The realization of *time* metaphors and the cultural implications:

An analysis of the Quran and English Quranic translations

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Abstract

The aims of this paper were to contrast English usages of ‘time’ metaphors with Quranic Arabic realizations and their representations in three English Quranic translations. Three noted translations of the Quran were used, namely, those done by, Pickthall, Yusuf Ali and Asad (‘Quran Search,’ 2007). Using the cognitive theory of metaphor as a framework (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), these translations were examined and contrasted, in order to distinguish the version that corresponded the most accurately with the conceptual metaphors found in both languages. If the examined conceptual metaphor was not realized in either language, changes to the meaning of the Quran were taken into consideration. Finally, historical, social and religious aspects were examined in order to determine the cause of certain conceptual metaphor realizations in both or one of the languages.

Materials taken from Lakoff & Johnson (1980b), Lakoff (1994), Kövecses (2002), and Kövecses (2006) gave insight into the social-historical reasons behind the metaphor realizations in English while Quranic references and hadiths, or Prophetic narrations, were considered when examining the Quran.

Two conceptual metaphors were tentatively concluded to be universal and two other metaphors were realized differently on the basis of differing cultural values. Culture in this context referred to the ‘mental representations’ of certain phenomena of a culture through the language (Kövecses, 2006, p.135).

The translations done by Yusuf Ali and Pickthall were considered to be more literal and thus more accurate renderings of metaphors in the Quran, within the cognitive theory of metaphor framework, while Asad’s translations were considered to be less accurate, containing, on the whole, more paraphrasing and individual interpretation. It was pointed out, however, that this is a sample study that cannot entirely represent the complete works of the authors mentioned. It was suggested that more studies need to be conducted in order to conclusively establish these findings.

Keywords: cognitive linguistics, metaphor, language, culture, thought, sense development, translation, time, English, Arabic, Quran, Islam
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1. Introduction

Metaphor has long been regarded as a literary device that is exclusive of everyday language-use (Lakoff, 1993, p.202). It is and has been characterized as ‘an expression which describes a person or object in a literary way’ (Walter & Woodford, 2005) and is the ‘result of some operation performed upon the literal meaning of the utterance…’ (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980a, p. 453). This traditional way of defining metaphor had been used for centuries; eventually, people did not think of it as a theory and had accepted it as a fact (Lakoff, 1993, p.202). Although currently deemed ‘false’ and obsolete (p.202), this traditional characterization of metaphor continues to be promoted, as can be seen in the dictionary entry above, for instance.

Traditional views on metaphor were ultimately modified, however, when Lakoff & Johnson (1980b) introduced a different approach to understanding and categorizing metaphor with their theory of conceptual metaphor. In this theory, they argue that metaphors pervade our way of conceiving of the world and are found extensively in many of our languages, thoughts and actions (p.3). A reason for such widespread usage is possibly that, by definition, conceptual metaphor aids the understanding of the non-physical by contrasting and categorizing abstract concepts with physical reality (Kövecses, 2002, p.6); this would be difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish without the use of metaphor (p.7).

Examples of abstract concepts used to relate to physical realities include time, for instance, that has been defined as a ‘continuum that lacks spatial dimensions’ (‘Time,’ 2006). Because of a lack of physical description, human beings have had to relate to time with perceivable physical experiences in order to explain it. In English, time has been compared with motion, an adversary (Kövecses, 2002, p.285) a container (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980b, p.29), as well as money (p.7). To illustrate what is meant by metaphorically relating a concrete object to an abstract entity, the phrase spending time, can be considered. In this example, money (use) is being compared to time. Because a comparison is being made between concepts that obviously do not share physical properties (money-use, for instance, is in no way physically similar to time that does not possess physical properties), these comparisons are entirely ‘metaphorical’.

As implied above, conceptual metaphors pervade our thoughts and are reflected through our languages. Consequently, different languages will have differing cultural and world views and this will be reflected through their metaphors. Examining metaphors, therefore, allows for the examination and comparison of cultural values. The ability to examine
different cultures from this perspective is acknowledged by Lakoff and Johnson (1980b), when they state that cultural presuppositions structure the way we use metaphors and that these presuppositions are by no means universal (p.57).

Thus, the aim of this paper is three-fold: the first is to see whether similar conceptual metaphors exist in both English and Quranic Arabic. The second is to see which translator (see section 2.3) most literally and thus accurately represents the Quran in terms of conceptual metaphor use. The third aim is to find a reason behind the realization or non-realization of the conceptual metaphors in both languages, and hence, cultures. Questions being asked are: a) do English ‘time’ conceptual metaphors exist in Quranic Arabic? b) how are these metaphors reflected in English Quranic translation? c) which of the three examined English Quranic translations (see section 2.3) is the most accurate representation of the original Arabic text in terms of conceptual metaphor? d) how do the inaccurate translations affect the meaning of the text? and finally e) what is the cultural significance of the realization or non-realization of the conceptual metaphors analysed?

2. Literature review

2.1 The cognitive theory of metaphor

In 1980, Lakoff and Johnson presented an alternative viewpoint on the expression of language when they claimed that conceptual metaphors penetrate our understanding of the world around us. According to them, metaphor is present in everyday speech, in every language, and is to a certain extent, culture specific (1980b, p.3). This viewpoint maintains that one conceptual domain, ‘any coherent organization of experience’, is understood through another conceptual domain, and is written in the following way, DOMAINT A IS DOMAINT B (Kövecses, 2002, p.4).

