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A Stylistic Analysis of the English Translation of Surah Al-Fil: A Comparative Study of Translations from Three Different Quranic Apps

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ABSTRACT

The Holy Quran is the holy book of Muslims and it was initially written in Arabic but it has been translated to other languages to enable the message to reach other non-Arabic speaking people. The theoretical framework uses the stylistic model of Leech and Short (2014) to compare the translations of Surah Al-Fil in three Quranic applications and how the decisions made by the translators impact the clarity, fidelity, and readability. This paper is engaged in a stylistic analysis of Surah Al-Fil in three popular Quranic mobile app such as Jazz Islam World, Quran.com, and Muslim Pro. Using a qualitative comparative methodology, the analysis is concentrated on four themes, namely lexical choices, grammatical structures, rhetorical devices, and cohesion/context. The results show that, as much as all the translations hold similar underlying meaning, they are different in style: Jazz Islam World is simple and straight to the point, Quran.com is somewhere in between poetic and factual, and Muslim Pro is analytic with theological commentary. The differences are based on the linguistic inclinations and the theological orientation of translators, as well as the target audience, which causes readability differences, clarity factors, and retentiveness of the Quranic eloquence. The paper sheds light on the increasing popularity of digital translations of the Quran and points to the necessity of the critical use of applications related to it in learning and worship practices. It also recommends the cooperation between language researchers and Islamic scholars and application developers to find the right mix between accessibility and fidelity and recommends further research to other Surahs, application updates, multimodality, and cross-linguistic studies.

Keywords: Stylistic Analysis, English Translation, Al-Fil, Comparative Study, Quranic Apps

INTRODUCTION

The Holy Quran, the sacred text of Islam, is the main part of the life of Muslims all over the world. It was first published in classical Arabic, but has been translated into many languages, in order to bring its message to the non-Arabic readers. As a lingua franca, English has seen quite a numerous number of Quranic translations throughout the years. Recently, the Quranic engagement has been made even easier due to the technological



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development of mobile phone applications. Offering a convenient and easy-to-use access to the text as well as its different translations, these Quran apps especially on the younger and more tech-savvy crowds. Nonetheless, the growing popularity of the digital medium begs the question regarding the quality, accuracy, and stylistic fidelity of the translation provided by these applications. (Abdul-Rauf, 2001).

Stylistic analysis is a branch of linguistics that studies the use of language in literature and other texts, examining how style contributes to meaning, tone, and reader experience. It focuses on linguistic features such as diction (word choice), syntax (sentence structure), figurative language, and rhetorical devices. It concentrates on the language characteristics of diction (choice of words), syntax (structure of sentence), figurative language and rhetorical devices (Verdonk, 2002).

When applied to Quran translation, stylistic analysis enables the researcher to investigate how the translators convey the multiple layered Arabic expressions into a different language, and whether the depth and tone and the rhetorical effect of the source is preserved. In addition to its assistance in the comprehension of the translation strategies this type of analysis also contributes to the evaluation of the effectiveness of conveying the intended message and spiritual resonance of the Quran in the target languages. (Leech & Short, 2014).

The present study is aimed at the stylistic comparison of the three different English translations of Surah Al-Fil, a rather short but rhetorically strong chapter of the Quran. The chosen translations are taken as Jazz Islam World, Quran.com, and Muslim Pro three of the most popular Quranic apps. All these apps have a different style of translation, as they have different translators behind them and the targeted audience. Based on the analysis of these translations, this study aims at determining the linguistic differences between them, particularly with regard to lexical decisions, grammatical constructs, and application of rhetorical figures. This comparison is essential because sometimes the difference can be only in a few letters or change of phrasing but the difference in perceived meaning and emotional response of readers can be substantial.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To identify the stylistic devices used by English Quranic apps in the translation of Surah Al-Fil

To know the stylistic differences in English Quranic apps for the translation of Surah Al-Fil

To know the stylistic similarities in English Quranic apps for the translation of Surah Al-Fil

To draw a comparative stylistic analysis of English Quranic apps translation of Surah Al-Fil

RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the stylistic devices used by the English Quranic apps for the translation of Surah Al-Fil?

What are the stylistic differences in English Quranic apps for the translation of Surah Al-Fil?

What are the stylistic similarities in English Quranic apps for the translation of Surah Al-Fil?

