

# *Tertium Comparationis* and Semanto-Syntactic Equivalence Across Arabic-English Languages: A Study of Qur'anic Constructions and Their Translations Through Krzeszowski's Approach

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**Abstract**—This Arabic-English contrastive study aims to fill the gap left by the lack of a comparison model by employing both Krzeszowski's (1990) taxonomy of equivalence and his semanto-syntactic equivalence, which are based on the hypothesis of identical deep structures or semantic inputs across the languages under scrutiny. In the present contrastive study, the deep structures of selected Arabic Qur'anic constructions and their English renderings were investigated. Specific methods were used for the examination of deep structures, such as semantically describing the origin and target constructions in terms of Fillmore's and Al-Khuli's semantic roles. Afterwards, selectional restrictions, co-occurrence restrictions, lexical items, and transformations of the texts under scrutiny were discussed. To do this, Qur'anic texts and their four renderings (i.e., 40 Qur'anic constructions and 160 translations) were selected and analyzed. As a result, the study reached certain conclusions supporting or opposing the hypotheses, objectives, and research questions. Using a quantitative (or statistical) approach, the results and conclusions of the present study found that a large number of the renderings of Qur'anic constructions into English are semanto-syntactically equivalent, whereas a low percentage are non-equivalent.

**Index Terms**—Arabic-English deep structures, equivalence across Arabic-English languages, Krzeszowski's methodology, semanto-syntactic equivalence, Fillmore's and Al-Khuli's semantic roles

## I. INTRODUCTION

The concepts of *tertium comparationis* and equivalence are central to contrastive linguistics but have received little attention in Arabic-English studies, particularly in the context of Qur'anic data. *Tertium comparationis* (TC) refers to the common ground required for comparison, while, according to Chesterman (1998), equivalence is closely tied to this notion. Krzeszowski (1990) focuses on these concepts in his model of semanto-syntactic equivalence, which examines similarities at the level of deep structure rather than at the surface.

This study applies Krzeszowski's approach to Arabic-English contrastive analysis, focusing on Qur'anic constructions and their translations. It addresses key questions concerning the applicability of *tertium comparationis*, the adaptation of Krzeszowski's methodology, the degree of cross-linguistic preservation of deep structures and semantic roles (e.g., Fillmore's framework), and how the word and sentence ranks (Constraints C1 and C2) of the examined data aid in the assignment of semanto-syntactic equivalency. The main objectives of the current study are (1) to adapt and apply Krzeszowski's model to Arabic-English comparison; (2) to examine Qur'anic deep structures and their translations for equivalence; (3) to analyze data in terms of semantic roles, restrictions, and transformations; (4) to test constructions at word and sentence ranks (C1 & C2); and (5) to present equivalence versus non-equivalence through tables and percentages.

### A. Research Questions

The present study tries to answer the following research questions:

1. How can the concepts of *tertium comparationis*, semanto-syntactic equivalence, and deep structures be referred to in English and Arabic traditions?
2. How can Krzeszowski's (1990) methodology be adapted for Arabic-English contrastive analysis?
3. How can the deep structures and semantic representations of Qur'anic constructions be identical and (semanto-syntactically) equivalent with those of their renderings into English?
4. How can the deep structures (semantic inputs) of the selected data across the Arabic-English languages be

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- represented semantically?
5. How can testing the word and sentence ranks (Constraints 'C1' & 'C2' in Krzeszowski's words) of the data under scrutiny help appoint semanto-syntactic equivalence?
  6. What is the percentage of (semanto-syntactic) equivalence or non-equivalence among the analyzed constructions of the Qur'anic texts and their English translations?

### B. Research Hypothesis

Consequently, the present study hypothesizes that:

1. The notions of *Tertium comparationis*, (semanto-syntactic) equivalence, and deep structures can be found in Arabic and English traditions.
2. Krzeszowski's (1990) methodology can be adapted for English-Arabic contrastive studies.
3. Most deep structures of Qur'anic constructions and their English renderings are identical and semanto-syntactically equivalent.
4. Fillmore's and Al-Khuli's semantic roles, selection (al) and co-occurrence restrictions, lexical items, and transformations are parameters for representing the deep structures of the selected data.
5. The constructions of the two languages share similarities at the word and sentence levels, indicating no violation of the two constraints Krzeszowski imposed on semanto-syntactic equivalence.
6. As a quantitative approach, the percentage of semanto-syntactic equivalence (among the deep structures of the selected constructions under scrutiny) is high.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Developed from 1971 to 1990, Krzeszowski's concept of semanto-syntactic equivalence is rooted in the hypothesis that equivalent constructions share identical deep structures, even when their surface structures differ (Krzeszowski, 1971, 1990). As influenced by generative grammar (i.e., Lakoff's more abstract notion of deep structure), Krzeszowski redefined it as "input" or "semantic structure" to avoid confusion with Chomsky's standard model (Bouton, 1976; Krzeszowski, 1990). Moreover, his theory draws on Catford's (1965) notion of textual equivalence and emphasizes that comparison across languages requires equivalent constructions as data (Bouton, 1976).

Developing deep structure theories has led to a universal or standard deep structure across languages (Chomsky, 1957; Fillmore, 1968; Jacobs, 1969; Di Pietro, 1971). Hence, Krzeszowski (1990) incorporates selectional restrictions, co-occurrence constraints, and semantic roles to test equivalence, asserting that semantic interpretation is grounded in deep structure. He combines equivalence (meaning-based) with formal correspondence (form-based) and stresses the role of bilingual intuition in identifying equivalents.

However, Fillmore's case grammar and Krzeszowski's predicate calculus provide the semantic foundation for contrastive studies, serving as *tertium comparationis* (McCawley, 1968; as cited in Krzeszowski, 1990). To ensure rigor, Krzeszowski has proposed two constraints (C1 and C2) that exclude conflicting lexical features and require the closest possible correspondence in translation. These principles support his claim that semanto-syntactic equivalence can be systematically applied to cross-linguistic comparison (Krzeszowski, 1981, 1990).

Drawing on Lakoff (1968), Krzeszowski (1990) argues that deep structures must be more abstract than surface structures, since absent categories (e.g., subject, verb, or object) in surface forms must be represented at the deep level. Dissatisfied with the Standard Theory, he adopts Lakoff's model, which incorporates semantics into deep structure and highlights its generative role (Krzeszowski, 1990). According to Lakoff (1968), deep structures define basic grammatical relations, generalize selectional and co-occurrence restrictions, assign lexical items to categories, and provide input for transformational rules.

This framework underlies Krzeszowski's hypothesis that equivalent sentences across languages share identical deep structures (Lakoff, 1968). Furthermore, selectional restrictions are defined by Finch (2000) as "semantic restrictions on the co-occurrence of linguistic items" (p. 177) and co-occurrence as defined by Trask (1993) is a general term that denotes a specification over the occurrence in the syntactic structure of two elements regarding their presence or absence or their forms that play a central role: verbs and nouns require compatible subjects, objects, or modifiers (e.g., *eat* [+ animate subject + edible object]). Violations of these constraints, such as "The stone eats a banana" or "You deceived my watermelon," produce semantic anomalies (Lakoff, 1968). Scholars such as Finch (2000), Trask (1993, 2007), Cruse (2006), and Murphy and Koskela (2010) confirm that selectional restrictions govern semantic well-formedness, distinguishing them from grammatical constraints. Thus, selectional restrictions and co-occurrence are key tools for investigating deep structure equivalence across languages, making them essential in Krzeszowski's model of semanto-syntactic equivalence. Furthermore, the analysis of any text may face many problems, as summarized by Szwedek (1984) as (1) the problem of equivalence and semantic representation and (2) comparison of certain surface phenomena.

In this regard, Szwedek (1984) argues that semantic representation should consist of semantic categories and relations, with semantic features both grammaticalized within a language and embedded in lexical meanings. If two languages grammaticalize a feature to a similar extent, structural equivalence can be established between them regardless of surface similarity, and this view is close to Krzeszowski's approach. However, Szwedek (1984) notes that

difficulties arise when semantic categories converge in surface structures or when a constituent performs multiple functions, making clear separation and description problematic. Additionally, Szwedek (1984) describes the structures in their simple forms as follows:

1. Grammatical Structure: subject, verb, object
2. Semantic Structure: agent, action, and goal
3. Thematic Structure: topic and content

Firbas (1974; as cited in Szwedek, 1984) orders the following structures: the action is initiated by the actor (agent), who necessarily exists before it, and the goal or object follows it. Furthermore, Chesterman (1998) adapts Mustajoki's model of semantic structure, illustrated in examples such as "Fred swept the floor" [Ac; S, O] and "Sue sold her car to Fiona" [Ac; S, R, O]. McCawley (1968), however, argues that semantic and syntactic representations share the exact formal nature. Similarly, Krzeszowski (1990) refers to Polanski's (1966) comparison of Chomsky's English phrase structure rules with those proposed for Polish to highlight parallels in syntactic representation.

