# Taḍmīn (Implication of Meaning) in the Qur'an with Reference to Ten English Qur'an Translations

Abdullah Soliman Nouraldeen

*PhD Researcher, University of Leeds, United Kingdom; English Language Lecturer, Islamic University of Madinah, Saudi Arabia*

**Corresponding Author:** Abdullah Soliman Nouraldeen, E-mail: mlasn@leeds.ac.uk; asalqurashi@iu.edu.sa

| ARTICLE INFORMATION | ABSTRACT |
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Taḍmīn is the use of a verb followed by a preposition with which does not standardly collocate to indicate rhetorically another verb, thus bringing about a deep, double meaning with few words. The Qur'an contains numerous examples of taḍmīn. Answering three research questions, this descriptive-prescriptive study aims at analysing and discussing ten English Qur'an translations of taḍmīn in two āyāt (verses) out of approximately 270 which involve taḍmīn, using a resource to identify taḍmīn and applying the four elements of it. The study concludes that not all four elements of taḍmīn are taken into consideration by the ten translators. They did, however, translate two different elements of taḍmīn, i.e. the majority of them rendered an explicit verb followed by an implicit preposition; some others translated an implicit verb followed by an explicit preposition and one translator in one āyah (verse) out of the two rendered the explicit verb and the explicit preposition. I suggested an improvement to the translations by including the four elements of taḍmīn in order to understand the āyāt (verses) deeply. I also suggest a further investigation that would assess more translations of taḍmīn and carry out interviews with Qur'an translators to reveal the reason(s) why the four elements of taḍmīn are not translated. This investigation might be conducted by me in the future.

## 1. Introduction

In Arabic, it sometimes happens that a verb is followed by a preposition with which does not standardly collocate[2]. The Arab grammarians articulate two different views with regards to understanding this phenomenon. *Kūfan* scholars believe that the preposition is meant to be used in place of another preposition, i.e. it is used metaphorically to indicate another preposition. This phenomenon is called *taqāruḍ* (التقارض) 'mutual borrowing', which means that the preposition 'borrows' its function from another preposition and vice versa. It is regarded as a type of metaphor (استعارة).

For instance, Allah says in the Qur'an: 'ولأصلبنكم في جذوع النخل [طه:71]' (then crucify you on the trunks of palm trees) [Q. 20:71] (Abdel Haleem, 2005, p. 199). The Arabic preposition 'في' (literally means 'in') in the *āyah* (verse) does not standardly collocate with the verb 'أصلب' (crucify); it is collocated with the preposition 'على' (which means 'on'). *Kūfan* scholars explain this by saying that the Arabic preposition 'في' (literally means 'in') is used metaphorically to indicate the preposition 'على' (on), i.e. both prepositions can be used interchangeably.

This study does not concern *taqāruḍ* for two reasons. First, some Arabic scholars, who I agree with, have criticised it, such as Ibn Jinī ([d. 392 AH/1002 CE], 2006, vol. 2, pp. 306-307), who believes that this approach guaranties inaccuracy, presents a

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[2] Dickins (2020, p. 33) includes some references to what different writers mean by 'collocate/collocation'. Yepes (2017, p. 12) differentiates between 'collocation' in two senses. The first one is "the recurrent co-appearance of two words" (P. 12), using the term 'co-occurrence', which is not meant in my article. However, the second one is "reserved for the phraseological (linguistic) approach" (p. 12), using the term 'collocation'. In my article, I will use the term 'standardly collocate' to distinguish it from 'co-occurrence'.

senseless view of syntax, and proves to be incorrect[3]. Moreover, al-Mīdānī (1996, vol. 2, p. 239) subscribes to the view of *taḍmīn* rather than *taqāruḍ*[4]. Second, unlike the second view, which is explained below, I believe that there is no rhetorical aspect associated with *taqāruḍ*.

