlight some epistemic and deontic modality inaccuracies observed in some translated verses in Surah Al-Kahf (The Cave) (18:1-21). To reach this goal the modality investigation was carried out after examining the theoretical framework of English modality set by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) and the theoretical framework of Arabic modal operators set by Resher (1968), Perkins (1983), and Angheliescu (1999).

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Modality theory

The grammatical choices that give the speakers the ability to enact their complex interpersonal relations are usually referred to as the interpersonal functions of the language; these functions are based on the fact that the speaker is not only talking about something but also is talking with others (Horbach, Ivanova, and Kalchenko 2021). Modality and mood are realized in the lexico-grammatical choices of the language to convey the communicative messages. Mood is bound with the choice of three basic illocutionary acts: indicative, interrogative and imperative. Modality refers to the speaker's point of view or comment on the speech content and function of the clause. It also refers to the semantic area holding between the non-affirmative and affirmative poles (Carter and McCarthy 1999; Butler 2005; Adejare 2014).

Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) believed that modality is the intermediate surface between yes and no and between the affirmative and non-affirmative polarity. In social contexts, language users exchange their linguistic experiences with others and this exchange takes the form of a text a part of which is modality. In this social exchange, the language user can present their suggestions or give orders or

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comment positively or negatively on what other language users say. Modality, according to Halliday (1994), comprises judgments of the addressers to the information or services given by the addressees. These services are realized by way of a statement, a question, or a command.

Modality in English texts is of several linguistic realizations: (1) overt modal operators such as *may*, *might*, *will*, and *would* (See 1.a), (2) overt semi-modals such as *need* and *dare* (See 1.b), (3) modal adjuncts such as *certainty*, *possibly*, *perhaps*, etc. (See 1.c), (4) lexical verbs such as *forbid*, *guess*, *suppose*, *wonder*, etc. (See 1.d), (5) lexico – modal auxiliaries such as *be able to*, *be going to*, *be supposed to*, *have to*, *be bound to* etc. (See 1.f), (6) a clause with an adjective (See 1.g), (7) a clause with a past participle (See 1.h), (8) a clause with a noun (See 1.i), and finally (9) a conditional clause (See 1.j) (Irslinger 2009; Sunardi 2016; Fong 2020).

(1)

- a. The attendees *must* abide by the place rules.
- b. I *need* see your commitment in this project.
- c. *Probably*, she is in a meeting by now.
- d. The manager *supposes* that you can handle it.
- f. Websites *are bound to* comply with some regulations
- g. *It is certain* that you will pass the driving test.
- h. He *is determined* to finalize the plan by the end of this month.
- i. *It is a possibility* that this war be erupted once again.
- j. *Unless* you put some more spices, this food *will* be tasteless.

2.2 Subclasses and degrees of modality

Downing (1992), Verstraete (2001), and Selezneva (2013) set two types of modality from the orientation of meaning: subjective and objective. Subjective modality means that the speaker's personal judgment is presented by the first person (e.g., *I must* study physics abroad). Objective modality, on the other hand, means that the personal opinion or judgment is expressed by a third person pronoun or an impersonal *it* (e.g., *He has to* study physics abroad).

Some linguists distinguish between explicit and implicit modals. Explicit modality is a clause wherein modality is expressed by overt modal operators (e.g., He *must* buy a new dictionary). Implicit modality is a sentence in which modality is covertly expressed by any other way rather than overt operators. They may be realized via modal adjuncts (e.g., Omar, *probably*, has bought a new dictionary), adjectives, or lexical verbs (Berry, Banbury, and Henry 1997; Kim and Godfroid 2019).

Halliday (1994) and Eggins (2011) defined two types of modality: modalization (i.e. proposition) and modulation (i.e. proposals). Halliday (1994) pointed out that modalization handles the meaning ranging between positive and negative, that is, between asserting and denying. Modalization refers to the speaker's comment or judgment to a proposition presented in the interaction. Modalization is of two types: probability and usuality. Hunston and Thompson (2000) and Lee (2020) contended that probability means how it is likely for an action to take place. Halliday (1994) set the probability scale as follows:

possible (low), *probable* (medium), and *certain* (high). Usuality, on the other hand, means how frequent an action takes place. Eggins (2011) and Hunston and Thompson (2000) set an ascending usuality scale ranging from the lowest degree to the highest as follows: *sometimes*, *usually*, and *always*.

Modulation refers to the meaning of a negative or positive proposal. Modulation is of two types: obligation and inclination. Obligation is used when giving commands which are scaled by Halliday (1994) from the lowest degree to the highest as follows: *allowed to*, *anxious to*, and *determined to*. Another scaling is put forward by Hunston and Thompson (2000) as follows: *permissible*, *advisable*, and *obligatory*. Inclination, the second type of modulation, is concerned with the speaker's degree of willingness to perform an action. Halliday (1994) pointed out that in offering the modality degrees of inclination ranges from the lowest to the highest as follows: *willing to*, *anxious to*, and *determined to*.

Tucker (2001) and Eggins (2011) proposed that modality values are set on the speaker's judgment into three levels: high, median, and low. The high degree means that the action is close to the positive polar and the action is possibly to happen; the median degree occurs between the high and the low levels; and the low degree is close to the negative polar and the action most possibly will not happen. The table below sums up all modality systems showing the types, realizations, values, and orientations.

Table 1: A summary of modality system

Type	{	Modalization	→	[Probability / Usuality]
		Modulation	→	[Obligation/ Inclination]
Value	{	Median		-
		Outer	→	[Low / High]
Orientation	→	[Objective/ Subjective]		
Manifestation	→	[Implicit/ Explicit]		

Modality can be further divided into epistemic, deontic, and dynamic. Epistemic modality refers to speaker's knowledge and judgment about the proposition (Finlay and Schroeder 2014). That is, it refers to the way the speakers communicate their modes of knowing: doubts, fears, guesses, and certainties. It is expressed by modals showing probability, possibility, or necessity. Epistemic certainty communicates the highest level of confidence depending on the speaker's judgment and knowledge on the proposition (e.g., Wendy's food *must* be well-cooked; it has been boiled for three hours) (Klemenova and Kudryashov 2018). Epistemic probability communicates a median degree of confidence depending on the speaker's judgment and knowledge on the proposition (e.g., Su *should* have been falling asleep) (Park 2013). Epistemic possibility communicates the lowest level of confidence based on the interlocutor's knowledge and judgment on the proposition (e.g., Bruce *may* come late this night) (Suikkanen 2018).