Additionally, Fillmore's (1966) model of base rules, initially designed for English, was later adapted by scholars such as Di Pietro (1971) for contrastive studies. Based on the hypothesis that all languages share the same deep structure or at least the same core elements of sentence, modality, and proposition as cited by Krzeszowski (1990), Fillmore's rules appear more universal and simpler than Chomsky's (Al-Khuli, 2000).

These rules are as follows:

1. PS1:  $S \rightarrow (\text{Mod}) \text{Aux. Prop.}$   
Where S = sentence  
Mod. = modality  
Aux. = auxiliary  
Prop. = proposition  
The arrow  $\rightarrow$  = is rewritten  
The parentheses ( ) = optionally included.
2. PS2:  $\text{Mod.} \rightarrow \left( \begin{array}{c} \text{Sentence Adverbials} \\ \text{Time Adverbials} \\ \text{Interrogatives} \\ \text{Negative Elements} \end{array} \right)$
3. PS3:  $\text{Prop} \rightarrow \text{V (Erg.) (Dat.) (Loc.) (Inst.) (Ag.)}$

The brackets indicate free choice. Sentence adverbials, such as "therefore," modify all sentences rather than a particular word.

Where V. = verb

Erg. = ergative (i.e., the subject of an intransitive verb and the object of a transitive verb; it is an NP that is most attached to V, and what Fillmore symbolized later on as Obj.)

Dat. = dative; the indirect object

Loc. = locative; the place referent

Inst. = the instrument of the action

Ag. = the actual doer of the action

1. PS4:  $\left( \begin{array}{c} \text{Erg.} \\ \text{Dat.} \\ \text{Loc.} \\ \text{Inst.} \\ \text{Ag.} \end{array} \right)$
2. PS5: Where NP = nominal phrase  
 $\text{NP} \rightarrow \text{P (Det.) (S) N.}$   
Where P = preposition  
Det. = determiner  
S = sentence  
N = noun

In his *Contrastive Generative Grammar*, Krzeszowski (1990) introduces the concept of the "Original Configuration," built on Fillmore's semantic roles: Agent (A) at the top, followed by Patient (P), Resident (R), and three locus-related roles: form locus (fL), at locus (atL), and goal. These serve as universal semantic categorial rules. Central to his framework are reference and co-reference, whereby configurations may act as referents within others. He further notes that roles without referential indices are erased, while coreferential roles within the same subconfiguration are merged, and that subconfigurations receive both referential indices and role labels (Krzeszowski, 1990).

Developed by Krzeszowski (1971, 1990), semanto-syntactic equivalence requires examination within European traditions to identify parallels or lack thereof in Arabic studies. Thus, Krzeszowski's primary concern beyond this theory is to prove the validity of a hypothesis that "equivalent constructions have identical deep structures even if on the surface they are markedly different" (Krzeszowski, 1990, p. 148). Strongly influenced by Chomsky's generative grammar, Krzeszowski adopts Lakoff's (1968) version of deep structure, which he considers more abstract and thus

more suitable for contrastive analysis.

In addition, Krzeszowski's theory builds on Fillmore's semantic roles within his "original configuration" and replaces Chomsky's notion of deep structure with "input" or "semantic structure" to avoid confusion with the Standard Theory (Krzeszowski, 1990). His framework also draws on Lakoff's (1968) deep structure and Catford's (1965) equivalence. Bouton (1976) clarifies that for Krzeszowski, equivalence means (1) constructions are mutually translatable, and (2) cross-linguistic comparison requires such equivalent constructions as data. Building on this theoretical foundation, the present study turns to Arabic scholarship, where the concepts of equivalence and deep structure have been addressed in various ways. In particular, the focus is on how Arab scholars approach the hypothesis of identical deep structures across languages, a notion central to semanto-syntactic equivalence. For instance, Bakir (1990) and others have examined parallels between Arabic deep structures and Chomskyan models. One of the earliest contributors is Al-Wa'er, whose works include *Toward a Modern and Realistic Sentential Theory of Basic Structures in Standard Arabic* (1983, 1987), a study that examines the fundamental rules of Arabic sentence structures, illustrated through examples such as interrogative constructions.