DOMAINT A that refers to any abstract concepts (or source domains), is related in some way to DOMAINT B, concrete objects (or target domains). Our understanding of the workings or features of the concrete domains will help us partially relate to the abstract ones (p.4). It has been pointed out that this process is unidirectional, or non-reversible; this implies that the target domain cannot normally be understood through the source domain (p.6). This is logical, as individuals need to be able to relate the concrete to the abstract in order to comprehend the less physical world. Furthermore, this is a highly automated process that is used unconsciously; as Lakoff and Turner (1989) put it,
Metaphor is a tool so ordinary that we use it unconsciously and automatically… it is irreplaceable: metaphor allows us to understand ourselves and our world in ways that no other modes of thought can. (xi)

Conceptual metaphors, being mental categories, are not necessarily expressed in a language; the use of capital letters, when referring to the domains, signifies this. All metaphorical expressions, however, are written in lower-case letters (Kövecses, 2002, p.4). This signifies that conceptual metaphors in a language are expressed through metaphorical expressions. For instance, one conceptual metaphor that will be analyzed in this paper, TIME IS MOTION, has two realizations: TIME PASSING IS MOTION OF AN OBJECT and TIME PASSING IS AN OBSERVER’S MOTION OVER A LANDSCAPE (p.33-34). The former conceptual metaphor suggests that time is stationary in relation to an object that is moving, while the latter implies that the observers are moving in relation to passing time. These conceptual metaphors structure the following metaphorical expressions respectively: ‘Thanksgiving is coming up on us’, and ‘his stay in Russia extended over many years’ (p.34).

It has been mentioned that one domain is understood in terms of another. Understanding the domains implies understanding the correspondences existing between the two domains. These correspondences are referred to as mappings (p.6). Mappings are the presupposed, underlying knowledge used when speaking about the different domains. Taking the conceptual metaphor TIME IS MOTION mentioned above as an example, the following mappings can be identified,

Times are things
The passing of time is motion
Future times are in front of the observer;
Past times are behind the observer
One thing is moving, the other is stationary;
The stationary thing is in the deictic center (Kövecses, 2002, p.33)

These mappings are the knowledge needed to understand the two domains that are being compared and hence to understand the metaphor. Without this knowledge, it is clear that the comprehension of conceptual metaphors will not occur (Kövecses, 2002, p. 6).
2.1.1 Ontological vs. structural metaphors

Although all conceptual metaphors function according to the cognitive theory of metaphor illustrated above, there are different categories of classification. The metaphorical expressions structured by conceptual metaphors that will be examined in this paper fall into two categories: structural and ontological metaphors. The difference between these two types of metaphor is that structural metaphors include an extremely well-defined target domain that will help structure the abstract source domain (Kövecses, 2002, p.33). Ontological metaphors, on the other hand, do not have such a well-defined target domain (p.34). Ontological metaphors merely categorize the abstract source domain into objects, substances, and containers and our understanding of the three is rather limited and quite general (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980b, p.25). If the mappings of the ontological metaphors were richer than they are, they would be considered structural metaphors (Kövecses, 2002, p.35).

An example of a structural metaphor is the conceptual metaphor TIME IS MOTION mentioned above; it has a complete and thorough mapping that will allow us to speak of time as motion in many ways. Verbs such as: coming, arriving, preceding, looking ahead, flying by, coming up, extending and getting close (Kövecses, 2002, p.33-34), among others, illustrate this. Taking a container ontological metaphor as an example, we can only speak of being in or out of the container (I have him in my sight, I have him out of my sight) or its contents (He’s in the center of it, there’s nothing in sight, I can’t get all of the ships in at once) (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980b, pp.29-30). The mappings of ontological metaphors are not as detailed as they are in structural metaphors. See section 4.1.2 for further elaboration and exemplification.

2.2 Theory of variation and universality in metaphor

As mentioned above, one of the aims of this paper is to contrast the cultural understandings reflected in one language through the conceptual metaphors reflected in another language; therefore, a definition of culture is in order. According to Kövecses (2006), culture in the conceptual metaphor context is a ‘set of shared understandings of the world, where our understandings [reflected in language] are mental representations structured by cultural models or frames’ (p.135). The cultural models and frames referred to are the source and target domains used in a language that are compared with one another (p.135). This definition implies that culture is reflected through the language; because of this, this paper may, at times, refer to language and culture synonymously.
In order to understand why conceptual metaphors correspond or differ cross-culturally, Kövecses (2006) outlines several reasons in his theory of variation and universality.

The universality or near-universality of metaphor implies that the realization of metaphor occurs in all or most of the languages of the world (pp. 155-156). (However, similar metaphor realizations can also occur between languages (p.163); these do not need to be universal realizations.) Reasons for this phenomenon have been attributed to similar conceptual metaphors evolving ‘by accident’ in the respective languages (p.156). It may also have occurred by languages borrowing from one another or the implication of some sort of universal motivation or understanding that is realized in the metaphors of the cultures (pp. 156-157). Motivation will be provided for any conceptual metaphors that have been analysed using any of these interpretations.

Like universality, there are several motives inducing variation in conceptual metaphors between cultures; Kövecses (2006, pp.167-172) cites eight such motives. These include: cultural beliefs, social history, personal history, human concerns, cognitive preferences and styles, experiential focus, as well as metaphor and metonymy. For the sake of efficiency, only the motives that are cited in the analysis will be further elaborated upon.

2.2.1 The Quran as ‘culture’

As mentioned above, this paper will further examine the similarities and differences between cultural realizations of time conceptual metaphors in English and Quranic Arabic. The potential claim that the Quran is a scripture rather than a culture is in some ways inaccurate but requires both a definitional analysis of ‘culture’ in the conceptual metaphor framework as well as an examination of the religious understandings of the Quran.

Firstly, taking the conceptual metaphorical definition of culture into account, namely a ‘set of shared understandings of the world, where our understandings are mental representations structured by cultural models or frames,’ (Kövecses, 2006, p.135), this definition clearly applies to the Quran. The Quran, as such, is a doctrine that is a part of the understanding of the Islamic faith. The issues that are dealt with in the Quran are religious, social, legal, and moral in nature (Abdel Haleem, 1999, p.10-11). In other words, one is given ways of conceptualizing the world through this doctrine which is the main source of the Muslim’s conceptualization of the world. The other source that supplements Islamic knowledge is hadith, or prophetic narrations (p.8); these hadith discuss the same issues mentioned above,
but perhaps in more practical detail (p.8). Taken together, hadith and the Quran form the ‘culture’ of Islamic thought.