Deontic modality, with positive or negative meanings, indicates whether the proposition presented by an order is compulsory, advisable or allowable. The meanings of deontic modality are categorized in terms of the degree of obligation into three levels: necessity, advisability and permission. Deontic necessity transfers the highest level of obligation of an order or a command (e.g., Chinese *must* submit their credentials by 03:20 p.m.). Deontic advisability transmits a median degree of obligation of

an order (e.g., Brian *ought to* examine his car before travelling to New York). Deontic possibility conveys the lowest level of obligation implying a permission sense (e.g., Scot, you *may* bring your dictionary next exam) (Livnat 2002; Park 2013; Suikkanen 2018).

3. Review of literature

Knoblock (2020) investigated the employment of the necessity modal auxiliaries *must* and *have got to* in political posts and comments generated by some bloggers on Donald Trump's Facebook page. The researcher divided the modals used in the comments into two groups according to the ideological position of the commenters: modals with epistemic senses and modals with deontic senses. The researcher assumed that the proportion of modals whether epistemic or deontic in the highly supportive or extremely critical comments communicates the stances of equivalence or supremacy assumed by the commenters. The research results showed that Trump's opponents and supporters take on different attitudes while debating over immigration. This result was affirmed because the ratio of deontic and epistemic purports of the modals varied immensely between the two groups.

Relying on Knoblock (2020)'s results, Mansoori and Afshari (2016) pointed out that overt modal verbs are one of the commonly used means for expressing certainty and uncertainty of a proposition from the speaker's perspective. The purpose of Mansoori and Afshari (2016)'s study was to locate and numerate the modal auxiliaries employed in the Persian and English translations of Surah Ar-Rahman and Surah Yasin. The study concluded that modality in Arabic language is not similar to that holding in Persian and English languages.

Unlike Mansoori and Afshari (2016), Yeshniyaz, Ryssaldy, Blashova, Tassyrova, Nuradilova, and Tolganay (2018) initiated their study by affirming that the domain of modality is one of the highly controversial issues in linguistics, and they attributed this belief to the absence of a consensus among linguists with regard to the nature of modality and the subclasses involved under modality umbrella. Several studies tried to conceptualize modality employing many approaches. Yeshniyaz et al. (2018) examined the modality literature and split the modal operators into two groups. The first group comprises some subcategories as epistemic, deontic and dynamic modality; the second group includes subjective as well as objective types of modality. However, each approach has its serious gaps which should be examined. The first group does not set a definition that unites epistemic, deontic, and dynamic types of modality; whereas the second group categorizes the modals in terms of nature which makes the taxonomy totally irrelevant.

According to Suhadi (2011) and Al Dulaimi, Omar, and Saleem (2019), epistemic modality refers to the employment of modality based on the interlocutor's judgment regarding the level of certainty of the knowledge on the proposition. Deontic modality, on the other hand, shows if the proposition presented by an order is compulsory, naturally advisable or permissible per as some standard background such as law, ethicality, convention, etc. Suhadi (2011) concluded that in many cases, the meanings of epistemic and deontic modalities are highly relative and complement to each other, based on the evidence that some modalities such as *must*, *should*, and *may* fall under both types. Thus, epistemic and deontic

modalities are like two sides of a coin.

Criticizing Suhadi (2011) for setting no clear-cut boundaries between epistemic and deontic modalities, Winiharti (2012:540) discussed the concept and usage of modality trying “to set borders between deontic and epistemic modals”. This study concluded that deontic modality comprises obligation as well as permission, whereas epistemic modality expresses possibility in addition to prediction. Howbeit, the difference between deontic and epistemic modals is not clear cut, inasmuch as “one modal verb can express both types, and one single proposition can be expressed by more than one modal verb.”

Making use of Winiharti (2012)’s results, Björnsson (2018) asserted that the central notion in Millikan’s bio-semantics is that the representation of a message is limited to terms requested for the normal success of the message. This study pointed out that the success requirement blocks us from declaring that epistemic judgments representing our epistemic circumstances. It is concluded that the actions governed by epistemic modal judgments implement some strategies for handling epistemic circumstances.

Kahlaoui (2015:214) contended that modality has up till now received “very meager attention in Standard Arabic syntax” and pedagogy. The scant literature available on modality reduced the interlocutor’s visibility in interaction into emphatic markers. This study revealed that modality in Standard Arabic is describable in a highly “systematic, teachable and learnable way”. Furthermore, the study called for upgrading a dominant pedagogical grammar of Standard Arabic dating back to thousands of years and still complying with prescriptivism and semanticity.

4. Modality in Arabic language

Using the classifications set by Resher (1968) and Perkins (1983), Anghelescu (1999) provided a theoretical framework for modality in Standard and Classical Arabic. The table below sums up Anghelescu’s taxonomy for Arabic modalities, commonly known as النواسخ

Table 2: Anghelescu’s taxonomy for Arabic modalities

Modality Type	Function	Examples
Epistemic	Certainty	إِنَّهُ طَبِيبٌ مُخَادِعٌ
	Doubt	كَادَ الْوَلَدُ يَقَعَ
	Anticipation	مِنَ الْمُحْتَمَلِ أَنْ يَسَافِرَ الْآبُ غَدًا
Deontic	Obligation	يَجِبُ أَنْ لَا يَغَادِرَ الصَّبِيَّةُ الْغُرْفَةَ
	Permission	يُمْكِنُ لَكَ الذَّهَابُ الْآنَ
	Interdiction	التَّدْخِينُ يَمْتَنَعُكَ مِنْ مُمَارَسَةِ الرِّيَاضَةِ
Evaluative	Evaluation	بُئْسَ الرَّجُلُ شَارِبُ الْخَمْرِ
Boulomaic	Expressive	لَيْتَ الْفَتَاةُ تَتَّقِيَ رَبَّهَا
Alethic	Necessity	لَأَبْدَ لِلَّيْلِ أَنْ يَنْجَلِيَ
	Possibility	مِنَ الْمُمْكِنِ أَنْ نَسَافِرَ غَدًا
Temporal	Time indicator	مَا زَالَ الْخَطَرُ مُحْدِقًا
	Adverbial	رَجُلٌ قَلَمًا يَجُودُ الزَّمَانُ بِمِثْلِهِ

