

## Shifts and Naturalness: A Case Study of Sura *Ya'sin*

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### Abstract

This paper is an attempt to study the Zwart's comparative model of shifts and Nida's naturalness applied in Persian to English translations of the Holy Qur'an. To achieve the purpose of the research, after considering the historical background related to this study, the researchers selected three English translations of the Holy Qur'an by Saffarzadeh (2005), Pickthall (1930) and Yusuf Ali (1977). As a next step, the first thirty verses of sura "Ya'sin" were considered and the Persian verses were contrasted with their English renderings. Then 51 shift cases were identified, and based on the Zwart's comparative model of shifts, the number of naturalness were classified. Finally, the frequency of shift cases and naturalness were calculated. Based on the obtained results, the researchers concluded that the highest number of applying the shifts belongs to Pickthall with 21 cases. Furthermore, the most frequent naturalness found belongs to Saffarzadeh, which is exactly 47.54% of the total occurrence of the naturalness. The data were analyzed by ANOVA and Spearman's Correlation test and its significance at the level zero; therefore, there is not any direct effect between these two factors i.e., Zwart's comparative model of shifts and naturalness applied in Persian to English translations.

**Keywords:** Translation, Sacred Texts, Shifts, Naturalness, Qur'an, *Ya'sin*

## 1. Introduction

Since Qur'an is the Holy book of Muslims, it has been translated into many languages. To make people familiar with Qur'an, whether Muslims or non-Muslims who are eager to do research about Islam, translation of Qur'an seems a necessary but problematic task. Accordingly, finding effective translation methods and strategies, to overcome obstacles, which cause misunderstanding in reading a translation of Holy Qur'an was the prime aim of the present study.

Translating sacred texts as Qur'an can be very significant for all societies, nations, cultures, and whose lives are affected by it. Since the translation of Qur'an seems crucial and as Saffarzadeh (2005, p. 2142) stated, "the Holy Qur'an does not belong only to a selected by the name of Muslims, it's but for all the people in the world...". With this in mind, a translator plays an important role to convey message of Qur'an.

Translators of Qur'an have applied different sorts of strategies while translating it. Investigating and analyzing these strategies were the aim of the researchers. Here, by finding Leuven-Zwart's (1989) strategy in the Sura *Yassin's* English translations and its effect on naturalness, the result hopefully, helps the other translators in future.

Lacking a suitable equivalence may cause some problems for translators; therefore, the translators should find a way to overcome these obstacles. As a translator encounters these problems due to unsuitable equivalence; s/he should look at all strategies and use those which are suitable to the context, in order to avoid the problem of lacking naturalness. In addition, applying the suitable shifts as Leuven-Zwart's (1989) comparative model of shifts in conveying the message can solve lots of problems during translation. The problems which make the translation odd and unclear while delivering the message.

So far, quite a few people have studied the notion of Catford (1965) about category shift Vinay and Darbelnet's shifts (1995) in the translations of Qur'an. To the best of our knowledge, no one has studied the relationship between Leuven-Zwart's (1989) comparative model of translation shifts and naturalness of Qur'an translation.

The notion of equivalence and shift is surely one of the most problematic and controversial areas in the field of Translation Studies. These terms have caused, and it seems quite probable that will continue to cause, lots of debates within the field of Translation Studies.

For the first time, Nida (1964), introduced the concept of "naturalness" and "Equivalence" for the translation of sacred texts. The former persuaded the translators to be faithful to the source texts and convey the same content in the target text without any changes. The latter was expanded and applied by others. Equivalence can be used by comparing different texts linguistically. On the other hand, "the term shift in translation is used to refer to any changes which happen in the translation process. It is also widely accepted that shifts can be caused and influenced by a variety of other factors, some of them extra-linguistic, such as the function of the translated text in the target culture or a subjective interpretation by the translator" (Leuven-Zwart, 1990, p. 228). The prescriptive undertone of shifts has completely disappeared; therefore, shifts are now recognized as a "phenomenon inherent to translation"

(Leuven-Zwart, 1990, p. 228) or even “a defining feature of translation” (Toury, 2004, p. 22), which makes them a suitable object of investigation within descriptive translation studies.

The researchers were to find Leuven-Zwart’s (1990) shift model’s relationship and the translation naturalness of the Holy Qur’an, surely some other factors are affected naturalness that were not here our matter of discussion. It was done just on thirty beginning verses of Sura *Ya’sin* in Persian and three English Qur’an translations of Saffarzadeh (2005), Pickthall (1930) and Yusuf Ali (1977).