What comparative analysis can be drawn between the stylistics of English Quranic apps for the translation of Surah Al-Fil?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stylistic analysis can be described as a linguistic approach. It is a technique of studying the structure, pattern, and the literary features of a text in order to understand the meaning and impact of the text (Simpson, 2004). As a sacred text, the Holy Quran has been explored using the different stylistic paradigms which have revealed its rhetorical beauty and deeper implied meanings. The focus of this stylistic analysis is particularly interesting because Surah Al-Fil (Chapter 105) is an impactful oath with the use of



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contrasts and rhythmic cadence (Smith, 2020).

Surah Al-Fil is a short, but effective chapter of the Holy Quran, narrating about the miraculous intervention of Allah, which prevented the destruction of Kaaba. Recently, studies focused on stylistic and linguistic variance among its English translations, especially the versions provided by different translators and Quranic applications. Even academic analysts have explored the roles that linguistic structures, rhetorical approaches, and translation decisions play in interpreting and comprehending Surah Al-Fil in English (Baker, 2019).

The Clear Quran by Dr. Mustafa Khattab: A Balanced Translation Approach

The Clear Quran by Dr. Mustafa Khattab is a modern English translation of the Quran, focused on clarity, precision, and readability. Compared to most of the previous translations, which are either 14 too literal or too interpretative, this one is balanced, thus being accessible to a contemporary reader, at the same time as it renders the flavor of the initial Arabic text. The translation has especially been praised due to its flowing language, contextual explanations, and easy to read format making it one of the most recommended translations of the Quran among both Muslims and non-Muslims alike who have expressed desires to understand the Quran (Khattab M, 2020).

Linguistically, The Clear Quran has achieved a fine balance of maintaining a close connection with the original Arabic text and providing a fluent read in English. There are Quran translations that aim at the word-to-word accuracy that results in the rigid and unnatural English on the one hand, and those that paraphrase too liberally at the expense of the richness of meaning on the other. Dr. The translation offered by Khattab is balanced and represents the beauty, rhythm, and meaning of the Quran text, at the same time making it an exciting and comprehensible reader of modern times (Khattab, 2016).

Linguistic Variations in Translations within Quran Applications

It is noted with the increasing usage of digital Quran applications, that many users currently have multiple translations of the Quran at their disposal. Nevertheless, the translations have significant variations in terms of their linguistic choice, form and the level of accessibility. Al-Qudah & Omari (2021) discusses those differences, especially with regard to the manifestation of the interrogative style in the variety of translations available in Quran apps. The authors inquire about whether those translations are simplified to the modern reader or they preserve the classical form of the Arabic syntax, which can sometimes be more complex and formal (Al-Qudah, H. A., Abdo, K. K., & AlQudah, L. A. (2021)). An important conclusion made during the research is that most Quran translation versions in applications can be divided into two main categories:

The simplified, contemporary translations were aimed at helping modernize the Quran by using natural and common English to make it friendlier to modern readers.

Literal and classical translations which attempt to maintain the original word order, structure and rhetorical richness of the Arabic text even when this makes their comprehension more difficult to some readers.

Phonetic and Grammatical Challenges in Quran Translations

The translation of the Quran does not just involve a replacement of words and meanings of the Arabic language into another language but it involves complex phonetics and grammatical considerations. These complexities are discussed in a study by Salma in 2021, which focuses on how Quran translation applications ought phonetic rules, grammar structures, and style. The study identifies the challenges that face translators



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when they want to preserve the rhythm, stress and intonation of the Quran and make the translations smooth and accessible. It additionally compares recitation-centered Quran applications with text-oriented translation applications and demonstrates how they vary in approaching phonetics and grammar (Salma, 2021).

Gains and Losses in Quranic Translations

A recent study published in 2025 discusses the grammatical, lexical and stylistic losses and acquisitions in three prominent English versions of the Quran. The current study aims at pinpointing the issues that translators encounter when they are trying to render the tremendous linguistic and rhetorical features of the Quran into English. By use of translation theories, the study evaluates the degree to which meanings are preserved, altered or lost in the translation process. The findings reveal that some translations are effective in maintaining the intended message, others fail to realize the most important stylistic and contextual features (Abdelkarim, M. B. A., Alhaj, A. A. M., & Hakami, A. H., 2025).