Several Arab scholars have addressed issues close to Krzeszowski's (1990) semanto-syntactic equivalence. Al-Wa'er (1983, 1987) distinguishes between yes/no and wh-questions in Arabic, arguing that while they undergo different syntactic transformations, they share semantic aspects under structural constraints—a view reminiscent of the common underlying structures in Krzeszowski's hypothesis. Similarly, Hassaan (1985) developed the idea of a single deep structure and multiple systems, proposing NP–VP configurations as the universal base of Arabic, where variation across languages is stylistic rather than grammatical.

Moreover, Zakaria (1986) also affirms that deep structure reflects universal meaning, while surface rules differ across languages. Bakir (1990) compares Chomsky's and al-Jurjānī's notions of deep structure, cautioning that identical structures do not always imply identical meanings. In addition, Al-Khuli (1999) provides a significant contribution with *Transformational Rules for the Arabic Language*, highlighting the difficulty of distinguishing deep and surface structures. He justifies using transformational rules on the grounds of their explanatory power, showing how different surface forms can share a single underlying structure. He also adapts Fillmore's base rules to Arabic because they are more universal and efficient than Chomsky's model.

Later, Hamaasa (2000) integrates syntax and semantics under the label "syntactic-semantic meaning," reminding the reader of the four points of Lakoff's (1968) deep structure and drawing on classical Arabic thought, such as that of al-Jurjani, Sibawayh, and Ibn Jinni. He emphasizes the universality of abstract grammatical relations and lexical selection rules, linking them to Chomskyan selectional restrictions. Likewise, Ukasha (2014) compares Fillmore's case grammar with Arabic, noting both overlap and variation in semantic roles such as Agent, Experiencer, Benefactive, Object, and Locative, as well as Fillmore's later refinements.

These studies show that Arab linguists have engaged deeply with the concepts of deep structure, universal grammar, and equivalence. Their works often converge with Krzeszowski's assumption of common semantic structures across languages, while also adapting Fillmore's or Chomsky's models to account for the specificities of Arabic sentence types.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Research Design and Instruments

The current study adopts both qualitative and quantitative methods. In the qualitative method, the researcher will provide in-depth explanations and descriptions of the purposively selected original constructions from the Arabic Qur'an and their renderings into English from four well-known translators, Pickthall (1997), Ali (2001), Shakir (1999), and Abdel Haleem (2005), to answer the research questions and fulfill the study's objectives. A table showing the percentage of semanto-syntactic equivalence between Qur'anic constructions and their four chosen English renderings, in terms of identical deep structures (equivalence) or non-equivalence, was sufficient for this study's quantitative research method.

To investigate *tertium comparationis*, semanto-syntactic equivalence, and the identical deep structures across Arabic and English, data collection involved juxtaposing original constructions with target translations and comparing their deep structures. Thus, original constructions were purposively selected, and the researcher deliberately selected the extracts based on specific characteristics or qualities relevant to the study's aims. Hence, the original constructions were selected from the Arabic Qur'an, and their renderings were translated into English by four famous translators (Pickthall, 1997; Ali, 2001; Shakir, 1999; Abdel Haleem, 2005). Moreover, the justification for selecting Qur'anic expressions in Arabic was because (1). The high standards of language of Quranic Arabic, (2). An uneasy comprehension of Qur'anic constructions for non-Arab learners, a discrepancy in the English translations of the Qur'an, and (3) A translation of Qur'anic texts into English, in addition to legal and literary types, is problematic, as Krzeszowski (2016) states.

In addition, the procedures that were followed for the study included:

1. The description of linguistic phenomena (contrastive linguistics, *tertium comparationis*, equivalence, deep structure, syntactic and semantic representations, lexical restrictions and co-occurrence, and transformations) in the English and Arabic traditions.
2. A description of Krzeszowski's (1990) model of analysis, which can be adapted for an Arabic-to-English contrastive study, was also carried out.