It should be noted that the belief that Muslims hold of the Quran being the absolute truth or the ‘word of God’ (p.8) and the non-Muslim view that it may not be, will not be discussed. This analysis will remain objective by referring to Islam as the ‘culture’, and the Quran as a representative of the language of the culture. Explanations of certain conceptual metaphor realizations in the Quran will be accounted for in the Islamic doctrine through the Quran or hadith.

It should also be noted that the Standard Arabic used today does not necessarily reflect the Quranic Arabic (‘Arabic language,’ 2007) used less than 1400 years ago (Abdel Haleen, 1999, p.1). Therefore, Quranic Arabic has been assigned its own status and name.

2.3 The Quran and Quranic translation
Translating Quranic Arabic into English poses many interpretational problems. Many English Quranic translations have been widely criticised for their inability to capture the meaning of the words and metaphors found in the book (eg. Ali, 1992; Al-Khawalda, 2004; Ardekani, 2002; Shakir, 2000).

As mentioned above, the Quran is considered, by Muslims, to be the ‘word of God’ revealed through Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Mohamed in 610 AD (Abdel Haleem, 1999, p.1-3); no translation of the Quranic texts can be said to hold this status (p.8). Abdel Haleem (1999) maintains that the translations are ‘renderings’ of the original script (p.8). This can in part be explained by the paraphrasing (Shokr, 2006, p.100) and misinterpretation (Ali, 1992) widely found in the English versions of the Quranic Arabic language. Shokr (2006) points out that paraphrasing is used in Quranic translation in order to make the Arabic metaphorical language comprehensible to the English speaker (p.4) - this includes Arabic conceptual metaphors (see analysis below). If the same metaphors are not realized in English and Quranic Arabic, the English translations will directly affect the potential meanings of the Quranic text. A lexical item can have more than one implication that may not be represented by merely one translational interpretation. Jäkel (2002) points out in his creativity hypothesis,

The potential meaningfulness of metaphor does not yield to simple paraphrase, its meaning cannot be reduced to a nonmetaphorical, propositional format without loss… (p. 22)
In this paper, translational accuracy is determined in relation to the realization of the conceptual metaphors in the languages. If both languages, for instance, realize a conceptual metaphor, then the English translations should reflect this, if it is to be considered an accurate rendering. If, however, certain conceptual metaphors are not realized in both languages, changes to the meaning of the verse through the alternative language-use will be taken into consideration.

The translations of the Quran that are analyzed here are by Yusuf Ali, Pickthall and Asad (‘Quran Search,’ 2006). These three translations are among the most highly noted in their field. Yusuf Ali’s version has been rendered ‘perhaps the most popular translation [that] stands as another major achievement in this [Quranic translation] field.’ (Kidwai, 1987, p.67). Pickthall’s version has been dubbed as ‘keep[ing] scrupulously close to the original in elegant, though now somewhat archaic, English, however, ‘…it is one of the most widely used English translations…’ (p. 67). Asad’s edition represents ‘a notable addition to the body of English translations couched in chaste English…’ (p.67). I believe that using these prominent translations and comparing them with Quranic reference materials (see Section 3) will allow me to both analyze and find the most accurate rendering of the three translations within the framework of the cognitive theory of metaphor.

3. Methods and materials

The conventionalized conceptual metaphors and metaphorical expressions that involve the use of the target domain time were found in Lakoff & Johnson (1980b), Lakoff (1994) and Kövecses (2002). In this paper, the English metaphorical expressions will be exemplified through verb-usage; these verbs have been adapted from metaphorical expressions found in the consulted sources mentioned above.

Data for the entries in the Quran were found online, in two corpora dealing with Quranic word frequency (‘Quran search,’ 2006; ‘Quran,’ 2006). The Yusuf Ali, Pickthall, and Asad translations of the Quran were found on ‘Quran Search’ (2006) In order to find out what the original Arabic verses literally state and get an accurate representation of the initial meaning of the text, a word-for-word analysis of the Quran was conducted. Encyclopaedias with a word-for-word translation of the Quran were consulted (Mujahid, 2000), as well as an Arabic-English dictionary (Baalbaki, 2002), in order to further confirm the findings in the encyclopaedia. Furthermore, to ensure the accuracy of the word analysis, native Arabic speakers were consulted.
Information about the origins of English conceptual metaphors was found in Lakoff & Johnson (1980b), Lakoff (1994), Kövecses (2002), and Kövecses (2006). Information about the origins of the Quranic realizations of conceptual metaphor were found in the Quran (‘Quran search’, 2006), as well as in hadith (Ibrahim & Johnson-Davies, 1980).

4. Presentation and analysis

As previously mentioned, the conceptual metaphors that include the target time have been divided into two categories: structural and ontological metaphors. These two types of metaphor encompass four conceptual metaphor categories as well as their subcategories. The categories and subcategories are illustrated in Figure 1:

Figure 1

The words that have been treated as temporal concepts in the metaphorical expressions include: time (or period of time), minute, hour, day, week, month, year(s), century, the days of the week, the days of the month, any numerical references to dates, hours, months and years.
The analysis of the Quran includes the transliteration of the original Arabic text, my word-for-word analysis of the chosen texts using the materials mentioned above, as well as Yusuf Ali, Pickthall and Asad’s English Quranic translations. The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is the system that has been utilized to transcribe the Quranic Arabic (see Appendix A).

It should be noted that the referencing of the Quran is done by listing the chapter (ch) and verses (v) in the following way: (ch:v); this reference follows each transcribed verse. In most cases, the order in which each English translation is listed is as follows, unless specifically mentioned: Yusuf Ali’s (a), Pickthall’s (b) and Asad’s (c) (‘Quran Search’, 2006). Furthermore, attention is not paid to the frequency of occurrence of the examples cited in the Quran. Only the existence of the metaphorical expressions in the text will be significant in this analysis.