About Surah AL-Fil

With regard to Surah Al-Fil, a case in point study applied functional grammar as proposed by Halliday in exploring the linguistic structure of the Surah and how the meaning is conveyed in the Surah in terms of the arrangement of words and phrases. The model of Halliday that focuses on the significance of language in the communication process provides an opportunity to decode stylistic and grammatical choices in the Quran. The study has looked into the various ways in which the various kinds of processes material process, relational process and mental process are expressed in the Surah and has shown finally that material processes are expressed most of all. Such a finding is noteworthy since material processes are used to describe actions and events and are thus especially well adapted to a Surah that narrates a historical example of divine intervention (Yusuf, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

Stylistics as Analytical Analyzer

This paper assumes the use of stylistics as a main tool of analysis, relying on the model of Leech and Short (2014), who discusses the ways in which linguistic options affect the meaning, interpretation, and reader response.

Leech and Short's Model (2014)

The categories of the model are four:

Lexical Categories: vocabulary, formality, connotations and the trade-off between literal faithfulness and stylistic lucidity.

Grammatical Categories: sentence composition, tense, punctuation, syntactic decisions on readability and rhythm.

Figures of Speech: metaphors, images, repetition, and parallelism that retain or create Quranic eloquence.

Contextual and Cohesion Features: coherence, reference, conjunctions and cultural or theological compatibility.

Application to Surah Al-Fil

Through the implementation of these classifications to the English versions of Surah Al-Fil in Jazz Islam World, Quran.com, and Muslim Pro, the framework enables the

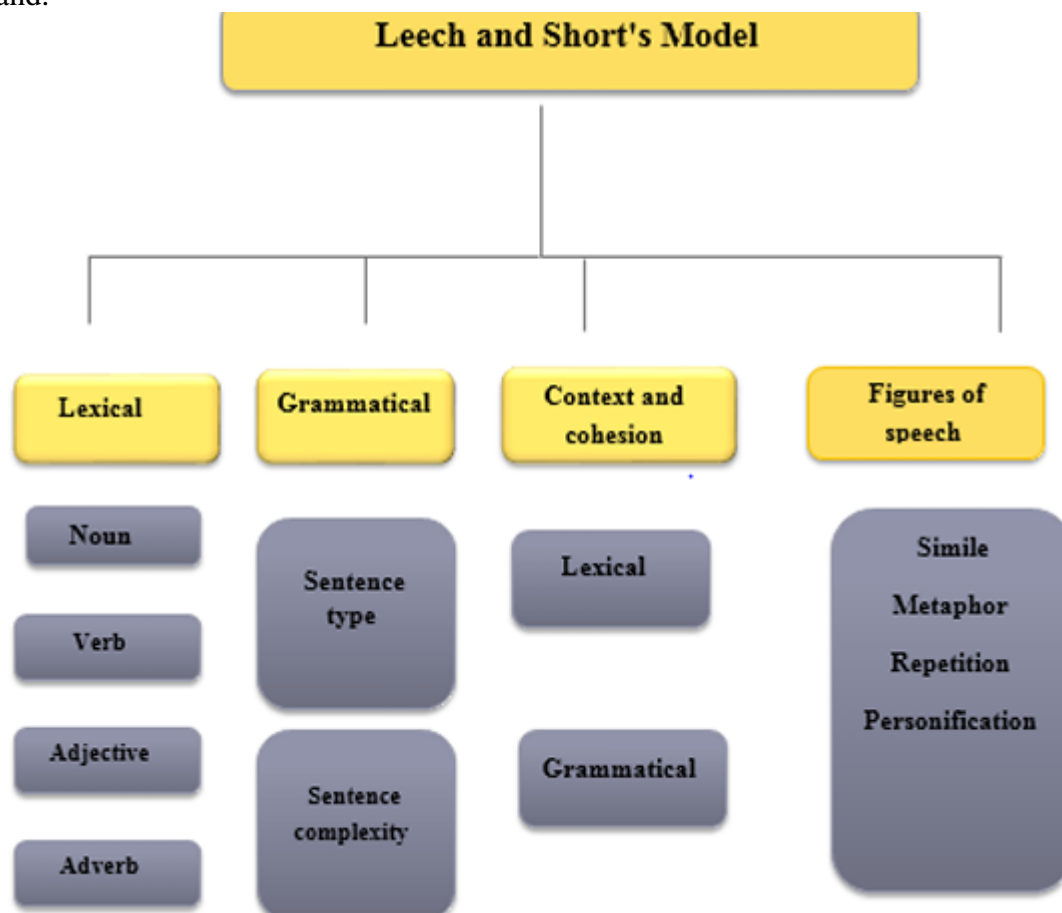


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systematic comparative approach of stylistic variability in these versions. It points out the effects of linguistic inclination and theological inclination of the translators on clarity, access and faithfulness to the original Arabic.