By contrast, *Baṣran* scholars interpret this linguistic phenomenon as *taḍmīn* (التضمين) which is translated by Gully (1997, p. 466) as "implication of meaning". It is found in Arabic in different branches such as syntax (particularly semantics), rhetoric and poetry (enjambement). This paper is concerned with the first two aspects of *taḍmīn*.

In semantics, *taḍmīn* is defined by Ibn Jinī ([d. 392 AH/1002 CE], 2006, vol. 2, p. 435, my translation) as "Collocating a verb with a preposition with which it does not [standardly] collocate; rather, the preposition signifies another verb with which does [standardly] collocate [5]". Moreover, it is explained by Ibn Hišām ([d. 761 AH/1360 CE], 1964, vol. 2, p. 762, my translation) as "[Arabs] may blend[6] a meaning of an [implicit] phrase with an explicit phrase so it has its function. This is called *taḍmīn*[7]". Rhetorically, this phenomenon also implies 'ellipsis', which conveys a deep, double meaning in few words. I conclude that *taḍmīn* is a semantic-rhetorical phenomenon that requires more attention.

What makes *taḍmīn* different from *taqāruḍ* is that the latter involves the use of one preposition in place of another, indicating one meaning only and the emphasis is on the preposition, while the former indicates both meanings of the two verbs ₋ the explicit verb and the implicit one ₋ and the emphasis is on the verb.

## 2. Taḍmīn in the Qur'an

*Taḍmīn* has a rhetorical aspect, and the Qur'an, which is well known for its rhetorical inimitability, is rich in *taḍmīn*. Mukhtar (2014, p. 42) believes that *taḍmīn* "can provide deep meaning to a verse of the Qur'an". This, of course, needs to be paid attention by Qur'an translators. Therefore, this study attempts at assessing the way Qur'an translators deal with this phenomenon when translating the Qur'an.

*Taḍmīn* in the Qur'an indicates implicitness, and it has four elements: explicit verb, implicit preposition, implicit verb, explicit preposition (see figure 1).

## 3. Research Questions

This research addresses three questions:

   a) How is *taḍmīn* translated in the Qur'an?
   b) Does the rendering of *taḍmīn* in current Qur'an translations need to be improved?
   c) How can the rendering of *taḍmīn* in current Qur'an translations be improved?

| ST: ولأصلبنكم في جذوع النخل [طه:71] |||
|---|---|---|
| TT: then crucify you on the trunks of palm trees [Q. 20:71] |||
| (Abdel Haleem, 2005, p. 199) |||
| Elements based on ST | al-Mīdānī (1996, vol. 2, p. 239[8]) | Fadel (2005, pp.436-437) |
| explicit verb | crucify | crucify |
| implicit preposition | on[9] | on |
| implicit verb | nail | bury |
| explicit preposition | to[10] | in |

Table 1 (Elements of *taḍmīn*)

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[3] Arabic source text: هذا باب يتلقاه الناس مغسولا ساذجا من الصنعة. وما أبعد الصواب عنه وأوقفه دونه. The Arabic word 'ساذجا' is interpreted intralingually by An-Najaar in his footnote of his edition (تحقيق) of Ibn Jinī (2006): عاريا من الدقة كأنه غُسِل منها، أو لتفاهته يستحق أن يغسل ويُمحى.

[4] Arabic source text: ليس من اللازم أن يكون واردا على سبيل الاستعارة في الحرف بل الكلام جاريا على طريقة التضمين.

[5] Arabic source text: اتصال الفعل بحرف ليس مما يُتَعَدَّى به؛ لأنه في معنى فعل يتعدَّى.

[6] 'blend' is translated here literally from the ST on purpose to capture the beauty of metaphor used in the ST. It uses the word 'يُشْرب' which is used literally with colors when a color is blended with another color, so they become 'blended' or when a coloured liquid is put on a cloth and it 'absorbs' it.

[7] Arabic source text: قد يُشْرِبون لفظًا معنى لفظٍ فيعطونه حكمه، ويسمى ذلك تضمينا.