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Both Standard Arabic and Classical Arabic have an opulent modality system that is easily discernible and realized not only in the form of nouns, verbs, adverbs, phrases, etc., but also in some grammatical operations, such as forming imperative structures, negation and interrogation. Modality is by far a metalinguistic process which signalizes an interposed strategy on the part of the speaker. This strategy has three different realizations (Perkins 1983; Anghelescu 1999).

- a. The speaker employs language to handle the propositional content of the discourse, i.e. the predicative correlation {S – P}. The scope of the modal *لَعَلَّ* in the example below is the whole predicative correlation, not only the subject or the predicate which both become the basic objects of discourse. In other words, the speaker says something about the sentence subject [S] and predicate [p]. Unlike English, Arabic is meta-linguistically much more transparent, as the interposition of the subject impacts the grammatical case of the subject (الطبيب) that becomes in the accusative case (Perkins 1983; Anghelescu 1999).

(i) The doctor may arrive today. *لَعَلَّ الطَّيِّبَ يَصِلُ الْيَوْمَ*

- b. Another realization of modal operators in Standard and Classical Arabic as exterior to the predicative correlation is when the speaker interposes to pass a judgment on the proposition — whether it is positive or negative. In the examples below, the modal operators work to codify the speaker's commentary. It corresponds to Resher (1968) qualitative modality as opposed to the epistemic modality. Typical modal markers of this category include verbal nouns such as *نَعَمْ* / *بُئْسَ رَبٌّ* (see iii), absolute objects (see i), or a modal adjective (see ii).

(i) *Modalization by absolute objects*

(C1) *فرح الولد فرحاً شديداً* [The boy was totally jubilant.]

(ii) *Modalization by a modal adjective*

(C2) *لَقَدْ كَانَتْ زِيَارَةُ مَيْمُونَةَ* [It was indeed auspicious to visit.]

(iii) *Modalization by a verbal noun*

(C3) *نَعَمْ الرَّجُلُ أَنْتَ* / You are the best man.

- c. The third realization of modal operators as an interposed strategy builds on a totally different logic from that involved in the previously illustrated realizations. The modal verb *يَجِبُ* which represents the speaker's intervention cannot be extracted from the proposition as is the case with modals in the examples above. This inference and intervention are more explicit in the examples below. The modal operator functions to announce a predicative correlation ruled by the speaker. This type of modality in Standard and Classical Arabic often involves the formal marker *أَنَّ* which is commonly translated into English as (must/should). The operator *أَنَّ* has a metalinguistic function as it triggers the structure of the predicative correlation announced by the modal verb. The visualization of the examples below shows that the modal is embedded in the propositional content (Resher 1968;

Perkins 1983; Anghelescu 1999). Kahlaoui (2015) summed up the realizations of Arabic modalities in figure 1 below.

i. *يَجِبُ أَنْ تَسْتَمَعَ إِلَى الْمُدْرَسِ* [You must listen to the teacher.]

ii. *وَجِبَ الاسْتِمَاعُ إِلَى الْمُدْرَسِ* [It is a must to listen to the teacher.]

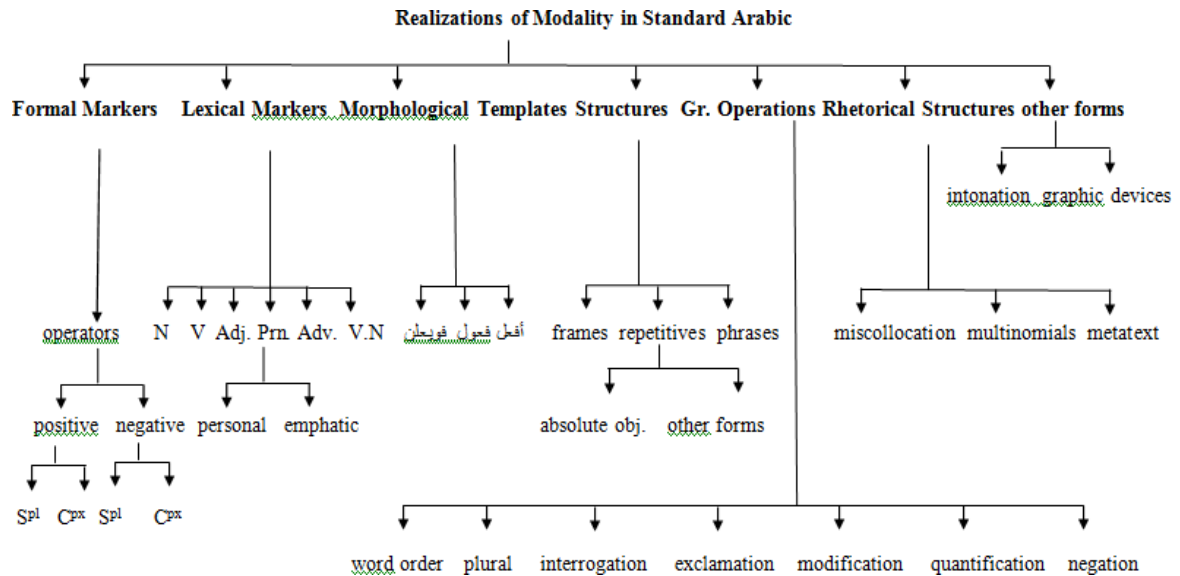


Figure 1: Kahlaoui (2015)'s summary of realizations of SA modality

5. Research problem and questions

The meager Arabic literature and the rich English researching on modality made the researcher anticipate that non-Arab translators could make some inaccuracies during translating Qur'an verses. That being so, this study attempts to trace, account for, and propose better suggestions for these bloopers in the first twenty-one verses in Surah Al-Kahf (The Cave) (18:1-21). To reach this goal, the study raised the following questions:

1. Are there any modality inaccuracies found when rendering Arabic verbs used in the subjunctive mood?
2. Are the values of modal adjuncts taken into account when attempting Qur'an verses?
3. How is modality employed by non-Arab translators when rendering Arabic coordinating conjunctions?
4. Which way is the best to translate the Arabic jussive verbs: the causative *let* or the subjunctive mood thereof?
5. Are there any modality bloopers when using the modal *should* in conditional clauses to translate Qur'anic verses?
6. Do the verbs with emphatic affixes require a modal with a particular degree of inclination?

6. Results and discussion

6.1 Overt modal operators and verbs in the subjunctive mood

In this section, the researcher will show how modality can be represented by overt modal operators and will try to find an answer for the first research question: “Are there any modality inaccuracies found when rendering Arabic verbs used in the subjunctive mood?”. To answer this question, the second verse of Surah AlKahf is presented with five different translation attempts by five translators: Muhammad Asad (1984), Muhammad Farooq-i-Azam Malik (1997), Yusuf Ali (2021), Mustafa Khattab (2016), and Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (2021).

(قَيِّمًا لِّيُنذِرَ بَأْسًا شَدِيدًا مِّنْ لَّدُنْهُ وَيُبَشِّرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا حَسَنًا)

[qayyiman liyundhira baʔsan shadidan min ladunhu wa yubashira ʔal-muʔmini:na ʔal-ladhi:na yaʕmalu:na ʔaṣ-sāliḥa:ti ʔanna lahum ʔajran hasanan] (The Cave, 18:2)

(1) Asad’s Qur’an Translation

[a divine writ] unerringly straight, mean to warn [the godless] of a severe punishment from Him, and to give unto the believers who do good works the glad tiding that theirs shall be a goodly reward

(2) Malik’s Qur’an Translation

It is straightforward so that He may warn about the terrible punishment for the unbelievers from Him and give good news to the believers who do good deeds that they shall have a goodly reward,

(3) Ali’s Qur’an Translation

(He hath made it) Straight (and Clear) in order that He may warn (the godless) of a terrible Punishment from Him and that He may give Glad Tidings to the Believers who work righteous deeds that they shall have a goodly Reward.

(4) Khattab’s Qur’an Translation

‘making it’ perfectly upright, to warn ‘the disbelievers’ of a severe torment from Him; to give good news to the believers—who do good—that they will have a fine reward,

(5) Pickthall’s Qur’an Translation

(But hath made it) straight, to give warning of stern punishment from Him, and to bring unto the believers who do good works the news that theirs will be a fair reward,

In Surah Al-Kahf (The Cave) (18:2), Allah tells His prophet, Mohammad (PBUH), that the Holy Qur’an has no crookedness, and severe punishment is waiting for the disbelievers, but those who perform righteous deeds will be goodly rewarded. This verse shows that modality can be realized by overt modal operators such as *shall*, *may*, and *will*. In (1), (2) and (3), the translators, retaining the classical spirit of the Holy Qur’an, utilized the overt modal operator *shall* to convey the futuristic tense implied in أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا حَسَنًا. But in (4) and (5), the translators, ignoring the classical atmosphere of the religious text, used the modal operator *will* to convey the underlying futuristic message in the source text.

The translators in (2) and (3) erroneously employed the modal operator *may* to give the verb لِيُنذِرَ a

possible identity. This imperfect verb is initiated with an indirect subjunctive prefixed particle (i.e. *la:m*) indicating purpose rather than possibility. This particle gives more emphasis to the inevitability contextually inferred from the source text. That being so, the translators in (1), (4), and (5) avoided using any modal operators and resorted to the non-finite subordinate clauses *to warn* and *to give warning* to convey the predestined emphatic spirit of the verb يَنْذِرُ. This verse shows that modals conveying epistemic possibility are not always employed when rendering Arabic verbs in the subjunctive mood which always end with short /a/ and can be preceded by particles, such as أَنْ /ʔan/ (carrying the meaning of *want to*), لَنْ /lan/ (employed to negate the future tense), لِ /li/ (usually used for purpose indications). This verse recommends using non-finite subordinate clauses when dealing with Arabic verbs in the subjunctive mood rather than using modals indicating epistemic possibility with low degrees.

6.2 The values of modality expressed by modal adjuncts

Verse (18:6) is selected to answer the second research question: “Are the values of modal adjuncts taken into account when attempting Qur’an verses?” In this verse, modal adjuncts are employed to communicate a specific message. Each modal adjunct expresses a given value and a particular degree of modality. To check whether the modality values are taken into consideration, the researcher investigates the translation attempts of the word فَلَعَلَّكَ by five different translators.

(فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَفْسَكَ عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ إِنْ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ ذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا)

[falaʿallaka ba:khun nafsaka ʿala: ʔatha:rihim in lam yuʔminu: bihadha: ʔalhadithi ʔasafa:] (The Cave, 18:6)

(6) Asad’s Qur’an Translation

But wouldst thou, perhaps, torment thyself to death with grief over them if they are not willing to believe in this message?

(7) Malik’s Qur’an Translation

O Muhammad! You probably will kill yourself in grief over them, if they do not believe in this Message (The Qur’an).

(8) Ali’s Qur’an Translation

Thou wouldst only perchance fret thyself to death following after them in grief if they believe not in this Message.