4.1 Ontological metaphors
Ontological metaphors are one of the least noticeable types of conceptual metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson 1980b, p.28). As previously mentioned, they enable us to structure a concept that does not seem to have one by providing a ‘nonthing’, often the source domain, with the status of ‘a thing.’ This ‘thing,’ that can be described, is the target domain (Kövecses, 2002, p.34-35). We enable ourselves to understand our own experiences in relation to concrete objects, by picking out certain parts of our own experiences from the whole in order to categorize, group and quantify them. In other words, we ‘impose artificial boundaries’ (p.25) on abstract entities.

4.1.1 TIME IS A CONTAINER
One concrete reality found among the ontological metaphors that relates to time, is a container, TIME IS A CONTAINER. The metaphorical expressions structured by this conceptual metaphor in English indicate that experiences with a time factor occur in a container. These experiences are made up of two categories. The first is the in-out orientation (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980b, p.29), namely being in or out of the container, (or time), and movement between containers, namely moving out of one container and into another. Another realization is time’s ability to fill the container, when one speaks of filling time, for instance (Kövecses, 2006, p.166).

In both the Quranic Arabic and Quranic translations, the concept of time being in the container is realized unanimously,
(1) *isnَّارَباكم مَلِكُ يَدَيْكَ خَالِقاً أَسَابِيْسُ وَأَرَافَتَ يَدَيْكَ أَفَذَانَ (7:54)*

Verily God yours Allah, Who created the skies and the earth in six days…

(a) Your Guardian-Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days…

(b) Lo! your Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days…

(c) VERILY, your Sustainer is God, who has created the heavens and the earth in six aeons…

Another metaphorical expression relating to the TIME IS A CONTAINER metaphor that both the Quran and two of the three English translations realize, is an amount of time that has been put into a container,

(2) *دَلَّا اِلَّا الْهَيْبَةَ الْمَلِيْقَةَ الْمَلِكِيَّةَ، وَهَلْ يَكُونُ الْحَقّ الْمُلَامَحَةَ الْمَلِكِيَّةَ (22:61)*

This that Allah brings together the night into the day and brings together the day into the night…

(a) That is because Allah merges night into day, and He merges day into night, and verily it is Allah Who hears and sees (all things).

(b) That is because Allah maketh the night to pass into the day and maketh the day to pass into the night…

(c) Thus it is, because God [is allmighty the One who] makes the night grow longer by shortening the day, and makes the day grow longer by shortening the night…

Asad’s translation (c) of the night ‘growing longer’ does not represent the original Quranic text metaphorically or semantically. The interpretation that Asad makes of the literal translation, namely that night is brought together ‘into the day’ and vice verse, is metaphorical in nature, however, he uses the conceptual metaphor GOD IS A REAPER to describe the ‘growth’ and the ‘shortening’ of time performed by God. The reaper, in this context, refers to the gatherer of the harvest and the object that is being ‘reaped’ is time. Asad interprets the day and night references to mean the seasons of the year, when days are shortened and nights are elongated and vice versa. This interpretation is unrelated to the container metaphor of the
original Quranic text and thus, semantically, the text has been changed through the use of a different conceptual metaphor. The other two translations, on the other hand, being near literal interpretations of the original text, preserve the original literal meaning.

Although not representing all of the realizations of the *TIME IS A CONTAINER* metaphor (there is for instance no verse that speaks of time being *out of* the container, or the container *overflowing* with time), these two metaphorical expressions signify that this metaphor does, in fact, exist in Quranic Arabic.

A reason that this conceptual metaphor is realized in both English and Quranic Arabic, may be that it is universal - the thought that all or most of the world’s languages share the same understanding of an abstract entity, in this case, time (Kövecses, 2006, p.156). One way of determining whether this is factual or not, *time* realizations in different, unrelated languages must be compared with one another. However, as this is a relatively limited study, samples of different languages with different family origins will be considered.

This technique of identifying the universality of conceptual metaphor through several unrelated languages has been adopted by Kövecses (2006, p.156). In several studies, the existence of the conceptual metaphor *HAPPINESS IS UP* has been examined in different languages, including Chinese, English and Hungarian (p.156). The results indicate that this metaphor, although realized slightly differently in each language, did share the same, central idea – that being happy is being ‘up’ (p. 156). Based on these findings, Kövecses concludes that we may be ‘fairly certain’ that this conceptual metaphor is ‘universal’ (p. 156).

Adopting this approach, the findings of the realizations of the *TIME IS A CONTAINER* metaphor in other unrelated languages are very similar. The languages that I have compared are the Finno-Ugric language of Finnish, Quranic Arabic, and English. The findings show that the container metaphor exists to a greater or lesser extent in all of these unrelated languages from different family trees. Quranic Arabic and English expressions have already been outlined above. However, in Finnish, similar expressions, as the ones mentioned above, do exist. One can speak of time passing in *six days* - *kuudessa päivässä* – and merging night into the *day* – *yö vaihtuu päiväksi* (K. Virtanen, personal communication, Nov. 16, 2006). Therefore, through the realization of the container metaphor in these three languages that assumedly do not have common origins, we can, for the time being, tentatively assume that this conceptual metaphor may be universal and that it possibly evolved out of a common human understanding of *time*. This, if nothing else, is demonstrated in the specific languages mentioned above; however, a
comprehensive study has not been done, and more research is needed to confirm the above-mentioned hypothesis.

4.1.2 TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY

Another conceptual metaphor that structures the view of time in English is the TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY conceptual metaphor. Time, it has been claimed, is a commodity in the modern Western industrialized culture (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.7). This is reflected in English through three conceptual metaphors, namely, TIME IS A LIMITED RESOURCE, TIME IS MONEY and TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY. In this paper, time is divided into these categories because the verbs used in the metaphorical expressions of the three differ from one another. The verbs waste (Lakoff, 1994), use, use up, have enough of, and run out of (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.9) are used in TIME IS A LIMITED RESOURCE, while the verbs spend, invest, budget, profitable, cost (p.9), and buy (Lakoff, 1994) are used in TIME IS MONEY. Finally, have, give, lose, and thank you for are used in the metaphorical expressions of TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.9). TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY is the conceptual metaphor used to label this section as the implications of the metaphor are the most general and encompasses the semantic notions used in both the limited resource and money metaphors.