[8] Arabic source text: لأصلبنكم على جذوع النخل ولأثبتنكم فيها بالمسامير التي تدخل في الجذوع

[9] Although this preposition is explicit in the English translation, it is implicit in the *āyah* (verse).

[10] Literally means 'in'. However, the preposition standardly collocates with the implicit verb in English is different from the Arabic one due to differences between languages.

#### 4. Methodology

In order to answer the research questions, this descriptive-prescriptive research relies on several resources from which the data is collected for analysis and assessment. As the main concern of this study is *taḍmīn*, *At-taḍmīn an-naḥwī fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* by Muhammad Fadel (2005) will be used as a primary resource to identify *taḍmīn* in the Qur'an. It is chosen because (a) it is fairly comprehensive, covering 270 *āyāt* (verses) which are believed to have *taḍmīn*, with quotations from different *tafāsīr* (exegeses) and (b) it is an extension to his PhD thesis.

Ten English Qur'an translations will then be studied and assessed, of which five are recent translations by Muslims and five are by non-Muslims. The reason for selecting a certain Qur'an translation varies from one researcher to another and depends on the purpose of the research, e.g. whether it studies the translation form a linguistic perspective or an ideological one. Many researchers may select translations because they are popular one; some others opt for the recent ones. Some could study translations because of who has produced them, e.g. an Arab Muslim or a non-Arab one. Others may single out a translation by non-Muslim.

In my study, I will select recent translations by Muslims, whether they are Arabs or not, because this serves the purpose of the study. These translators may well be familiar with previous translations and might try to improve them. In this regard, *taḍmīn* may not be paid attention by previous translators, so more recent translators may have tried. Regarding translations by non-Muslims, there are only a few full translations available as well as some partial ones (such as Approaching the Qur'an: the early revelations by Michael Sells (2007), who focuses on the early *Makkī Sūwar* (chapters)[11] of the Qur'an). Therefore, recentness will not be a criterion for selecting translations by non-Muslims. Rather, I will choose a mixture of recent and non-recent popular translations.

These five English Qur'an translations by Muslims (except Kidwai and Soliman) and five English Qur'an translations by non-Muslims (except Bell, Turner and Gerrans) are available on a database entitled IslamAwakened, which was established by Gregory Waleed Kavalec in 2003. This is an online corpus that contains 57 parallel English Qur'an translations (continuously updated) which a reader or researcher can easily use to compare and study. However, for the translations that are not available on IslamAwakened, I will refer to printed copies and consult *Tarjamāt maʕānī al-Qurʾān* by Mustapha (2019) for their titles.

The ten English translations of the Qur'an ₋ of which the first five are by Muslims and the second five are by non-Muslims ₋ are as follows:

(1) The Qur'an: A new translation (Abdel Haleem, 2005).
(2) What is in the Qur'an: Message of the Qur'an in simple English (Kidwai, 2013).
(3) The Clear Qur'an (Khattab, 2016).
(4) The Majestic Qur'an: A plain English translation (Hussain, 2018).
(5) Bridges' translation of the ten *Qira'at* of the Noble Qur'an (Soliman, 2020).
(6) The Qur'an (Palmer, 1880).
(7) The Qur'an: Translated with a critical rearrangement of the surahs (Bell, 1937).
(8) The Koran Interpreted (Arberry, 1955).
(9) The Qur'an: A new interpretation (Turner, 2013).
(10) The Qur'an: A complete revelation (Gerrans, 2016).

The analysis of the *āyāt* (verses) and their English translations will be carried out by applying the features of *taḍmīn* that I have identified in figure 1, i.e. explicit verb, implicit preposition, implicit verb and explicit preposition.