(9) Khattab’s Qur’an Translation

Now, perhaps you ‘O Prophet’ will grieve yourself to death over their denial, if they continue to disbelieve in this message

(10) Pickthall’s Qur’an Translation

Yet it may be, if they believe not in this statement, that thou (Muhammad) wilt torment thy soul with grief over their footsteps

In this verse (18:6) Allah urges His prophet Mohammad (PBUH) not to feel distressed because the disbelievers reject the Qur’anic messages. Modality in this verse is expressed by adjuncts such as

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probably in (7), *perchance* in (8) *perhaps* in (9), and *maybe* in (10). The modal adjuncts are generally utilized to express likelihood or usuality, or to provide additional information on the speaker's opinion or comment. The word فَلَعَلَّكَ [fala'allaka] consists of a prefixed resumption particle (i.e. لَعَلَّ), attached to an accusative particle, and a second masculine singular object pronoun (i.e. كَ).

To express the modality of the word فَلَعَلَّكَ [fala'allaka], the translators used various modal adjuncts without investigating the differences holding among these adjuncts. The modal adjunct *probably* is used to say that an action has a high scope of happening, 50% or greater. But *perchance* and *possibly* are used to say that an action has a low chance of occurrence, 50% or less. As for *maybe* and *perhaps*, they are used to convey the message that an action has the same and equal chances of happening or not happening. Since the probability of the action in the verse (18:6) is high to the extent that that Prophet Mohammad kills himself in grief, the use of *perchance*, *possibly*, *perchance*, and *maybe* were not good choices by the translators as they did not manifest the high degree of probability existing in the verse (Kathir & Al-Sharif, 2022). This verse shows that the values of modal adjuncts have not been taken into account by some translators when attempting Qur'an verses.

6.3 Epistemic possibility

Verse (18:19) is opted to answer the third and the fourth research questions: "How modality is employed by non-Arab translators when rendering Arabic coordinating conjunctions?" and "Which way is the best to translate the Arabic jussive verbs: the causative *let* or the subjunctive mood thereof?" This verse shows that ignoring the coordinating conjunction *or* (أو) enfeebled the epistemic possibility that dominates the source text. Over and above, this verse shows that the causative use of the verb *let* rather than the subjunctive mood thereof can be best used to translate Arabic jussive verbs.

(وَكَذَلِكَ بَعَثْنَاهُمْ لِيَتَسَاءَلُوا بَيْنَهُمْ ۖ قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِنْهُمْ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ ۖ قَالُوا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ ۖ قَالُوا رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثْتُمْ فَابْعَثُوا

أَحَدَكُمْ بِوَرَقِكُمْ هَذِهِ إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ أَيُّهَا أَزْكَى طَعَامًا فَلْيَأْتِكُمْ بِرِزْقٍ مِنْهُ وَلْيَتَلَطَّفْ وَلَا يُشْعِرَنَّ بِكُمْ أَحَدًا)

[wakadhalika ba'athna:hum liyatasa:lu: baynahum qa:la qa:ilun minhum kam labithtum qa:lu: labithna: yawman aw ba' da yawmin qa:lu: rabbukum ?a'lamu bima: labithtum faib'athu: ?ahadaku biwariqikum hadhihi ila ?almadi:nati falyanthur ?ayyuha: ?azka: ta'a:man falya?tikum birizqin minhu walyatalattaf wala: yush'iranna bikum ahadan] (The Cave, 18:19)

(11) Asad's Qur'an Translation

And so, [in the course of time,] We awakened them; and they began to ask one another [as to what had happened to them]. One of them asked: "How long have you remained thus?" [The others] answered: "We have remained thus a day, or part of a day." Said they [who were endowed with deeper insight]: "Your Sustainer knows best how long you have thus remained. Let, then, one of you go with these

silver coins to the town, and let him find out what food is purest there, and bring you thereof [some] provisions. But let him behave with great care and by no means make anyone aware of you:

(12) Malik's Qur'an Translation

In the same miraculous way We woke them up from sleep so that they could question one another. One of them asked: "How long have you been here?" The others answered: "Maybe we have been here for a day or part of a day." Finally they concluded: "Our Rabb knows best how long we have stayed here. Anyhow let one of us go to the city with this silver coin, and let him find who has the purest food and bring us something to eat. Let him behave with caution and let him not disclose our whereabouts

(13) Ali's Qur'an Translation

Such (being their state) We raised them up (from sleep) that they might question each other. Said one of them "How long have ye stayed (here)?" They said "We have stayed (perhaps) a day or part of a day." (At length) they (all) said "Allah (alone) knows best how long ye have stayed here...Now send ye then one of you with this money of yours to the town: let him find out which is the best food (to be had) and bring some to you that (ye may) satisfy hunger herewith: and let him behave with care and courtesy and let him not inform anyone about you

(14) Khattab's Qur'an Translation

And so We awakened them so that they might question one another. One of them exclaimed, "How long have you remained 'asleep'?" Some replied, "Perhaps a day, or part of a day." They said 'to one another', "Your Lord knows best how long you have remained. So send one of you with these silver coins of yours to the city, and let him find which food is the purest, and then bring you provisions from it. Let him be 'exceptionally' cautious, and do not let him give you away.

(15) Pickthall's Qur'an Translation

And in like manner We awakened them that they might question one another. A speaker from among them said: How long have ye tarried? They said: We have tarried a day or some part of a day, (Other) said: Your Lord best knoweth what ye have tarried. Now send one of you with this your silver coin unto the city, and let him see what food is purest there and bring you a supply thereof. Let him be courteous and let no man know of you.

In verse (18:19) epistemic possibility is expressed by the use of *could* and *might* in (12), (13), (14), and (15). The modal *could* in (12) implies a high degree of epistemic possibility, unlike the modal *might* in (13), (14), and (15) that indicates a low degree of possibility. Howbeit, the positive factual use of the non-finite verb phrase *to ask one another* has been a perfect choice by the translator in (11) to reflect the purpose function of the prefixed particle *la:m* attached to the third person masculine plural imperfect verb *لَيَتَسَاءَلُوْا*/ liyatasa:ʔlu: By the same token, the modals *could* and *might* in (12), (13), (14), and (15) failed to convey the subjunctive mood of the verbe *يَتَسَاءَلُوْا*. The subjunctive mood means that the verb will certainly take place in the future, and the use of epistemic possibility modals enfeebled the degree of possibility to the medium and the lowest thereof.