To achieve the objectives of this study, the following three questions were posed:

**RQ 1.** Which of the three translations has used shifts more frequently?

**RQ 2.** Which translation is the most natural one?

**RQ 3.** Is there any direct relationship between the amount of shifts and naturalness in these translations?

## 2. Methodology

As previously stated, the aim of this paper was to investigate Leuven-Zwart’s (1990) model of shifts used in translating the Qur’an words and their naturalness. In this study, the following three translations were investigated:

Translation 1~ Saffarzadeh’s translation (2005)

Translation 2~ Yusuf Ali’s translation (1977)

Translation 3~ Pickthall’s translation (1930)

In this case study, the researchers were to compare three different English translations of Sura *Ya’sin* in the Holy Qur’an, mainly focusing on the shifts applied and their naturalness in these translations. These three versions were Sura *Ya’sin* translated by Pickthall (1930), Yusuf Ali (1977) and Saffarzadeh (2005). Three translators come from different countries with different cultures.

Thirty verses of Sura *Ya’sin* in Persian by Saffarzadeh (2005) and three English versions of Qur’an were selected. Pickthall (1930), Yusuf Ali (1977) and Saffarzadeh (2005) were analyzed based on Leuven-Zwart’s (1989) comparative model of shifts and their relationship with Nida’s (1964) theory of Dynamic equivalence; they were compared with each other. The researchers were to observe how the translators used shifts and naturalness in their translations of Qur’an as compared Persian to English and how these two factors affect each other in Qur’an translation. Each English version of Qur’an translation was compared in two aspects. One was on Leuven-Zwart’s (1989) shift and the other on Nida’s (1964) naturalness after these comparisons have been done.

To meet the purpose of the study, the researchers made use of comparative research design. Therefore, the results of the research were based on contrasting the Persian verses of the Sura “*Ya’sin*” with their English translations and comparing the English translations with one another.

After comparing the two variables on three versions of the translation of Qur’an on thirty

beginning verses of Sura Ya'sin, the results were analyzed. Then, the researchers collected the data and demonstrated the results in diagrams and tables. The frequency of shifts was calculated, and it was shown in different charts. Finally, the most natural one was found. At last, the relationship between the shifts and naturalness was shown in another diagram, whether they have a direct relationship or not.

### 3. Results and Discussion

The present study was an attempt (1) to find the frequency of Leuven-Zwart's (1989) comparative model of shifts applied in translating the Holy Qur'an from Persian into English in thirty verses of Sura "Ya'sin", by three different translators, (2) to investigate the naturalness of each three English translations according to the Nida's (1964) dynamics theory, (3) to clarify the translator who has made the most and the least use of Leuven-Zwart's (1989) comparative model of shifts in his/her translation, (4) to find whether there is a relationship between shifts and naturalness applied in the Qur'an translation from Persian into English.

Leuven-Zwart's (Leuven-Zwart, 1989, pp. 159-69) comparative shift model has three-kind category: 1) Modulation 2) Modification 3) Mutation. All the shifts which have been applied by the mentioned translators are shown in four following tables; each table is allotted for each kind of Leuven-Zwart's comparative model of shifts.

Leuven-Zwart (1989, pp. 159-64) defines Modulation as "one of the transemes tallies with the Architranseme but the other differs either semantically or stylistically - the sit up example above would be classed as modulation because the English phrase has an extra element (quickly)". Table 1 present all the extracted cases of modulation in Persian samples of the chosen material and their English translations:

Table 1. All the cases of modulation with their English translations

Saffarzadeh's Translation	Pickthall's Translation	Yusuf Ali's Translation	Persian Sample
-----	By the wise Qur'an,	By the Qur'an, full of Wisdom	سوگند به قرآن، کتاب حکمت آموز
-----	-----	the apostles	پیامبران الهی
-----	bear tidings	-----	بشارت دادن
-----	-----	reject	تکذیب کردن
-----	augur	augur	دانستن
-----	-----	a people transgressing all bounds	قومی فاسد و تجاوزگر
-----	to cry	to say	خطاب قرار دادن
-----	to save	to deliver	رهایی بخشیدن از عذاب الهی
fall into	-----	-----	بودن
To listen	to hear	To listen	قبول کردن نصایح
To come	-----	To come	ارسال فرموده شدن

Was	was	was	ظاهر شدن
-----	-----	-----	----------

As the another type of shift, Leuven-Zwart (1989, pp. 165-168) defines Modification as “both transemes show some form of disjunction (semantically, stylistically, syntactically, pragmatically, or some combination of these) compared to the architranseme. For example, ‘you had to cry’ and ‘hacia llorar’ (“[it] made cry)”. As you can see, all the cases of modification with their English translations are presented in Table 2:

Table 2. All the cases of modification with their English translations

Saffarzadeh's Translation	Pickthall's Translation	Yusuf Ali's Translation	Persian Samples
-----	those sent	-----	پیامبران الهی
warn	warn	admonish	هدایت کردن
-----	heedless	remain heedless	غافل بودن
-----	warn	-----	به هدایت واصل شدن
to fulfill	to prove	to prove	صادر کردن
-----	stiff-necked	-----	بالا نگاهداشتن سر
fear from	feareth	fear	پرهیزیدن
-----	to Coin	Set forth	مثال زدن
Do	-----	-----	برگزیدن معبود
include	made	enroll	اراده فرمودن
-----	anguish	-----	ارسال فرموده شدن

For Mutation, Leuven-Zwart (1989, pp. 168-169) asserts “It is impossible to establish an architranseme either because of addition, deletion or ‘some radical change in meaning’ in the TT”. Table 3 provides all the cases of Mutation in Persian samples of the chosen material and their English translations:

Table 3. All the cases of mutation with their English translations

Saffarzadeh's Translation	Pickthall's Translation	Yusuf Ali's Translation	Persian Samples
-----	On a straight path	On a Straight Way	که مردم را به راه راست هدایت می کنی
-----	A revelation of the Mighty, the Merciful	-----	وسیله ی هدایتگری تو این قرآن مجید است که از سوی آن قادر بی همتای رحمتگستر نازل فرموده شده.
-----	-----	-----	بدین سبب این بت پرستهای قریش پندپذیر نیستند.
-----	-----	-----	اگر معبودانی بجای او

			برگزینم
If Only my people knew	Would that my people knew	Would that my People knew	
-----	and lo! they were extinct	-----	و ناگهان تمام آن کافران در خاموشی مرگ فرو رفتند
, nor we Needed to do so		nor was it needful for us so to do	و ما فرو فرستنده ی لشکر [بر اینگونه اقوام نیستیم]

In following tables, the collected data is presented in nine tables. In the first three tables, frequency of category shifts in the work of each translator separately is shown. Then, in the next four tables, the researchers present the frequency of each type of category shifts separately in the work of each translator and all of the three translators as a whole. Table 11 includes the data altogether. Finally, total frequency of shifts is provided in table 12.

Table 4. Frequency of Leuven-Zwart’s comparative Shifts in Saffarzadeh’s Translation

	Total No. of Shifts		No. of Modulation	No. of Modification	No. of Mutation
Saffarzadeh	10		4	4	2
	100%		40%	40%	20%

According to Table 4 and Figure 1, modulation and modification were the most frequently used kind of shifts in Saffarzadeh’s translation; on the other hand, mutation was the least frequently used shift in her translation. In other words, Saffarzadeh has used modulation and modification forty percent (i.e., four times) and mutation twenty percent (i.e., twice) in the extracted samples of the study.

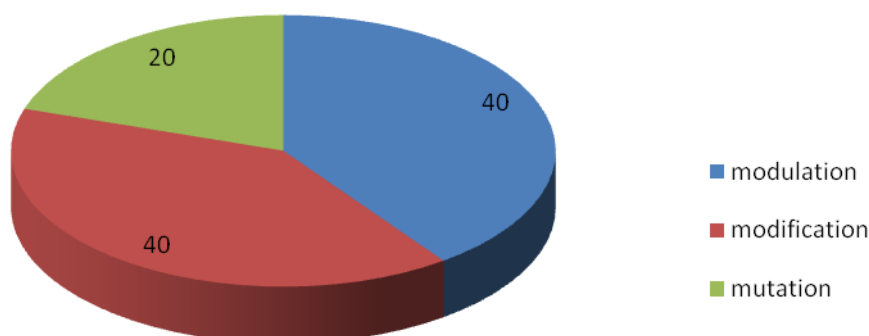


Figure 1. Overall Frequency of Leuven-Zwart’s (1990) comparative Shifts in Saffarzadeh’s Translation

Table 5. Frequency of Leuven-Zwart’s comparative Shifts in Pickthall’s Translation

	Total No. of Shifts	No. of modulation	No. of modification	No. of mutation
Pickthall	21	7	10	4
Total Percentage	100%	33.33%	47.61%	19.04%

According to information provided in Table 5 as shown in Figure 2, modification was the most frequently used shift in Pickthall’s translation; on the other hand, mutation was the least frequently used shift in his translation. In other words, Pickthall has used modulation 33.33 percent (i.e., seven times), modification 47.61 percent (i.e., ten times) and mutation 19.04 percent (i.e., Four times).