Relation to Digital Quranic Studies

Locating the study in this framework, one must acknowledge the increasing importance of digital Quranic studies that require serious consideration of the app-based translation as an educational and religious resource, and balances fidelity and accessibility on the one hand.



Model of Analysis

METHODOLOGY

The research design used in the study is descriptive, which explores how each translator transfers meaning onto words, and a comparative aspect that determines similarities and differences in the stylistic orientations that each translator uses (Leech and Short, 2014). The first approach is stylistic analysis based on linguistic and literary theories that discuss lexical factors, including use of vocabulary, formality, connotations, and the ratio between fidelity and clarity in English, grammatical factors, including sentence structure, tense, punctuation, and syntactic patterns that influence the readability and rhythm, rhetorical and literary devices, including metaphors, imagery, repetition, parallelism, and tone that maintain the persuasive and aesthetic nature of the original Arabic, and cohesion and contextual factors that facilitate internal consistency, coherence, and In this sample, three English translations of Surah Al-Fil (probably through Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan) are used: Jazz Islam World (Sahih International), Quran.com and Muslim Pro (Dr. Mustafa Khattab). The purposive sampling method was employed so that the



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chosen sources could be selected intentionally because they are relevant to the aims of the study. Two steps included in the process of data collection were accessing the applications, locating the Surah and its translation, extracting the text and recording metadata. Analysis of data was performed in the style of Leech and Short (2014), who consider lexical, grammatical, rhetorical, and contextual features of discourse as primary areas of study of stylistic variation between texts.



Jazz Islam World

Muslim Pro

Quran.com

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Stylistic Analysis of Surah Al-Fil

Lexical category

Lexical level of stylistic analysis deals with the vocabulary used in a piece of work, the words, their meaning, implications and the level of formality or informality contained in a text. When it comes to Quranic translation, lexical choice is of paramount importance



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to the extent that it must communicate both semantic form of the original Arabic as well as its emotional and theological overtones.

Lexical Category Analysis

Ayah	Jazz Islam World	Quran.com	Muslim Pro	Observations (Lexical & Stylistic Differences)
1	Owners	Companions	Army	Noun choices differ: ownership vs. companionship vs. military skill. Verbs are uniform (been seen, considered, dealt). Syntactic uniformity in pronouns and prepositions.
2	Plot go astray	Changing their plan into misguidance	Frustrate their evil plan	Nouns differ slightly (plot, plan, evil plan). Verbs vary (go, make, frustrate) but convey divine intervention. Tone shifts between descriptive and critical.
3	Birds in flocks	Birds in flocks	Flocks of birds	High consistency across translations. Only minor restructuring ("flocks of birds" vs. "birds in flocks"). Same verbs, pronouns, adverbs, prepositions.
4	Striking with stones of <u>Sijjil</u>	Striking with stones of hard clay	Pelted with stones of baked clay	Word choice differs in verbs ("striking" vs. "pelted") and nouns (<u>Sijjil</u> , hard clay, baked clay). Slightly different imagery, but overall meaning constant.
5	Made them like eaten straw	Made them like eaten straw	Leaving them like chewed-up straw	Literal vs. interpretative tone. Verbs ("made" vs. "leaving") and adjectives ("eaten" vs. "chewed-up") show stylistic shift from passive degradation to graphic illustration.

The lexical analysis of the five ayahs shows that there is both similarity and diversity in the three translations of Jazz Islam World, Quran.com and Muslim Pro. The difference in the first ayah is in nouns: owners, companions, and army but the verbs, pronouns, and prepositions are also similar, showing varying interpretive emphasis on who owns, who is a companion, or who is skilled at waging war. Slight variation in nouns, such as plot, plan, and evil plan; verbs, such as go, make, and frustrate, are also seen in the second ayah, but they all have the same meaning that is the divine intervention frustrating the plans of adversaries. The third ayah is very consistent and all translations talk about Allah sending birds in flocks with the only slight difference that Muslim Pro restructured it to say flocks of birds. The message of divine punishment is unchanging in the fourth ayah, but variations are observed with verbs, used as striking, pelted, and the use of stones, termed as Sijjil, hard clay or baked clay, which create different pictures. The last ayah compares the literal and the interpretive: Jazz Islam World and Quran.com say made them like eaten straw, and Muslim Pro emphasizes the imagery of making them like chewed-up straw, making a stylistic shift between passive abuse and graphic picture-making.