In the original Arabic text, the Quran does not realize the conceptual metaphors, TIME IS MONEY, TIME IS A NATURAL RESOURCE or TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY; none of the verbs mentioned above are used in connection with the depiction of time (‘Quran search’, 2006). Even though these conceptual metaphors are not represented in the Quran, they do exist in a few instances in the English Quranic translations. Overall, however, each author has made very few translations based on valuable commodity metaphors (see Appendix B). Nonetheless, the verb spend has been used relatively often and unanimously, in all three translations. This verb, included in the TIME IS MONEY metaphor will, therefore, be analysed as a representative of the valuable commodity metaphors found in the Quranic translations. Each translation will be analysed in comparison to the others in order to determine which translation is the most accurate rendering, in terms of conceptual metaphor.

An example of both Yusuf Ali’s (a) and Pickthall’s (b) use of the verb spend when referring to the passing of time is made in 25:64,
(3) \(\text{va \ ʿAladīna jabiṭuna liśabbāḥišṭīm... (25:64)}\)

And those do house them to Lord their prostrating and standing

(a) Those who spend the night in adoration of their Lord…

(b) And who spend the night before their Lord…

(c) and who remember their Sustainer far into the night…

The meaning of the Arabic word, \(yabeetoona\) involves two dimensions. The first is the spatial dimension; the semantic notion of this word implies that one resides in a home and does so when it is night (Baalbaki, 2002). The second, as implied by the night reference, is the time dimension. All three of the translations only capture the time dimension. And although all are inaccurate in terms of the connotations of the word \(yabeetoona\), it should be recognized that there is no English equivalent that takes the two dimensions into account. However, there are translations of time that are more accurate than others.

Use of the word spend in the first two translations, agrees with the original verse in terms of meaning but not through conceptual metaphor, as the metaphorical expressions of \(\text{TIME IS MONEY}\) are not realized in the Quran (‘Quran search,’ 2006). Asad’s version (c), on the other hand, adds information to the verse with the expression ‘far into the night.’ This phrase suggests that a certain amount of time has passed. This information is not present in the verse above. Asad uses the conceptual metaphor \(\text{TIME IS A CONTAINER}\) to express the idea, of being far into the night, a metaphor clearly not found in the original text.

Because Yusuf Ali and Pickthall’s use of the verb spend does not accurately reflect the original Arabic text and because Asad’s use of the \(\text{TIME IS A CONTAINER}\) metaphor inaccurately reflects both the literal language and changes the meaning of the Arabic original, no translation can be considered accurate in terms of conceptual metaphor.

One final translation where both Asad (a) and Yusuf Ali (c) make use of the verb spend when referring to time, occurs in the following verse,

(4) \(lʔ\ ʿabrahu… av amdšíjʔ\ ʔhuqubʔ(18:60)\)

no leave…or accomplish years [in travel]

(a) "I shall not give up…even if I [have to] spend untold years [in my quest]!" (Asad)
(b) I will not give up... though I march on for ages. (Pickthall)

(c) "I will not give up...(until) I spend years and years in travel." (Yusuf Ali)

The verb *amdiya* that is used in this verse means to ‘accomplish’ something (Baalbaki, 2002). In this case, it literally means to ‘accomplish years’ in travel. This is a difficult expression to translate into English because the conceptual metaphor PASSING OF TIME IS ACCOMPLISHING THE TIME does not have an English equivalent. Using any other conceptual metaphor when speaking of the passing of time will be an inaccurate representation of the original text in terms of conceptual metaphor. However, Asad and Yusuf Ali’s renditions are true to the meaning of the Quranic original. Pickthall inserts the expression ‘for ages’ thus avoiding reference to a conceptual metaphor. There is however, no English equivalent of ‘accomplish years’, so none of these realizations can accurately reflect the original Arabic text in terms of conceptual metaphor, but all are accurate renderings when considering the meaning of the original text.

4.1.2.1 TIME IS A VALUABLE ENTITY

Although it has been claimed that the Quran does not refer to time as a valuable commodity in any way, there is reference in the Quran made to a *loss* of time, as well as a *limit* of time. At first glance, these verbs seem to be realizations of the TIME IS A NATURAL RESOURCE metaphor, but they are in fact realizations of another conceptual metaphor, TIME IS A VALUABLE ENTITY,

(5) 1. va ḥasār
    2. ʾinna al-/ns ṭa lafeex wsr
    3. idī? al-a ofna ʾmanu va ṣimiḏu al-ṣa ḥat vaṭawāsāv biḥaqq vaṭawāsāv biḏsābr (103:1-3)

By Time
Verily the Man in loss
Except those believe and do the good things and hold onto by the truth and hold onto the patience

(6) likuli nabain mustaqarun vasavfa ṭa ṣamvna (6:67)

To each message fixed [time] and soon will know ye.
Although English acknowledges that time is comparable to valuable commodities, this is not the case in Quranic Arabic. Lakoff & Johnson offer a possible social-historical explanation for this phenomenon when they point out that these metaphors were first used in modern industrialised Western societies (1980, p.8). When labour began being paid by the hour, the week, or the year, and people had to pay ‘hotel room rates, yearly budgets, interests on loans…’ time began being understood as a commodity (p.8).

This industrialization hypothesis that Lakoff & Johnson (1980) put forth is supported by the analysis of the Quran as well as the English Quranic translations. It should be pointed out that industrialization first took place in the late 18th and early 19th centuries (‘Industrial revolution,’ 2007), while the Quran was first available to humankind in the 7th century (‘Quran,’ 2007). This argument offers support to the hypothesis, as the Quran does not realize any commodity-time metaphors and the text existed well before industrialization started. Furthermore, the translations of the Quran were all written after nations had become industrialized. Pickthall for instance, finished his version of the Quran in 1930 (Pickthall, 1922, p.xi), while Yusuf Ali completed his version in 1934 (Yusuf Ali, 1992, p.xiv) and Asad published his version in 1980 (Asad, 1980). This would explain why all of these authors used the money conceptual metaphors to describe the passing of time in their translations, possibly without even realizing it.