Modal adjuncts expressing epistemic possibility such as *perhaps*, and *maybe* are used (12), (13), and (14) to highlight the spirit of doubt dominating the speech of the Cave companions after being awakened.

The Cave Sleepers doubted the period they stayed in the cave; therefore, one of them presumed that they remained for a day or a half of a day or some part of a day. Unlike (12), (13) and (14), the spirit of distrust and uncertainty overwhelming the source text is not reflected in (11) and (15). What enhanced the suspicion sense in the source text is the coordinating conjunction *أَوْ* (or), which is followed by the accusative masculine noun *بَعْضُ* (some) and the genitive masculine indefinite noun *يَوْمٍ* (day). Asad (1984) and Pickthall (2021) ignored the coordinating conjunction in the source text; that is why their translations were not as accurate as the other ones.

At the end of (18:19), three verbs in the jussive mood are employed in the source text: *لِيَتَلَطَّفَ*, *فَلْيَنْظُرْ*, and *فَلْيَأْتِكُمْ*. The first verb, *فَلْيَنْظُرْ*, is initiated with the prefixed conjunction *fa* which is followed by the prefixed imperative particle *la:m* and the imperfect verb *يَنْظُرُ*. The second verb, *فَلْيَأْتِكُمْ*, consists of the prefixed conjunction *fa* which is followed by the prefixed imperative particle *la:m* and the imperfect verb *يَأْتِيكُمْ* which ends with a second person object pronoun. The third verb used in the jussive mood, *وَلِيَتَلَطَّفَ*, is initiated with a prefixed conjunction *wa* (and) and followed by a prefixed imperative particle *la:m* and the form V imperfect verb *يَتَلَطَّفُ*. The jussive mood in the Arabic source text expresses an order or a command. To convey the jussive mood in the source text all the translators in (11), (12), (13), (14), and (15) used the semi-modal causative di-transitive verb, *let*. This verb is used to give permission, and can be used in the subjunctive mood such as “*Let God bless our country*”. However, the verb *let* in the target texts is used in the causative sense to imply the deontic necessity dominating the source text, meaning that the Cave Sleeper, who is expected to go to the town, must find out the best kind of food, bring some thereof, and be cautious. It is obvious that the causative use of the verb *let* rather than the subjunctive mood thereof can be best used to translate the Arabic jussive verbs. It can be inferred that the *let-object-verb* structure has a deontic modal function.

6.4. Conditional *should* versus deontic advisability and epistemic possibility

The verse (18:20) is selected to answer the fifth research question: “Are there any modality bloopers when using the modal *should* in conditional clauses to translate Qur’anic verses?”. To answer this question, the modality systems involved in the subordinate clause *إِنْ يَظْهَرُوا* and the main clause *يَرْجُمُوكُمْ* are investigated to know whether the context implies unlikelihood or advisability. The use of the English modal *should* in a conditional clause suggests that an action is unlikely or not particularly probable and this does not align with the meaning of the source text that suggests possibility rather than unlikelihood. That is why translations in (17) and (19) are much better than those in (16), (18), and (20) for conveying the possibility of the harm that may fall upon the Cave Sleepers if they are caught by the disbelievers. If the translators had used *should* that indicates deontic advisability, it would have been more acceptable than the conditional *should* as the former conveys a medium degree of obligation. This

spirit of obligation is enhanced by the previous verse, and hence the message will be that the Cave Sleepers should be cautious in order not to be seen or caught by the disbelievers.

إِنَّهُمْ إِنْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ يَرْجُمُوكُمْ أَوْ يُعِيدُوكُمْ فِي مِلَّتِهِمْ وَلَنْ تُفْلِحُوا إِذَا أَبَدَا

[innahum in yathharu: ‘alaykum yarjumu:kum aw yu‘i:du:kum fi millatihim walan tuflihu: idhan ?abadan]
(The Cave, 18:20)

(16) Asad’s Qur’an Translation

for, behold, if they should come to know of you, they might stone you to death or force you back to their faith - in which case you would never attain to any good!"

(17) Malik’s Qur’an Translation

For if they find you out, they will stone you to death, or force you back into their faith and in that case you will never attain felicity."

(18) Ali’s Qur’an Translation

"For if thy should come upon you they would stone you or force you to return to their cult and in that case ye would never attain prosperity.

(19) Khattab’s Qur’an Translation

For, indeed, if they find out about you, they will stone you ‘to death’, or force you back into their faith, and then you will never succeed."

(20) Pickthall’s Qur’an Translation

For they, if they should come to know of you, will stone you or turn you back to their religion; then ye will never prosper.

In verse (18:20), the translators in (16), (18) and (20) above used the modal *should* in a conditional context to convey the message that the disbelievers may harm the Cave Sleepers upon seeing one of them. The usage of modal *should* in conditional clauses implies that an action is unlikely or not particularly probable and this does not align with the meaning of the source text that suggests possibility rather than unlikelihood. That is why translations in (17) and (19) are much better than those in (16), (18), and (20) for conveying the possibility of the harm that may fall upon the Cave Sleepers if they are caught by the disbelievers. If the translators had used *should* that indicates deontic advisability, it would have been more acceptable than the conditional *should* as the former conveys a medium degree of obligation. This spirit of obligation is enhanced by the previous verse, and hence the message will be that the Cave Sleepers should be cautious in order not to be seen or caught by the disbelievers.

Howbeit, semantically speaking, epistemic possibility in (17) and (19) also excels the deontic advisability usage of the modal *should*. What supports this suggestion is the structure of the verbs يَرْجُمُوكُمْ and يُعِيدُوكُمْ: the two verbs are imperfect and in the subjunctive mood. Furthermore, the two verbs are attached to a subject pronoun that is followed by a second person masculine plural object pronoun. The imperfection of the two verbs indicates that the action has not been taken place, but there is a possibility that it will occur. Moreover, the subjunctive mood of the two verbs clarifies the speaker’s clear wish to warn his friends that there is a possibility for them to be caught and stoned by the tyrant disbelievers.