3. The data for analysis (i.e., Qur'anic constructions and four famous English translations) were then selected.
4. The source and target texts or constructions were juxtaposed for scrutiny to identify similarities and differences, which are the cornerstone of any contrastive study, as the aforementioned linguistic phenomena of the two languages are examined.
5. The semantic roles, selectional restrictions, co-occurrence, and transformations of the Qur'anic texts and their selected translations were investigated.
6. The deep structures of the data were compared under scrutiny to find similarities and differences in terms of identical deep structures and equivalence.
7. Similarities between the deep structures of the source and target constructions were noted and led to identical deep structures and semanto-syntactic equivalence; in contrast, dissimilarity led to non-equivalence.
8. Krzeszowski's two constraints of word rank (C1) and sentence rank (C2) were assessed, and violations of these two constraints yielded non-equivalence, lexical gaps, or semanto-syntactic gaps.
9. Tables were created to ensure availability and present the percentages of equivalents and non-equivalents among Qur'anic constructions and their English translations.

### B. Model of Analysis

The present study was subjected to Krzeszowski's (1990) model of comparison, on the one hand, or an eclectic model, on the other hand, if one combines Fillmore's model of semantic representation with Al-Khuli's adaptation for representing Arabic sentences semantically. That was justified by following a similar type or model of representation for the two languages under scrutiny. Otherwise, a contrastive study would have been impossible if the comparison or semantic representation models for one language differed from those for another. In the end, the present study intended to investigate semanto-syntactic equivalence between the selected Qur'anic constructions with four of their renderings into English, with the belief that it is not a total equivalence.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analyses and comparisons of Qur'anic constructions and their English translations included active, simple, compound, and complex sentences, numbered 1-40. This data was followed by analyzing the components of the construction and highlighting the semantic roles of its categories, as per Fillmore's and Al-Khuli's base rules. Furthermore, only three Qur'anic constructions are offered as analysis samples, whereas others are presented in the quantitative results and discussions. After that, the base structure and the semantic roles of this Qur'anic construction are revealed in a linear pattern. Moreover, selectional and co-occurrence restrictions, as well as the process of transformation from which this structure is derived, are highlighted in addition to covering the construction concerning word and sentence ranks.

Similarly, the four English renderings of this construction, labelled a through d, will be analyzed in parallel with the Qur'anic construction, in terms of their semantic representations based on Fillmore's and Al-Khuli's semantic roles, and arranged in linear patterns. The analysis will also address selectional and co-occurrence restrictions, transformational processes, and the ranks of words and sentences. After each Qur'anic construction and its four corresponding renderings are analyzed, a comparative evaluation will be conducted between the source and target constructions. This comparison focuses on semantic representations: base rules or semantic roles, selectional and co-occurrence restrictions, and word and sentence ranks to identify similarities and differences. The results will be summarized in a table for each Arabic construction, with its four English renderings by Pickthall (1997), Ali (2001), Shakir (1999), and Abdel Haleem (2005). The table will align the semantic roles of the source construction with those of its renderings, marking identical representations with a check mark (✓) and non-identical ones with an X, thereby indicating semanto-syntactic equivalence or non-equivalence.

### 1. Qur'an 1:5

Arabic: إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

Transliteration: *iyyaka na'budu wa iyyaka nasta'iin*

English: "You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help."

This *ayaa* ("verse") of the glorious Qur'an is made of two proportions or clauses, specifically *إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ* / *ayaaka na'budu* ("You we worship") and *إِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ* / *ayaaka nasta'iin* ("You alone we ask for help"). As an abstract deep structure, the first proportion is that *إِيَّاكَ* / *ayaaka* ("you") is a fronted object with an ergative semantic role (Erg.). The agentive subject (Ag.) is *نَحْنُ* / *nahnu* ("we"), which is implied in the attached *ن* / *nun* (the letter "n") as *نَحْنُ* / *nahnu* ("we"). Consequently, the selectional restrictions and co-occurrence of the verb *نَعْبُدُ* / *na'bud* ("worship") is "the imperfect, transitive verb" in that construction, which requires a factual subject as the pronoun *نَحْنُ* / *nahnu* ("we") with the features (+ animate + human + concrete + pronoun + plural + worshipper) and the direct object *إِيَّاكَ* / *ayaak* ("you") with the features (+ power + superior + abstract + pronoun + singular). Furthermore, the verb *نَعْبُدُ* / *na'bud* ("worship") can be classified within the word "worship" (religious actions) as far as the semantic field is concerned. Even more, the fronting object transforms this *ayaa* ("verse") into a surface structure. In addition, the second part of the construction *إِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ* / *iyaaak nasta'iin* ("You alone we ask for help") is analyzed as a sentence (S) as far as Fillmore's base rules are concerned. However, the semantic roles of the Qur'anic constructions are:

اياك + (نحن) + نعبد + و اياك نستعين  
 iyyak + (nahnu) + na'bud + wa iyyak nasta'iin  
 Erg. + (Ag.) + Aux. VI + S.

Since Krzeszowski suggests that two texts be available for comparison, the two texts in this study are Qur'anic constructions (Text 1) and their English translations (Text 2). The selected translations of the above Qur'anic construction are:

- Pickthall: "Thee (alone) we worship; Thee (alone) we ask for help."
- Ali: "Thee do we worship, and Thine aid we seek."
- Shakir: "Thee do we serve, and Thee do we beseech for help."
- Abdel Haleem: "It is You we worship; it is You we ask for help."

All translations of the two Qur'anic *ayaa* begin with the ergative role of the fronted object ("thee" or "you"), followed by the agentive subject ("we"), and end with the verbs "worship" or "serve" as equivalents of the Arabic verb *نعبد/na'bud*. Regarding selectional and co-occurrence restrictions, "thee" and "you" carry the features (+ power + deity + superior + abstract + pronoun + singular), while "we" possesses the features (+ animate + human + concrete + pronoun + plural + helpless). However, the abstract components of Qur'anic constructions must be reflected in their translations; otherwise, equivalence conditions are violated. At the word and sentence levels, the subject "we" corresponds to the implied Arabic *نحن/nahnu* (human worshippers), and the object "You" refers to *ياك/iyyak* (God). Lexically, the verbs "worship," "serve," and "*نعبد/na'bud*" share the same reference and belong to the same semantic field as "worship".

The semantic input, or deep structures, of translations are as follows:

- Pickthall: Thee + we + worship; Thee + we + ask for help.  
Erg. + Ag. + Aux. V + S
- Yusuf Ali: Thee + we + do worship, Thine aid + we + seek.  
Erg. + Ag. + Aux. V + S
- Shakir: Thee + we + do serve; Thee + we + do beseech for help.  
Erg. + Ag. + Aux. V + S
- Abdel Haleem: You + we + worship; You + we + ask for help.  
Erg. + Ag. + Aux. V + S

The deep structures, or semantic inputs, of the original and target sentences share identical base rules and semantic roles (e.g., Erg., Ag., VI.), despite differences in word order. Since the Arabic and English constructions exhibit the same number and types of semantic roles, they display identical semantic representations and semanto-syntactic equivalence. This equivalence is further supported by their matching selectional restrictions and co-occurrence patterns. The variation in grammatical order is stylistic rather than structural, as Hassaan (1985) explains regarding Arabic surface and deep structures; for example, *قام زيد قام/zaydun qaama* ("Zayd rose") and *قام زيد قام/qaama zayd* ("rose Zayd") differ only stylistically. Thus, beginning a sentence with a subject or verb in Arabic or English reflects stylistic variation, not grammatical difference. Consequently, the underlying meaning of both constructions remains equivalent, as in *نحن نعبد اياك/ iyyak nahnu na'bud* ("We worship You").

TABLE 1  
SEMANTIC ROLES (SRs) AND EQUIVALENCE OF QUR'ANIC CONSTRUCTION 1 AND ENGLISH EQUIVALENTS

	Origin	Pickthall	Yusuf Ali	Shakir	Abdel Haleem
Semantic Roles	Erg.	Erg.	Erg.	Erg.	Erg.
	Ag. Implied	Ag. Implied	Ag. Implied	Ag. Implied	Ag. Implied
	Aux. VI	Aux. VI	Aux. VI	Aux. VI	Aux. VI
	S	S	S	S	S
Semanto-Syntactic Equivalence		✓	✓	✓	✓

## 2. Qur'an 14:12

Arabic: وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ

Transliteration: *wa'laa Allah fal yatawakkal al mutawakkilun*

English: "And upon God let those who would rely, rely."