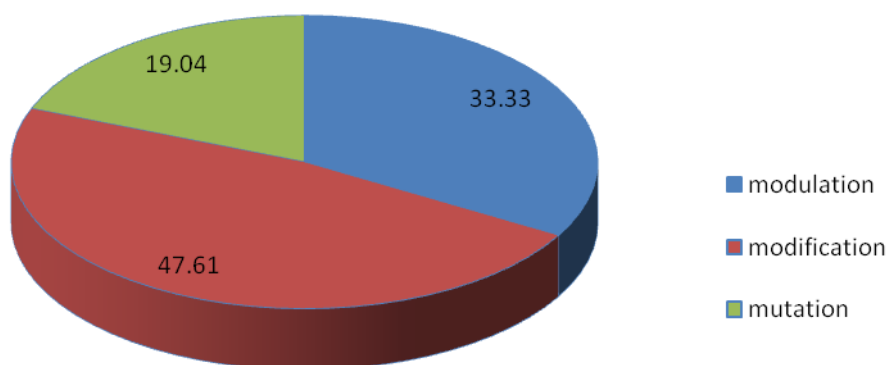


Figure 2. overall Frequency of Leuven-Zwart’s (1990) comparative Shifts in Pickthall’s Translation

Table 6. Frequency of Leuven-Zwart’s comparative Shifts in Yusuf Ali’s Translation

	Total No. of shifts	No. of modulation	No. of modification	No. of mutation
Yusuf Ali	20	10	7	3
Total Percentage	100%	50%	35%	15%

As you see in Table 6 and Figure 3, modulation was the most frequently used shift in Yusuf Ali’s translation; on the other hand, mutation was the least frequently used shift in his translation. In other words, Yusuf Ali has used modulation 50 percent (i.e., ten times), modification 35 percent (i.e., seven times) and mutation 15 percent (i.e., three times).

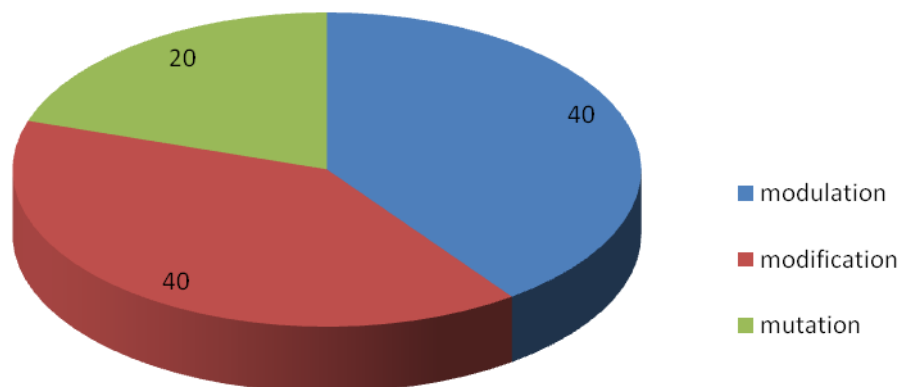


Figure 3. Overall Frequency of Leuven-Zwart's (1990) comparative Shifts in Yusuf Ali's Translation

Table 7. Frequency of Modulation

	Saffarzadeh	Pickthall	Yusuf Ali	All of the Three Translators
Number of modulations	4	7	10	21
Percentage	19.05%	33.33%	47.62%	100%

According to Table 7 and Figure 4, Yusuf Ali has used modulation more than Saffarzadeh and Pickthall. In other words, modulation was utilized by Yusuf Ali 47.62%, Pickthall 33.33% and Saffarzadeh 19.05%.

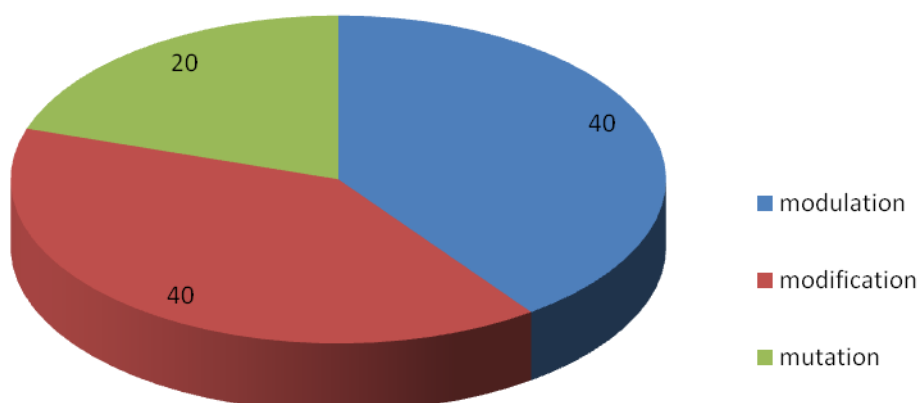


Figure 4. Frequency of modulation



According to this figure, Yusuf Ali has used the most modulation and Saffarzadeh has used the least modulation.