In the Quran, there is no instance of time being compared to commodities. However, time is realized as a valuable entity in Islam, TIME IS A VALUABLE ENTITY, as can be seen in the supposed TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY verses above. While English expresses the value of time through financial benefits, the Quran expresses the value of time through good deeds that will eventually lead to the entrance of Heaven.

According to Islam, a Muslim must perform good deeds in order to earn their way into an eternal hereafter in Heaven, meaning that using one’s time effectively to perform these actions is essential. In order to explain why time is considered so valuable, Islamic values must be considered. Beginning with the purpose of creation, the Quran states that life is a test, LIFE IS A TEST, to see if human beings can serve God well. This message is found throughout the Quran. One example in an accurate literal translation of a Quranic verse by Asad that states,

He who has created death as well as life, so that He might put you to a test [and thus show] which of you is best in conduct, and [make you realize that] He alone is almighty, truly forgiving. (67:2)
From this verse, we can see that life is equated with a test. Furthermore, passing this test requires belief in God, PASSING THE TEST IS BELIEF IN GOD and the performance of good deeds, PASSING THE TEST IS THE PERFORMANCE OF GOOD DEEDS. If this test is passed, one may enter into Heaven, PASSING THE TEST IS ENTERING HEAVEN. The following verse, literally translated by Asad, exemplifies the above-mentioned conceptual metaphor,

BEHOLD, God has bought of the believers their lives and their possessions, promising them paradise return… (9:111)

The goal of this life then, is to perform good deeds. Performing good deeds requires time, TIME IS THE OPPORTUNITY TO PERFORM GOOD DEEDS, as is demonstrated by the ‘time’ chapter, in the Quranic verses, mentioned above.

In sum, considering all of the conceptual metaphors mentioned above, the basis behind time being considered valuable in Islam is not for the purposes of financial transaction, as it is expressed in the English language, but for the purposes of performing good deeds to serve God that will provide entrance into Heaven.

4.1.3 TIME IS AN ADVERSARY

An extension of ontological metaphors exists in the form of personification. Personification is expressed in conceptual metaphors through a source domain that has been ascribed human characteristics (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.34). Lakoff & Johnson refer to it as the most ‘obvious’ type of ontological metaphor (p.33), as the target domain that has turned from being a ‘nonthing’ into a ‘thing’ (Kövecses, 2002, p.35) is now being understood through the functions of our own physical experiences.

In the conceptual metaphor TIME IS AN ADVERSARY, we have moved from understanding TIME IS A PERSON to understanding time in a very specific way; we now acknowledge how to think about and act towards it (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.34). This conceptual metaphor has different subcategories; an adversary is equated with a thief, a reaper, a devourer, a destroyer, an evaluator (Kövecses, 2002, p.49-50) as well as a pursuer (Lakoff, 1994). Reaper in this context refers to ‘death’ that has been personified as an old man. Metaphorical expressions structuring these conceptual metaphors include steal, any reference insinuated by the verb reap, devour, destroy, correct and catch (up), respectively (Kövecses, 2002, p. 49-50).
In the Quranic texts, unlike in English, time has not been described as a negative force. However, individuals in the book have been said to speak negatively of time. This occurs twice in the scripture and is unanimously represented metaphorically in all three English translations.

The first verse speaks of a man who thinks that nothing can destroy him but time,

(7) vaq ʔu m ? hīgja i ʔdl j hajʔun j alddunj j nāmutu va nāhj j va m j huliskuna i ʔdl a alddahru... (45:24)

And say they nothing there but life our the world we die and we live and nothing destroys us except the time.

(a) And they say: "What is there but our life in this world? We shall die and we live, and nothing but time can destroy us.

(b) And they say: There is naught but our life of the world; we die and we live, and naught destroyeth us save time...

(c) And yet they say: “There is nothing beyond our life in this world. We die as we come to life, and nothing but time destroys us.” But of this they have no knowledge whatever: they do nothing but guess.

In this example, time is being equated with a destroyer. Nearly the same phrase is used throughout the three translations, when destruction through time is being referred to. The above translations are all faithful renderings of the original metaphorical expression which has been literally translated, through the ‘literal word’ analysis, into ‘nothing destroys us except the time.’

In the second example, a group of people are discussing a poet who they believe will be destroyed and that it is only a matter of time until this occurs,

(8) am jaquluna jʔi ʔrun natarabbas j ʔu bish ʔa rajba almanunis (52:30)

Or say they poet we wait for him accidents [in time] the horrible

(a) Or do they say:- "A Poet! We await for him some calamity (hatched) by Time!"

(b) Or say they: (he is) a poet, (one) for whom we may expect the accident of time?

(c) Or do they say, “[He is but] a poet - let us wait what time will do unto him?”

20
In the example, the literal translation of *rayba almanooni* has been defined as ‘misfortune’ that implies an element of time (Baalbaki, 2002). The idea that time brings misfortune into occurrence is not realized in all three of the English translations, save Yusuf-Ali’s (a) translation. Asad (c) does not make it clear if the effects that time will have on the so-called ‘poet’ will be positive or negative, and Pickthall does not make it clear that ‘the accident’ will in fact be caused by time. Only Yusuf Ali’s translation makes it clear that something terrible will happen to the ‘poet’ and that this will be caused by time.

As shown above, the one realization of *TIME IS AN ADVERSARY* documented in the Quran is *TIME IS A DESTROYER*. Furthermore, none of these realizations exist in the scriptures if one excludes the quotations of other people and these quotations do not represent the Islamic view of time as is shown below.

The reasons why the English language and Quranic Arabic realize personified time negatively can be explained through other conceptual metaphors. Lakoff & Turner (1989) come to the conclusion that the conceptual metaphor, *TIME IS AN ADVERSARY* is directly affected by another metaphor, *EVENTS ARE ACTIONS* (pp.34-36). In this conceptual metaphor, all events are considered actions; every action must also have an instigator and Kövecses (2002) refers to this being as an ‘active, wilful agent’ (p.50). This ‘wilful agent,’ it has been noted, acts outside the realm of human experience. It is, in other words, ‘an external force’ (p.50) – that is time – and is the ‘concept’ that is often blamed for tragedy.