#### 5. Analysis and Discussion

In analyzing and discussing the English translations of the following *āyāt* (verses) of the Qur'an, the emphasis will be on the presence/absence of the four elements of *taḍmīn*, the rhetorical aspect of *taḍmīn* and suggestions for improving the translation of the four elements of *taḍmīn*. Moreover, I will provide the full translation of each translator for the *āyāt* (verses) that will be analysed and discussed to give the reader a much better sense of how *taḍmīn* elements fit into wider TT.

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[11] The *sūwar* (chapters) of the Qur'an are divided, according to the time when they were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad -Allah's peace and blessings be upon him-, into *Makkī* (the adjective for the city of Makkah) and *Madanī* (the adjective for the city of Madinah). All of the *sūwar* (chapters) that had been revealed to the Prophet Muhammad -Allah's peace and blessings be upon him- before the *hijrah* (migration) to Madinah are *Makki* while those who had been revealed to the Prophet Muhammad -Allah's peace and blessings be upon him- after the *hijrah* (migration) to Madinah are *Madanī*.

**Āyah (verse) 1**

| ST:ولَأُصَلِّبَنَّكُم فِي جذوع النخل [طه:71] |
|---|
| **Abdel Haleem**: then **crucify** you **on** the trunks of palm trees. [Q. 20:71] |
| **Kidwai**: I will **get** you **crucified on** the trunks of palm trees. |
| **Khattab**: and **crucify** you **on** the trunks of palm trees. |
| **Hussain**: and **hang** you **on** the trunks of palm trees. |
| **Soliman**: and I will most surely **crucify** you **on** the trunks of the palm-trees. |
| **Palmer**: and I will surely **crucify** you **on** the trunks of palm trees. |
| **Bell**: and will **crucify** you **on** palmtree stems. [Q. 20:74[12]] |
| **Arberry**: then I shall **crucify** you **upon** the trunks of palm-trees. |
| **Turner**: and **crucify** you **on** the trunks of the date-palms. [Q. 20:72[13]] |
| **Gerrans**: And **put** you **to death by stake upon** the trunks of date-palms. |

| Elements of *taḍmīn*/Translators | explicit verb | implicit preposition | implicit verb | explicit preposition |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Abdel Haleem** | crucify | on | - | - |
| **Kidwai** | get…crucified | on | - | - |
| **Khattab** | crucify | on | - | - |
| **Hussain** | hang | on | - | - |
| **Soliman** | crucify | on | - | - |
| **Palmer** | crucify | on | - | - |
| **Bell** | crucify | on | - | - |
| **Arberry** | crucify | upon | - | - |
| **Turner** | crucify | on | - | - |
| **Gerrans** | put…to death by stake | upon | - | - |

It is noted above that all ten Qur'an translators rendered the explicit verb in the *āyah* (verse) followed by the preposition 'on' which standardly collocates with the verb. However, this preposition is not explicit in the *āyah* (verse) itself. This means that the translators had to link the explicit verb with its collocate, i.e. 'on' without paying attention to the fact that the preposition found explicitly in the *āyah* (verse) does not standardly collocate with the verb 'crucify'. This preposition is not used at random; it indicates *taḍmīn* which none of the translators above translated.

Rhetorically, the use of the explicit preposition 'فِي' (literally: 'in'), which does not standardly collocate with the verb 'أصلب' 'crucify', is meant in the *āyah* (verse) to indicate another implicit verb, using few words. According to the interpretation of Fadel (2005, pp.436-437), the appropriate implicit verb in the *āyah* (verse) could be 'bury', which standardly collocates with the explicit preposition 'فِي' 'in'.

Although 'burying' usually indicates the action being done in a grave, this word is used in the Qur'an with trunks of palm trees to capture perfectly the severe punishment and ultimate endless indignity, i.e. those so punished would remain crucified even after death and would not be buried in a grave. This also could be true, particularly when reading the end of the *āyah* (verse) 'ولتعلمن أينا أشد عذابا وأبقى' 'You will know for certain which of us has the fiercer and more lasting punishment' (Abdel Haleem, 2005). Each type of punishment has a purpose which is stated clearly at the end of the *āyah* (verse), i.e. 'crucifying' to show them the severe punishment and 'burying' to face more enduring punishment and ultimate endless indignity.