Table 8. Frequency of modification

	Saffarzadeh	Pickthall	Yusuf Ali	All of the Three Translators
Number of modifications	4	10	7	21
Percentage	19.05%	47.62%	33.33%	100%

According to information provided in Table 8 as shown in Figure 5, Pickthall has used modification more than Saffarzadeh and Yusuf Ali. In other words, modification was utilized by Pickthall 47.62%, Yusuf Ali 33.33% and Saffarzadeh 19.05%.

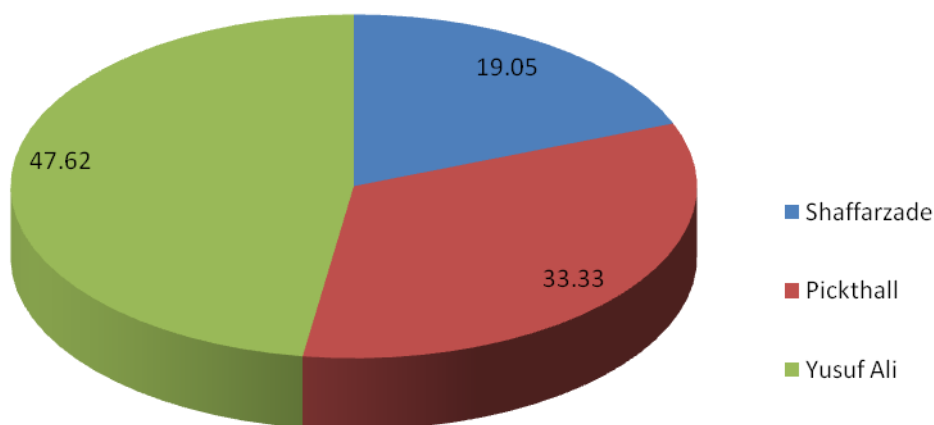


Figure 5. Frequency of modification

Table 9. Frequency of mutation

	Saffarzadeh	Pickthall	Yusuf Ali	All of the Three Translators
Number of mutation	2	4	3	9
Percentage	22.22%	44.44%	33.33%	100%

As you see in Table 9 and Figure 6, Pickthall has used mutation more than Saffarzadeh and Yusuf Ali. In other words, mutation was utilized by Pickthall 44.44%, Yusuf Ali 33.33% and Saffarzadeh 22.22%.

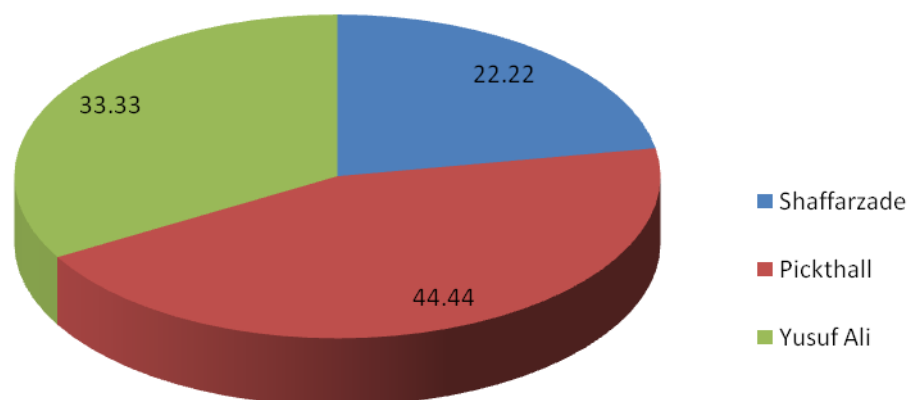


Figure 6. Overall Frequency of mutation

Table 10. Total Frequency of Shifts

	Total No. of Shifts	No. of modulation	No. of modification	No. of mutation
Frequency	51	21	21	9
Percentage	100%	41.18%	41.18%	17.65%

Table 10, as illustrated in Figure 7, provides information on the total frequency of shifts in the three translators. Accordingly, there were 21 cases of modulation, 21 cases of modification, and 9 cases of mutation.