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6.5 *Emphatic affixes and degree of inclination modality*

Verse (18:21) is selected to answer the last research question: "Do the verbs with emphatic affixes require a modal with a particular degree of inclination?" This verse shows that verbs with emphatic affixes, such as *la:m* and *nu:n*, are much better translated with a modal expressing high degree of inclination to convey the message involved in the verse.

(وَكَذَلِكَ أَتَتْهُمْ لَعْنُهُمْ لِيُعْلَمُوا أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا إِذْ يَتَنَازَعُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ أَمْرَهُمْ ۖ فَقَالُوا ابْنُوا عَلَيْهِم بُيُوتًا ۖ رَّبُّهُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ ۚ قَالَ الَّذِينَ غَلَبُوا عَلَىٰ أَمْرِهِمْ لَنَتَّخِذَنَّ عَلَيْهِم مَّسْجِدًا)

[wakadhalika ʔaʔtharna: ʕalayhim liyaʕlamu: ʔanna waʕda Alla:hi haqqun waʔanna ʔalsa:ʕata la: rayba fi:ha: idh yatana:zaʕu:na baynahum ʔamrahum faqa:lu: ibnu: ʕalayhim bunya:nan rabbuhum ʔaʕlamu bihim qa:la alladhi:na ghalabu: ʕala: ʔamrihim lanattakhidhanna ʕalayhim masjidan](The Cave, 18:21)

(21) *Asad's Qur'an Translation*

And in this way have We drawn [people's] attention to their story, so that they might know - whenever they debate among themselves as to what happened to those [Men of the Cave] - that God's promise [of resurrection] is true, and that there can be no doubt as to [the coming of] the Last Hour. And so, some [people] said: "Erect a building in their memory; God knows best what happened to them." Said they whose opinion prevailed in the end: "Indeed, we must surely raise a house of worship in their memory!"

(22) *Malik's Qur'an Translation*

Thus did We reveal their secret to the people so that they might know that the promise of Allah is true and that there is no doubt about the coming of the Hour of Judgment. (But what a pity that instead of considering the Hour of Judgment) they started arguing among themselves about the companions of the cave. Some said: "Erect an edifice over their remains." Their Rabb is quite aware of them. Those who finally prevailed over their matter said: "Let us erect a place of worship over them."

(23) *Ali's Qur'an Translation*

Thus did We make their case known to the people that they might know that the promise of Allah is true and that there can be no doubt about the Hour of Judgment. Behold they dispute among themselves as to their affair. (Some) said "Construct a building over them": their Lord knows best about them: those who prevailed over their affair said "Let us surely build a place of worship over them."

(24) *Khattab's Qur'an Translation*

That is how We caused them to be discovered so that their people might know that Allah's promise 'of resurrection' is true and that there is no doubt about the Hour. When the people disputed with each other about the case of the youth 'after their death', some proposed, "Build a structure around them. Their Lord knows best about them." Those who prevailed in the matter said, "We will surely build a place of worship over them."

(25) *Pickthall's Qur'an Translation*

And in like manner We disclosed them (to the people of the city) that they might know that the promise of Allah is true, and that, as for the Hour, there is no doubt concerning it. When (the people of the city) disputed of their case among themselves, they said: Build over them a building; their Lord knoweth best concerning them. Those who won their point said: We verily shall build a place of worship over them.

Verse (18:21) terminates the story of the Cave Sleepers who died immediately after being discovered by the people of the city who not only realized that resurrection is true, but also a group of whom decided to build a mosque in their memory. The translators used different subtypes of modulation to construe the decision of some of the citizens to erect an edifice in the memory of the Cave companions. In (24) and (25), inclination, a subtype of modulation, is used but with a low degree of willingness. Unlike (24) and (25), the translator in (21) used the same type of modulation (i.e. inclination) but with a higher degree of subjective willingness. In (22) and (23), the translators lowered the degree of the speaker's willingness to be understood as a mere suggestion.

The translation in (22) excelled the other translated texts as the verb **لَتَتَّخِذَنَّ** is initiated with an emphatic prefix *la:m* that is followed by an imperfect verb ending with another emphatic suffix *nu:n*. The high degree of inclination in the verb **لَتَتَّخِذَنَّ** is marked by the usage of two emphatic affixes: *la:m* and *nu:n*, which entail the usage of a modal conveying a high degree of determination. This verse indicates that Arabic verbs with emphatic affixes are better translated with an English modal expressing high degree of inclination.

7. Discussion

The gaunt Arabic literature on the grammatical use of modality in Arabic texts has been one of the intrinsic hindrances and difficulties that defied non-Arab translators when interpreting and construing some Qur'an verses. That being so, this research study endeavors to underscore some epistemic and deontic modality inaccuracies in some translated verses in Surah Al-Kahf. To attain this goal, six research questions are raised in section 5. Based on the results in section 6, the first research question, "Are there any modality inaccuracies found when rendering Arabic verbs used in the subjunctive mood?" made the researcher conclude that translators should not employ English modals indicating a low degree of epistemic possibility when construing Arabic verbs in the subjunctive mood. This is attributed to the nature of epistemic possibility modals in English that indicates three values (i.e. high, medium, and low) and the nature of subjunctive mood in Arabic that involves a high degree of possibility. It is in alignment with Mansoori and Afshari (2016) and Knoblock (2020) who pointed out that the particles **أَنْ** [*ʔan*], **لَنْ** [*lan*], **كَيْ** [*kay*], and **إِنْ** [*ʔithan*] raise the degree of possibility of the subjunctive verb.

The second question – "Are the values of modal adjuncts taken into account when attempting Qur'an verses?" – is answered by checking the different translations of the word **فَلَعَلَّكَ** [*fala'allaka*] in (18:6). It is noted that the translators used different modal adjuncts without taking into consideration the

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differences holding among these adjuncts. The modal adjunct *probably* is employed to say that an action has a high rate of happening, 50% or greater. Howbeit, *perchance* and *possibly* are employed to say that an action has a low chance of occurrence, 50% or less. Inasmuch as the probability of the action in the verse (18:6) is extremely high to the extent that Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) kills himself in grief, the use of *perchance*, *possibly*, *perchance*, and *maybe* were not good suggestions by the translators. This finding is in alignment with Mansoori and Afshari (2016) and Yeshniyaz et al. (2018) who categorized modality into three groups and set values and degrees for modal adjuncts whose translations heavily rely on the context of the target text.