Grammatical Category Analysis

The study about the comparative Grammatical Category Analysis table of Surah Al-Fil in the three translations (Jazz Islam World, Quran.com, Muslim Pro). Such grammatical categories as the type of sentence, tense, pronouns, nouns, verbs, adjectives, and



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prepositions are taken into consideration.

Grammatical Category Analysis of Ayahs

Ayah	Jazz Islam World	Quran.com	Muslim Pro	Observations (Grammatical Features & Variations)
1	Owners; adds respectful parenthetical “Peace be upon him”; uses present perfect tense; keeps question form	Uses phrase “Have you not considered”; present perfect tense; question form	Emphasizes military imagery with “Army”; present perfect tense; question form	All retain grammatical structure (question + present perfect). Variations mainly in nouns and stylistic tone.
2	Nouns: “plot”; Verb: “go astray”	Noun: “plan”; Verb: “into misguidance”	Noun: “evil plan”; Verb: “frustrate”	Grammatical form (tense, pronouns, structure) consistent; variations affect tone—direct, descriptive, moralized.
3	Declarative past tense; phrase “birds in flocks”	Declarative past tense; same structure	Declarative past tense; minor restructuring to “flocks of birds”	Sentence structure, tense, and prepositions are uniform. Only rhythm/stress differs slightly due to word order.
4	Declarative past tense; verb “striking”; stones as “ <u>Sijjil</u> ”	Declarative past tense; verb “striking”; stones as “hard clay”	Declarative past tense; verb “pelted”; stones as “baked clay”	All share grammatical form (tense, pronouns, prepositions). Variations occur in verbs/adjectives for stylistic effect.
5	Declarative past tense; “made them like eaten straw”	Declarative past tense; almost same as Jazz Islam World, with “He” added	Declarative past tense; “Leaving them like chomped-up straw”	Grammatical consistency overall. Verbal variation (“made” vs. “leaving”) introduces stylistic difference, but message intact.

The grammatical analysis of the Surah Al-Fil shows that there is a high degree of consistency in all the translations, with the only differences being in the type of words used and the tone of style. Every translator maintains the interrogative voice in the first ayah and uses a perfect tense, but Jazz Islam World uses a respectful parenthesis, Quran.com uses the reflective term have you not considered, and Muslim Pro uses military terms by describing an army. In the second ayah, verb and noun are not similar plot/go astray/plan/into misguidance/evil plan/frustrate--but the grammar, tense, pronouns, and structure are the same, only the tone shifts to the descriptive mode, then to the moral mode. The third ayah is one with almost perfect harmony, except that all the versions are in declarative past tense, and have the same prepositional form, the only difference being that a slight rearrangement of the order in the sentence is made in the version by Muslim Pro: flocks of birds. In the fourth ayah, both declarative forms are maintained in past tense, the pronouns and prepositions are all the same, but the verbs are different, and the stones are referred to as Sijjil-, hard clay-, or baked clay-, representing stylistic changes without interfering with grammatical integrity. The last ayah once again uses declarative past tense in all the translations, Jazz Islam World and Quran.com translations this time say made them like eaten straw, and again Muslim Pro translates this ayah as leaving them like chomped-up straw, a more graphic image. These



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differences notwithstanding, the grammatical patterns of all the ayahs are consistent without changing the original message but offering flexibility in style.

Figures of Speech

Ayah	Figures of Speech	Examples	Key Point
1	Rhetorical Question, Metonymy, Personification	“Have you not”; Elephant = army; God dealing with invaders	Dramatic tone stressing divine intervention.
2	Rhetorical Question, Metonymy, Repetition	“Did He not”; plot/plan/evil plan	Emphasizes God’s power over schemes.
3	Imagery, Personification	Birds in flocks = divine messengers	Strong visual of divine retribution.
4	Imagery, Metonymy, Personification	Stones of <i>Sijil</i> /hard clay/baked clay	Stones symbolize God’s wrath and punishment.
5	Simile, Imagery	“Like eaten/chewed-up straw”	Simile shows humiliation and destruction.