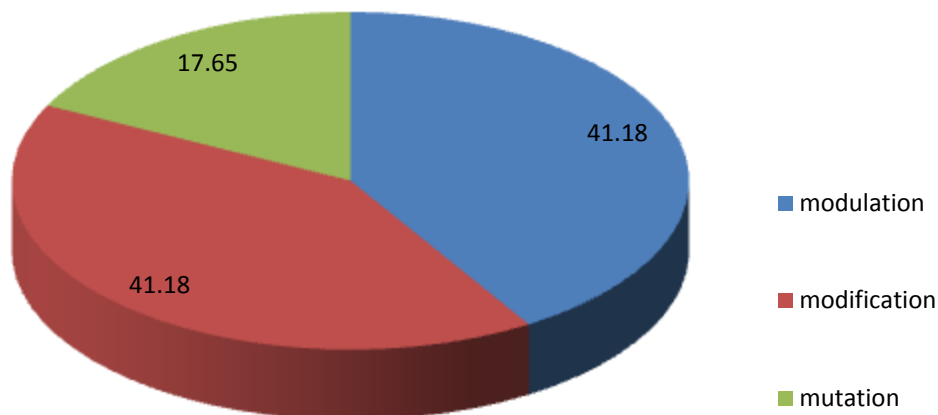


Figure 7. Total Frequency of Shifts

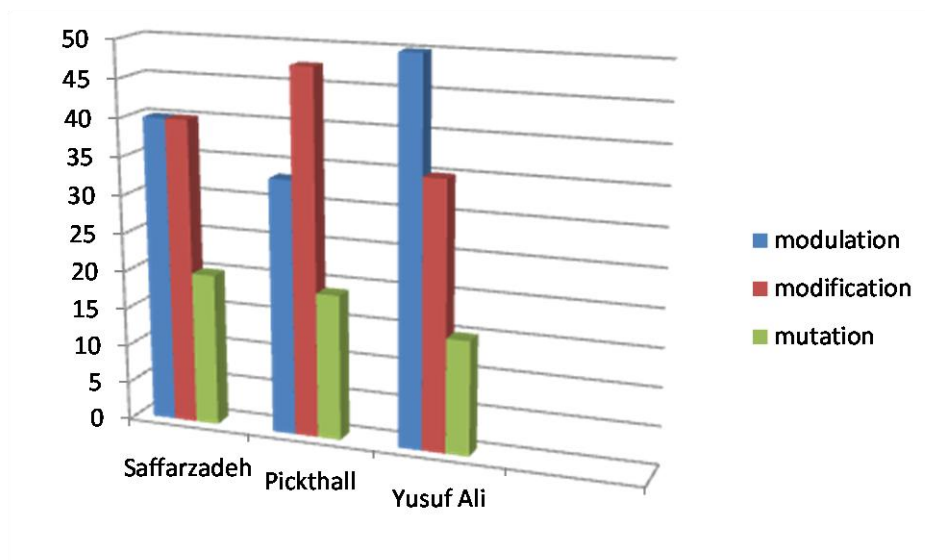


Figure 8. Overall Frequency of Leuven-Zwart’s comparative model of Shifts

Figure 8 shows Yusuf Ali has used modulation most frequently, Pickthall has utilized modification most frequently and Saffarzadeh has used mutation most frequently.

Table 11. Frequency of naturalness in these three translators

	Saffarzadeh	Pickthall	Yusuf Ali	All of the Three Translators
Number of being natural	29	15	17	61
Percentage	47.54%	24.60%	27.87%	100%

Table 11 and Figure 9 shows the frequency of naturalness in the three translators. Accordingly, there were 29 cases of naturalness in Saffarzadeh’s translation, 15 cases in Pickthall’s, and 17 cases in Yusuf Ali’s. According to this figure, Saffarzadeh is the most natural one and Yusuf Ali is the least natural translation among them.

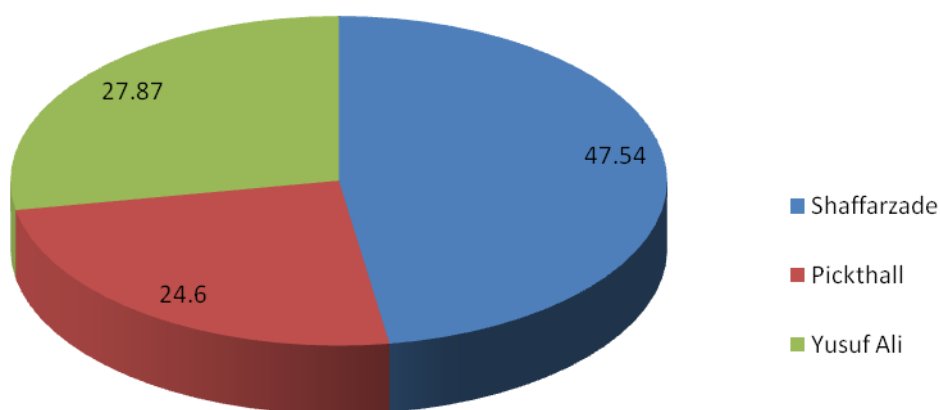


Figure 9. Overall Frequency of naturalness

Table 12. Frequency of naturalness and shifts

	Saffarzadeh	Pickthall	Yusuf Ali	All of the Three Translators
Number of naturalness	29	15	17	61
Number of shifts	10	21	20	51

As you can see in Table 12 and Figure 10, there were 29 cases of naturalness and 10 cases of shifts in Saffarzadeh’s translation. In addition, there were 15 cases of naturalness and 21 cases of shifts in Pickthall’s translation. Further, there were 17 cases of naturalness and 20 cases of shifts in Yusuf Ali’s translation. According to the zero significant level in ANOVA test and Spearman’s correlation test, no relationship has been found between shift and naturalness (See Figures 10 & 11).