The question as to why time has been specifically ascribed the quality of an adversary in English, may have arisen out of the belief in the metaphorical expression, *LIFE IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION* (Kövecses, 2002, p.50). The mapping of this conceptual metaphor equates life with a precious possession and the removal of life with the loss of a precious possession (Kövecses, 2002, p.50). The conceptual metaphor, *PEOPLE ARE PLANTS* can also explain why a reaper is used when speaking negatively about time; reapers tend to destroy plants and this is metaphorically comparable to the killing of people.

In Islam, it may be argued that since using one’s time to perform good deeds is essential to entering Heaven (see Section 4.1.2.1), time may be blamed, by people, for its scarcity. However, time is never realized as a negative entity in the Quran. The reason for this is that the Prophet had narrated one *hadith* that explains what God’s view of time is. Since the revelation of this *hadith*, Muslims have had a way of conceptualizing time,
Sons of Adam inveigh against Time, and I am Time… (This *hadith* was related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim) (Ibrahim & Johnson-Davies, 1980, p. 48).

The footnotes of this *hadith* explain that God is ‘the ordainer of all things [and] to inveigh against misfortunes that are part of Time is tantamount to inveighing against Him.’ (p.48). It should be pointed out that the expression ‘sons of Adam’ refers to all people; Islam believes in creationism and that the first human being that was created was Adam (Abdel-Haleem, 1999, pp.125-126). All human beings born after Adam are considered his ‘sons,’ which entails the allusion to both men and women (p.126). Therefore, time has been personified as God, GOD IS TIME. To equate time with anything negative would be to equate God with something negative. Of course, this is not done by Muslims, and therefore, believers in Islam are told to beware of their time but not to speak badly about it.

4.2 Structural metaphors

As stated above, the target domains in structural metaphors, unlike ontological metaphors, are understood through the complex makeup and detailed knowledge we have of the source domains (Kövecses, 2002, p.33).

The two versions of the TIME IS MOTION conceptual metaphor that will be examined here include TIME IS A LANDSCAPE WE MOVE THROUGH and TIME IS SOMETHING MOVING TOWARDS YOU. As previously mentioned, in the former metaphor, *time* is considered to be a fixed location that the observers themselves are moving along with, while in the latter metaphor, it is the observer that is fixed and *time* that is moving along with the observer. (p. 33).

4.2.1 TIME IS A LANDSCAPE WE MOVE THROUGH

Both of the structural metaphors mentioned above are realized in the Quran as near equivalents of the English expressions. In English, for example, one can speak of *short* or *long periods of time* that we go through (Lakoff, 1994). Likewise in the Quran, one can read of periods of passing time,

\[9\] bal mattaʔn? hʔalʔis va ʔbʔahum hattʔ tʔa Salajhiʔmu alʔumuru …(21:44)

Nay luxuries gave we those and their fathers until grow long upon them the life [age or life]…
(a) Nay, We gave the good things of this life to these men and their fathers until the period grew long for them…

(b) Nay, but We gave these and their fathers ease until life grew long for them….

(c) Nay, We have allowed these [sinners] – as [We allowed] their forebears – to enjoy the good things of life for a great length of time…

In this verse, the concept of time becoming long entails the idea that a person advances in years and becomes older. It is a metaphorical way of expressing it, using the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A PLANT that is grown or shortened, as well as the metaphor TIME IS A LANDSCAPE WE MOVE THROUGH. The persons mentioned in the verse above have their lives ‘grown long’ so that they may progress through it. These conceptual metaphors are literally represented by Yusuf Ali (a) and Pickthall’s (b) translations, when they use the expression ‘grow/grew long for them…’ Asad’s (c) translation, however, does not represent this language and paraphrases the verse into English by using the expression ‘a great length of time’ instead of the ‘growth of time’. Although this phrase takes into account the TIME IS A LANDSCAPE WE MOVE THROUGH metaphor, it does not take into account the LIFE IS A PLANT metaphor. Therefore, both Yusuf Ali and Pickthall’s translations are the most accurate within the cognitive metaphor framework.

4.2.2 TIME IS SOMETHING MOVING TOWARDS YOU

Like the metaphorical expressions of the landscape metaphor, the conceptual metaphor TIME IS SOMETHING MOVING TOWARDS YOU is also found throughout the Quran with similar English metaphorical expressions.

In English one can speak of ‘upcoming events’, while in the Quran, this upcoming event is realized as a delay,

(10) ... fats ḥāl al-fadlārima’l-ḥamd... (57:16)

Delay to on them the time

(a) … but long ages passed over them…

(b) … but the term was prolonged for them …

(c) … and whose hearts have hardened with the passing of time …
In all of these examples, time has been correctly translated as the entity that moves. However, the way the entity moves is what differs among the above translations. Yusuf Ali (a) interprets this verse as meaning that time had already ‘passed’ while the literal meaning of the root *talaa* is simply to ‘delay’ (Baalbaki, 2002) the passing. Pickthall’s (b) version is accurate in terms of meaning, but is realized from a different perspective. Delaying time implies prolonging time, and this is how Pickthall translated this verse. Asad (c) does not acknowledge that time has been delayed or prolonged and simply states that time passed. Therefore, although slightly inaccurate in terms of perspective, Pickthall’s translation can still be seen as the most accurate of the three.