The rhetorical and literary tools used in Surah Al-Fil in the five ayahs show a combination of rhetorical and literary tools that add dramatic and theological power to the text. The translations in the first ayah consist of rhetorical questions to make them think, there is metonymy since the elephant is used to represent the army of the Abraha and personification since God is seen to address itself directly to the invaders, further supported by the phrase have you not. The second ayah carries this on with some rhetorical questioning and metonymy, where plot, plan, or evil plan is a malicious intent, and this is reinforced by repetition of how God is powerful to end malevolent plans. The third ayah emphasizes rich Imagery and personification, where birds in flocks are described as messengers of God with retribution, and the image of retribution is vivid and consistent. Imagery, metonymy, and personification are once again utilized in the fourth ayah, when the stones of "Sijil," or hard clay or baked clay, are used to symbolize divine wrath and become personified as the means by which God controls the world. And lastly, the fifth ayah uses a very vivid simile and compares the beaten army to eaten straw or a chewed-up straw, furthering the visual effect of humiliation and complete devastation. Together, these figures of speech strengthen themes of divine intervention, justice, and supremacy by using vivid imagery and symbolic expression.

Cohesion and Contextual Analysis of Surah Al-Fil

Comparison across three translations: Jazz Islam World, Quran.com, and Muslim Pro.



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Ayah	Jazz Islam World	Quran.com	Muslim Pro	Key Point
1	Uses honorifics; direct address to Prophet	Bracketed explanations; balanced tone	Shorter; stresses personal God-connection	All highlight divine act; differ in personalization & style.
2	“Plot/go astray”	“Plan/misguidance”	“Evil plan”	Lexical variation alters tone (direct, precise, moral).
3	“Birds in flocks”	Same as Jazz Islam World	“Flocks of birds”	Structure consistent; imagery of divine action intact.
4	“Sijjil” (historical)	“Hard clay” (accessible)	“Baked clay” (vivid)	All stress punishment; wording shifts historical vs. modern clarity.
5	“Eaten straw”	“Eaten straw”	“Chewed-up straw”	Simile consistent; slight variation in imagery of destruction.

The content and contextual analysis of the Surah Al-Fil through the three translations of Jazz Islam World, Quran.com, and Muslim Pro reveal the similarity in the message and the difference in the diction. In Ayah 1 all the apps stress the divine action but the degree of personalization is different: Jazz Islam World uses both honorifics and personal approach in the form of bracketed explanations, whereas Quran.com provides less personalized version, but stresses the sense of individual approach to God. Ayah 2 is coherent in terms of pronouns, but it is lexically different, and Jazz Islam World wholly translates as plot and go astray, Quran.com as misguidance, and Muslim Pro intensifies the tone to evil plan, as reflection of translation strategy of precision versus dynamism of interpretation. Ayah 3 is very similar in structure, with Jazz Islam World and Quran.com being more exact with their usage of birds and flocks but Muslim Pro is more specific with their placement of flocks of birds and is more relying on divine intervention using imagery without ellipsis. In Ayah 4, Jazz Islam World adopts the historical word Sijjil, Quran.com translates it to hard clay as a way to make it accessible to people, and Muslim Pro translates it to baked clay as a way to make it sound vivid, all with the lexical cohesion intact. Lastly, Ayah 5 uses the simile in all translations-Jazz Islam World and Quran.com with eaten straw and Muslim Pro modernizing it with chewed-up straw-where the stress is on the agents, to support the theme of total destruction. Taken together, the translations are cohesive with linguistic and lexical differences defining historical, theological, or contemporary contextual focus.

Conclusion

This analysis contrasts the English translations of Surah Al-Fil in Jazz Islam World, Quran.com, and Muslim Pro in the stylistic model of Leech and Short, demonstrating that they have the same fundamental meaning, but are distinguished by the use of lexical terms, grammar, rhetorical techniques, and the way they frame the context. Jazz Islam World is straightforward and simple while Quran.com is both poetic and factual, and as far as Muslim Pro is concerned, it is explanatory with theological commentaries. These stylistic decisions influence meaning, clarity and reader experience, as the literal, interpretive and balanced approaches to style impact on readability and the maintenance of Quranic eloquence. The use of digital over printed translations is a new study, and it also highlights the importance of design in the creation of meaning. Its results can be used by translators, app creators, and teachers to emphasize the importance of accessibility versus fidelity and suggest further research on other Surahs, updates to the



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app, multimodes, and cross-linguistic comparisons.

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