Investigating the use of the coordinating conjunction *or* (أو) in verse (18:19) set an answer to the third research question: “How modality is employed by non-Arab translators when rendering Arabic coordinating conjunctions?” The verse (18:19) manifests that disregarding the coordinating conjunction *or* (أو), as Asad (1984) and Pickthall (2021) did, macerated the type of epistemic possibility dominating the text. Asad (1984) and Pickthall (2021) attempted to convey the meaning of the source text and to avoid literal translation; however, in doing this, they dropped a coordinating conjunction that is used in the source text to enhance the spirit of distrust and uncertainty overwhelming the speech of the speakers in the source text. This finding is not in harmony with Kahlaoui (2015) who claimed that dropping an element to convey source message including epistemic or deontic indications may affect the type of modality used.

Verse (18:19) also gave a clear answer to the fourth research question: “Which way is the best to translate the Arabic jussive verbs: the causative *let* or the subjunctive mood thereof?” It was found that the semi-modal causative di-transitive verb *let* rather than the subjunctive mood thereof can be best used to translate Arabic jussive verbs as (11), (12), (13), (14), and (15) show. This finding is not in harmony with Aziz (1992) and Abdul-Fattah (2011) who pointed out that the jussive verb in Arabic takes no vowels at all, and if the verb ends in *ين، ان، ون،* the final (ن) is omitted. This case comes when the present tense verb is preceded by one of two particles *لم* (did not) used to negate the past tense and *لا* (do not) that expresses prohibition. Therefore, it is much better for translators not to use any modals when translating jussive verbs as the negative particles and the base form of the verb will do the purpose.

Concerning the fifth research question — “Are there any modality bloopers when using the modal *should* in conditional clauses to translate Qur’anic verses?” — the modality systems involved in the subordinate clause *إِنَّهُمْ إِنْ يَظْهَرُوا* and the main clause *يَرْجُمُوكُمْ* showed that the modal *should* is erroneously used by Asad (1984), Ali (2021), and Pickthall (2021) as the conditional *should* indicates that an action is unlikely or not particularly probable and this does not go with the meaning involved in verse (18:20) that suggests possibility rather than unlikeliness. This finding is in harmony with El-Hassan (1990) and Butler (2005) who pointed out that when construing a source text, the usage of the proper modal relies on the translator’s full understanding to the context wherein the modal will be used, as a modal can express possibility in a context and obligation in another.

The last research question investigates the way translators deal with verbs with emphatic affixes (i.e. *la:m* and *nu:n*). In Verse (18:21) that terminates the story of Cave Sleepers, the emphatic verb ‘لَنَتَّخِذَنَّ’ [lanattakhidhanna] is translated with different types of inclination, unlike Malik (1997) who used a modal expressing a high degree of inclination, Asad (1984), Ali (2021), and Pickthall (2021) erroneously lowered the degree of inclination when translating this verb; that is why, they failed to convey the Qur’anic message involved in this verb phrase. This result is in alignment with Sunardi (2016) and Suikkanen (2018) who contended that verbs with emphatic suffixes in Semitic languages are rendered into English with modals indicating a particular degree of inclination depending on the context of the source text.

8. Conclusion

Based on the modality survey in the first twenty – one verses in Surah AlKahf and on the answers to the questions raised in section 5.1, this research conclusions can be summed up in the following points. [1] Translators should not use English epistemic possibility modals when rendering Arabic verbs in the subjunctive mood. [2] Some Arabic coordinating conjunctions such as *or* convey a degree of possibility that requires an English epistemic possibility adjunct modal to be there in the target text. [3] The causative use of the English verb *let* rather than the subjunctive mood thereof can be best used to translate Arabic jussive verbs. [4] The modal *should* in conditional clauses implies that the action is unlikely or not particularly probable. Thus, it can’t be used to translate Arabic possible actions. [5] Arabic verbs with emphatic affixes are better translated with an English modal expressing a high degree of inclination.

استخدام وإساءة استخدام عوامل الأسلوب المعرفي والأدبي في بعض الآيات المترجمة
من سورة الكهف: الإطار الوظيفي المنهجي

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الملخص

تبيّن الدراسة الحالية وجهاً من أوجه الإعجاز اللغوي في القرآن الكريم، إذ حاول الكثير من المترجمين نقل بعض الأساليب اللغوية القرآنية إلى اللغة الإنجليزية ولكنهم عجزوا عن النقل الكامل للرسالة القرآنية، ولما كانت الدراسات الإنجليزية حول الأساليب في اللغة العربية ضئيلة، صارت تلك هي أحد العوائق التي تحدث غير العرب من المترجمين. و تحاول هذه الدراسة إبراز بعض الأخطاء اللغوية المعرفية والأدبية في بعض الآيات المترجمة في سورة الكهف، وتم إجراء هذه الدراسة بعد فحص الإطار النظري للأساليب المعرفية والأدبية التي طرحها بعض اللغويين. ولقد أظهرت نتائج الدراسة، أولاً: ضرورة عدم استخدام صيغ الاحتمالية المعرفية الإنجليزية ذات القيم المنخفضة عند ترجمة الأفعال العربية الشرطية. ثانياً: بعض أدوات الاقتراح العربية مثل "أو" تنقل درجة من الاحتمالية تتطلب وجود إمكانية معرفية في النص المستهدف. ثالثاً، يتم ترجمة الأفعال العربية ذات الملحقات الصرفية ترجمة أفضل عند استخدام صيغة إنجليزية تعبر عن درجة عالية من الميل الفكري. الكلمات المفتاحية: الاحتمالية المعرفية، النماذج الأدبية، الاقتراح، الأسلوب الشرطي، أفعال الجزم.

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