It may be that the translators have not rendered the *taḍmīn* in their translations of the Qur'an for one of two reasons. They might have abided by the norms of English with regards to prepositions standardly collocating with verbs without considering the reason why 'ولَأُصَلِّبَنَّكُم' (crucify) does not standardly collocate with an appropriate preposition. Another reason could be that the translators subscribe to the view of *taqāruḍ*.

In order to capture the rhetorical aspect of *taḍmīn* in the *āyah* (verse), I suggest translating it as 'crucify you on and bury you in the trunk of palm trees'. Although this suggestion captures the double sense of the Arabic, it is stylistically rather inelegant

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[12] Bell (1937, p. vii) states that he followed Fluegel's numbering of the *āyāt* (verses). This does not conform with the agreed numbering by Muslims.

[13] The numbering here is different because Turner, following a view of some Muslims' scholars, considers the *basmalah* (a blending term for بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم, which is translated by Turner as: In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful) an *āyah* (verse) of each *sūrah* (chapter) in the Qur'an.

in English. Therefore, rendering the phrase 'ولأصلبنكم في' may read as follows 'crucify you on'; however, with a footnote explaining the rhetorical aspect with the double meaning.

Another suggestion might be a literal translation 'crucify you in' with (a) a footnote that explains the rhetorical aspect embodied in the *āyah* (verse) or (b) explanatory "words in brackets in order to make proper sentences in English" (Soliman, 2020, p. x) to avoid "the difference between Arabic and English syntax" (p. x). This might leave the reader to ponder and reflect (in Arabic: *tadabbur*) with regards to the use of 'in' with the verb 'crucify' with which does not standardly collocate. I have expected that Soliman (2020) would translate it as 'crucify you in' because the main emphasis of his translation is on *tadabbur* and his approach is to stay "as close as possible to the Arabic text of the Qur'an" (p. ix). However, this was not translated as I have expected.

**Āyah (verse) 2**

> ST:واتبعوا ما **تتلوا** الشياطين **على** ملك سليمان [البقرة:102]
> **Abdel Haleem**: and followed what the evil ones **had fabricated about** the Kingdom of Solomon instead. [Q. 02:102]
> **Kidwai**: They followed what the evil ones **gave out in** Solomon's kingdom.
> **Khattab**: They ˹instead˺ followed the magic **promoted** by the devils **during** the reign of Solomon.
> **Hussain**: They *blindly* followed the devilish people who **had fabricated about** the kingdom of Sulayman.
> **Soliman**: and they followed what the devils **read during** the reign of Solomon.
> **Palmer**: And they follow that which the devils **recited against** Solomon's kingdom.
> **Bell**: And follow what the satans used to **recite in** the reign of Solomon. [Q. 02:96[14]]
> **Arberry**: and they follow what the Satans **recited over** Solomon's kingdom.
> **Turner**: And instead of [following] the Torah and the Gospel, they followed **the sorcery** of those versed in the black arts - the jinns and the minions of Satan; the same occult knowledge that **had been used in opposition to** the kingship of Solomon. [Q. 02:103[15]]
> **Gerrans**: And they follow what the *shayṭāns* **read out during** the reign of Sulaymān.

| Elements of *taḍmīn*/Translators | explicit verb | implicit preposition | implicit verb | explicit preposition |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Abdel Haleem** | - | - | had fabricated | about |
| **Kidwai** | gave out | in | - | - |
| **Khattab** | promoted | during | - | - |
| **Hussain** | - | - | had fabricated | about |
| **Soliman** | read | during | - | - |
| **Palmer** | recited | against | - | - |
| **Bell** | recite | in | - | - |
| **Arberry** | recited | - | - | over |
| **Turner** | the sorcery… had been used | in opposition to | - | - |
| **Gerrans** | read out | during | - | - |

Unlike *āyah* (verse) 1, Abdel Haleem and Hussain translated the implicated verb 'تفتري' 'fabricated' followed by the explicit preposition 'على' 'about', which is literally translated as 'on/over'. However, they used the preposition that follows the English rules regarding the prepositional collocate of the verb 'fabricate', which is 'about'. This use of *taḍmīn* in the translation of Abdel Haleem and Hussain suggests that they do not agree with the *taqāruḍ* approach.