Reasons why this conceptual metaphor exists in both languages can perhaps be explained by Lakoff (1993) who asserts,

> The fact that time is understood metaphorically in terms of motion…and locations accords with our biological knowledge. In our visual systems, we have detectors for motion and detectors for…locations. We do not have detectors for time (whatever that could mean). Thus, it makes good biological sense that time should be understood in terms of…motion. (p.45)

Perhaps then, this is a universal way of categorizing the concept of time. Again, adopting Kövecses’ view that universality can be confirmed by analysing metaphorical expressions in different, unrelated languages, the TIME IS MOTION conceptual metaphor has metaphorical realizations existing in the Quranic Arabic and English examples as outlined above, as well as in Finnish and Mandarin. For instance one can state a long time passed in both Finnish - long period of time has passed (*on kulunut pitkä aika*) (K. Virtanen, personal communication, Nov. 16, 200) - and Mandarin – ‘March comes before April’ (Kövecses, 2006, p.186). However, not all languages realize TIME IS MOTION in the same way. Kövecses (2006) cites a report, for instance, that claims that TIME IS MOTION, in Mandarin, is realized vertically (p.186), while Arabic, English, and Finnish realize it horizontally. Perhaps the generic, or general, level of this metaphor (p.157) can be tentatively cited as universal and the specific realizations of it are left up to the individual language. However, more research is needed to confirm this hypothesis.
5. Limitations of the Study

It is necessary to note that there may be other time metaphors that have not been identified or examined in addition to the ones that have been analysed. The consulted sources (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1994; Kövecses, 2000; Kövecses, 2005) often discuss similar conceptual metaphors. However, the sources may not have contained all of the mappings relating to time in English; this is reflected in the discrepancy between the authors themselves. Lakoff & Johnson (1980), for instance, mention a few conceptual metaphors – TIME IS A CONTAINER and TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY - that Kövecses (2002) does not mention in his rather extensive categorization. He does, however, acknowledge these metaphors in Kövecses 2006 (p.166, 188). Furthermore, not all of the conceptual metaphors mentioned in the consulted sources were used in the analysis. The metaphors that were chosen for analysis, however, were the ones that were most commonly discussed across the literature.

Another aspect concerning metaphor that has not been taken into account in the paper is metaphorical interpretation. The Arabic verses analysed above were only interpreted on a literal level. For example, one verse mentioned above was ‘delay to on them the time’ (57:16). In this case, delay was interpreted literally as time is postponed and this will eventually cease. However, it could be reinterpreted metaphorically into time will always be postponed. These varieties of interpretations were not taken into account in the literal translations.

Finally, the realizations of the target time in conceptual metaphors were only analysed from the existing English metaphors. This paper did not take into account other Arabic time realizations in the original Quranic text. Because the objective of the paper was to explore conceptual metaphors in the English translations of the Quran, the Arabic text was not independently explored. However, this would be an interesting research area for a future investigation.

6. Conclusion

The metaphorical expressions of the conceptual metaphors with the source domain time are realized similarly in English and Quranic Arabic even though the latter was first made available to humankind less than 1400 years ago. The only exception to this is the conceptual metaphor TIME IS MONEY which is only realized in modern industrialized Western societies. The TIME IS AN ADVERSARY metaphor is also realized in the language, through quotations in the Quran, although this metaphor does not support the view of time in the Islamic culture.
The cultural significance of the metaphors that have been examined are that two
metaphors, TIME IS A CONTAINER and TIME IS MOTION, have been tentatively branded universal
on the basis that they exist in three different languages with different origins. It is
acknowledged, however, that the validation of this hypothesis needs more research. The other
two conceptual metaphors, TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY and TIME IS AN ADVERSARY
were reflected differently in the cultures. The TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY metaphor did
not exist in the original Quranic text. Reasons that were mentioned included value-differences.
English regards time as a financial commodity while Islam values time as the aid that will
allow entrance into Heaven in the hereafter. TIME IS AN ADVERSARY was proven to have
realizations in both languages, on the other hand, but, again, reasons for this differed. Islam
equates time with God in the conceptual metaphor TIME IS GOD. Therefore, time in Islam, is
considered, like God, as something ‘holy,’ while English looks to the conceptual metaphor LIFE
IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION and regards losing this possession as something negative caused by
time.

In regards to which translation can be considered the most accurate in terms of
conceptual metaphor, this question is difficult to answer as this analysis was only done on a
literal level and has not taken into account all of the different types of metaphorical
implications the text can hold. Secondly, this is only a sample of the conceptual metaphors
used both in the Quran and the English Quranic translations, so no comprehensive claim can be
made. However, the, characteristics of the author’s translations can be mentioned. Asad makes
use of paraphrasing and self-interpretation of the text, while Pickthall makes a literal
interpretation of the text with slight deviation at times, and Yusuf Ali remains very true to the
Quranic original and inserts only words where there is no English equivalent.

However, further analysis would be needed to see if these characteristics of the
authors hold or if they have simply come across by chance. Furthermore, analyses of different
conceptual metaphors from the Quranic perspective may prove to make substantial gains in the
view of how different cultures function and think. If more of these studies will be made,
however, remains to be seen.
References


Appendix A: International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

The Arabic alphabet and transcription

| /ʔ/  | ء  |
| /b/  | ب  |
| /t/  | ت  |
| /ð/  | ث  |
| /g/  | ج  |
| /h/  | ح  |
| /x/  | خ  |
| /d/  | د  |
| /ð/  | ذ  |
| /r/  | ر  |
| /z/  | ز  |
| /s/  | س  |
| /ʃ/  | ص  |
| /ʒ/  | ض  |
| /tʃ/ | ط  |
| /ðʒ/ | ض  |
| /tʃ/ | تط  |
| /ʃ/  | ش  |
| /ʃ/  | ض  |
| /ʕ/  | ف  |
| /q/  | ق  |
| /k/  | ك  |
| /l/  | ل  |
| /m/  | م  |
| /n/  | ن  |
| /h/  | ه  |
| /v/  | و  |
| /y/  | ى  |

Note: the Quranic Arabic has been transcribed based on the IPA adapted taken from (Alghamdi, 2003). Allophones have not been taken into account.

Diacratic symbols

<table>
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<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>SYMBOL</th>
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<tr>
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<td>/ʕ/</td>
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<td>Dam’ma</td>
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Note: the harakat, or diacritical symbols, are used in Arabic transcription (p.5). These phonemes are not represented in the Arabic alphabet (p.5).
Appendix B: TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY:
Metaphorical expressions in the Quranic translations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERBS</th>
<th>Yusuf Ali</th>
<th>Pickthall</th>
<th>Asad</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>25:64, 4:81</td>
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