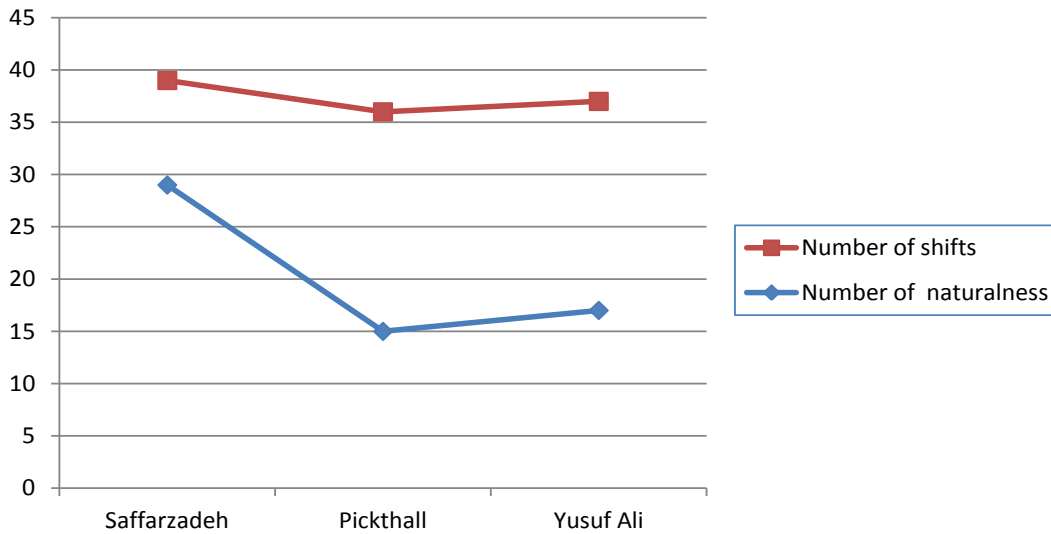


Figure 10. the relationship between Leuven-Zwart’s comparative model of shifts and naturalness

According to Figure 11, Saffarzadeh's translation is the most natural translation and she used the least number of shift among them. Pickthall's translation is the least natural translation and he used the most shifts among them.

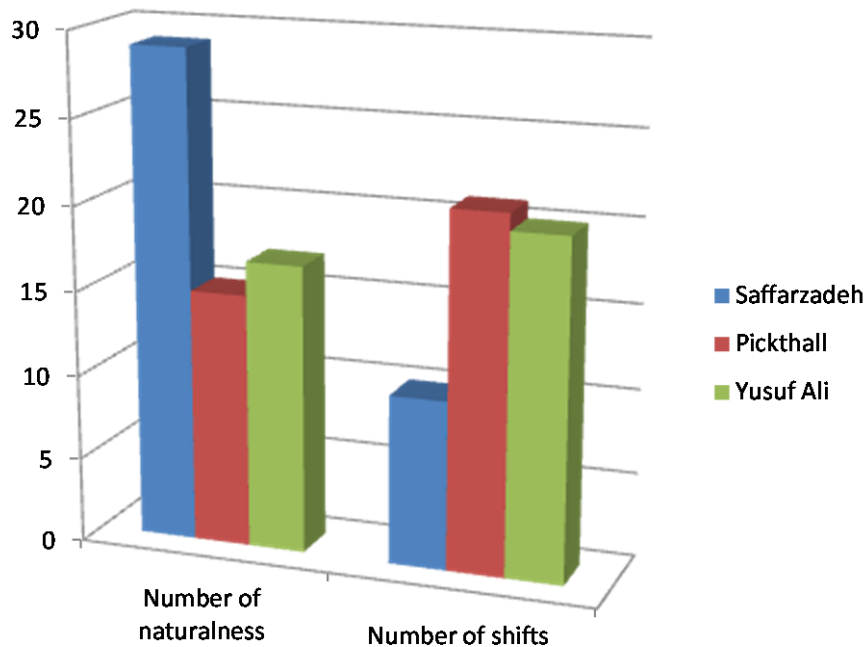


Figure 11. overall relationship between number of shifts and naturalness

To achieve the objectives of the study by running SPSS, we get the following pieces of information in this regard.

Table 13. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Shifts	9	5.00	2.000	2	10
naturalness	3	20.00	7.000	15	29

In this study, first we should look at the normality of our frequency distribution of data. Some other descriptive statistics are obtained in which one output is of our concern that is 5 percent trimmed mean for shifts and 20 percent mean for naturalness; this piece of information tells us that if we remove extreme cases from our data, the mean should not change much. Table 13 shows this issue. The minimum and maximum shifts were 2 and 10, and the minimum and maximum naturalness were 15 and 29.