This is in contrary to my view when I analysed and discussed *āyah* (verse) 1 that the translators did not include *taḍmīn* in their translations of the Qur'an because they are in agreement with the view of *taqāruḍ*. This might indicate the need to carry out an interview in the future with these translators to further investigate the issue.

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[14] Bell (1937, p. vii) states that he followed Fluegel's numbering of the *āyāt* (verses). This does not conform with the agreed numbering by Muslims.

[15] The numbering here is different because Turner, following a view of some Muslims' scholars, considers the *basmalah* (a blending term for بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم, which is translated by Turner as: In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful) an *āyah* (verse) of each *sūrah* (chapter) in the Qur'an.

By contrast with Abdel Haleem and Hussain, Arberry did not translate the implicit verb or the implicit preposition, following the literal translation approach. But for all that, it seems that he did not notice that the explicit preposition 'على', which he translated as 'over', does not standardly collocate with the explicit verb 'تتلو' in Arabic, which he rendered as 'recited', although it collocates with the explicit verb 'recited' in English.

The other seven translators rendered the explicit verb 'تتلو' in various ways followed by an implicit preposition 'في', which they variously translated as 'in', 'during', 'against' and 'in opposition to', all of which conform to the English translations of the verb 'يتلو', leaving the explicit preposition 'على' untranslated.

Rhetorically, the use of the preposition 'على' here is intended to signify another verb which results in a deep, double meaning using few words. Fadel (2005, pp. 254-255) interprets 'يتلو' as 'follow' from the original (basic) verb 'تلا'. This means that (a) what they 'يتلو' 'recite' involves 'following one another' and being repeated continuously, and (b) what they 'recite' is 'fabricated', as occurred during the reign of the Prophet Solomon -Allah's peace and blessings be upon him-. This was done instead of reciting the Torah that was revealed to them. Turner's (2013, p. 9) translation of this part of the *āyah* (verse) is exegetical. It reads:

> And instead of [following] the Torah and the Gospel, they followed the sorcery of those versed in the black arts - the jinns and the minions of Satan; the same occult knowledge that had been used in opposition to the kingship of Solomon. The enemies of Solomon claimed that the secret of his power and dominion lay in magic and sorcery.

A suggested translation that presents all elements of *taḍmīn,* but it is very inelegant in English, would be 'they followed what the group of satans (the devils) had recited during and fabricated about the ruling of Solomon'. The phrase 'fabricated about' might be put in square brackets or moved to the footnote with a rhetorical explanation of *taḍmīn* elements.

## 6. Conclusion

Qur'an translators render *taḍmīn* in various ways in the Qur'an. Most of the ten translators translate the explicit verb without paying attention to the fact that the explicit verb in the ST does not standardly collocate with the explicit preposition. However, very few translators seem to be aware of the fact that the implicit verb is followed by the explicit preposition; they take no notice of the explicit verb in the *āyah* (verse). None of the translators rendered all the elements of *taḍmīn*.

I believe *taḍmīn* in the Qur'an should be considered by translators in the future. The translations done by Muslims that I studied are recent, so they might have been expected to consider *taḍmīn*. However, they did not translate it. Further study could be carried out to investigate the translations of all *āyāt* (verses) that involve *taḍmīn* in the Qur'an, particularly given Fadel's (2005) exegetical analysis of 270 *āyāt* (verses) with *taḍmīn*.

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