Table 14 Illustrates Test of Normality which is called Kolmogorov-Smirnov. This one evaluates the normality of the distribution of scores as well.

Table 14. Result of Normality Test of Kolmogorov-Smirnov: One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		Shifts	Naturalness
N		9	3
Normal Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>	Mean	5.00	20.00
	Std. Deviation	2.000	7.000
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.059 <sup>c</sup>	. <sup>c,d</sup>

A non-significant result, that is Sig values more than 0.05, indicates normality. In our case, the Sig value is greater in amount than our set Sig value of 0.05, then we have not violated the assumption of normality here.

Table 15. ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	42.000	1	42.000	.000	.000
Within Groups	72.000	1	72.000		
Total	114.000	2			

According to Table 15, the significant is zero between groups. Here, our two groups are two variables that are shifts and naturalness. They do not have any direct or linear relationship.

Table 16. Correlations

			translation	translation
Spearman's rho	Shifts	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	3	3
		Std. Error	.000	.000

	95% Confidence	Lower	1.000	.000
	Interval	Upper	1.000	.000
Naturalness	Correlation Coefficient		.000	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.
	N		3	3
	Std. Error		.000	.000
	95% Confidence	Lower	.000	1.000
	Interval	Upper	.000	1.000

According to the information provided in Table 16, a correlation of  $\sim 0$  indicates that there is almost no linear association between these two variables. Therefore, there is no meaningful relationship between Shifts and Naturalness.

#### 4. Conclusion, Implication, and Suggestions

As previously discussed, the present researchers tried to investigate the Zwart's comparative model of shifts and Nida's naturalness applied in Persian to English translations of the Holy Qur'an. To achieve the objectives of this study, three following questions were posed.

**RQ1:** Which of the three translations has used shifts more frequently?

Saffarzadeh has used shifts more than other two translators. Pickthall by applying 21 shifts, has made most use of Leuven-Zwart's comparative model of shifts in his translation. He has employed a comparative approach to his translation.

**RQ2:** Which translation is the most natural one?

As it was shown in tables and figures, Saffarzadeh's translation is the most natural one by applying 29 cases of naturalness.

**RQ3:** Is there any direct relationship between the amount of shifts and naturalness in these translations. According to the collected data and obtained results, Pickthall has the most frequent shifts occurred with 21 cases and Saffarzadeh's translation was the most natural one with 29 cases of occurrence. Therefore, there was no relationship between these two factors.

Based on the extracted data and obtained results, the following conclusions are presented as the last remarks of this piece of paper:

The researcher concludes that:

- a) Modulation and modification had the most and equal frequent shift found in this research with the occurrence number of 21, which is exactly 41.18% of the total occurrence of the shifts.
- b) The least frequent strategy was mutation with the occurrence number of 9, which is about 17.65% of the total occurrence of the shifts.
- c) The highest number of applying the shifts belonged to Pickthall with 21 cases.
- d) The highest number of being natural belongs to Saffarzadeh with 29 cases which is about

47.54% of the total occurrence of the shifts.

e) There was not any direct relationship between the most frequently shifts used and naturalness, as Pickthall had used the most shifts and Saffarzadeh's translation was the most natural one.

The present research has valuable information in the field of Translation. Therefore, it can be useful for translators, teachers and language learners and especially the Qur'an researchers. For example, translation teachers can apply the results of this research to teach translation shifts from Persian to English in their classes in a more practical and comprehensive approach. For example, when teaching research methodology to Translation Studies students and while teaching translation theories to the students, these result can be applicable.

Language learners and translators can also take advantage of this research in order to achieve different skills to overcome the matter of untranslatability. On the other hand, Qur'an researchers can do some fundamental research in a larger scale by using the available conclusions of this research.

Since the Noble Qur'an is the word of God, which has been revealed to the Prophet Mohammad (p.b.u.h) in Arabic language over fourteen hundred years ago, it seems that finding new approaches and strategies for transferring its message to other languages is valuable and essential. On the other hand, religious texts are the most controversial to translate or survey. However, the researchers tried to do their best in order to pave the way of development in religious studies. The areas that can be further explored can be as follows:

a) A research could be done by surveying the same context by applying different models of shift presented by other scholars and theoreticians such as the Blum-Kulla's (1986) shifts of cohesion and coherence in translation.

b) The present study was limited to only sura "Ya'sin" of the Holy Qur'an, researchers could conduct the same research on other sura(s) or even other religious texts such as Nahjal Balagheh and their translations.

c) The present research took Leuven-Zwart's comparative model of shifts as its theoretical framework; another study could apply the same research based on Leuven-Zwart's descriptive model of shift stated by Leuven-Zwart.

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