This *ayaa* ("verse") of the glorious Qur'an is made of a straightforward clause. As an abstract deep structure, *على الله/laa Allah* ("on Allah" or "in Allah") in Qur'anic construction has a locative semantic role that involves the direction or the goal to which believers resort. The verb phrase, or what Fillmore calls verbal (VI), is made of the letter ل ("L"), which involves the directive meaning as part of the modality attached to the main verb *يتوكل/yatawakkal*, which is an intransitive verb meaning "to put one's absolute trust (in God)" (Badawi & Abdel Haleem, 2008, p. 1044). In addition, the noun phrase *المتوكلون/almutawakkilun* ("one who relies on God") is an agentive subject. The prepositional phrase, which is the goal of the sentence, is fronted.

Consequently, the selectional restrictions and co-occurrence of the verb *يتوكل/yatawakkal* ("to put one's trust in God") in this construction indicate that it requires a subject with the semantic features (+ animate + human + concrete + noun + plural + believer + God reliant). Another noun is "Allah," or "God," which offers the features (+ power + superior + abstract + trusted + deity + noun + singular). Moreover, the verb can be classified within the semantic field of trust in

God and dependence (Omar, 2002). Moreover, this *ayaa* is transformed into a surface structure by the fronting of the *الله على/laa Allah* (“on Allah” or “in Allah”) before the verb of the sentence and its subject. Likewise, the base rules or semantic roles of this Qur’anic construction are as follows:

على الله + ل + يتوكل + المتوكلون  
*Ala Allah+ li+ yatawakal+ al-mutawakilun*  
 Loc./tL/Goal + Mod. + Aux. VI + Ag.

For comparison, the translations of this Arabic construction into English are presented below:

- Pickthall: “In Allah let believers put their trust!”
- Ali: “And on Allah let all men of faith put their trust.”
- Shakir: “And on Allah should the believers rely.”
- Abdel Haleem: “Let anyone who trusts, trust in God.”

All translations of the *ayaa* start with the locative or goal role expressed by the prepositional phrase (“in/on Allah”), which is fronted for emphasis, except in the last translation, which begins with “Let.” The subsequent nouns (“believers,” “men of faith,” and “anyone who trusts”) function as agents sharing identical semantic features. The verbs “let put,” “should rely on,” and “let trust” correspond to the Arabic verb *ليتوكل/lituki* (“to rely”), where the particle *-li* (“to”) conveys a directive sense similar to “let,” while “should,” in one translation, expresses modality or command. Despite minor lexical variations, all verbs belong to the same semantic field of trust and divine reliance. Regarding selectional and co-occurrence restrictions, the subjects (“believers,” “men of faith,” and “anyone who trusts”) exhibit the features (+ animate + human + concrete + believer + plural + God-reliant). At the same time, the object nouns “Allah” and “God” possess the features (+ power + superior + deity + abstract + singular + trusted). As far as the testing of the two constraints C1 and C2 is concerned (i.e., word and sentence ranks), the word constructions “believers,” “men of faith,” and “anyone who trusts” are synonymous, and they have a reference to *المتوكلون/almutawakkilun* (“one who relies on God”), and “Allah” and “God” are synonymous and have a reference to *الله/Allah* (“God”) in Arabic. As far as the lexical item of the verb phrase is concerned, internally and externally, the verbs “let put,” “should rely on,” and “let trust” are synonymous and have a reference to the Arabic verb *ليتوكل/liyatawakal* (“to rely”), which falls into the same semantic field of “trust and God reliance.”

The following are the semantic inputs, or deep structures, of translations:

- Pickthall: In Allah + (‘you’ implied) + let + believers + put their trust!  
 Loc./Goal + (Ag.) + VI + Erg. + S
- Yusuf Ali: on Allah + (‘you’ implied) + let + all men of faith + put their trust.  
 Goal + (Ag.) + VI + Erg. + S
- Shakir: on Allah + should + the believers + rely.  
 Goal + Aux. + Ag. + VI
- Abdel Haleem: ‘You’ implied + let + anyone who trusts + trust in God.  
 (Ag.) + VI + Erg. + S

Compared to the original Arabic construction, variations appear in the number and assignment of semantic roles. The first three translations include “in/on Allah” as a goal, an implied agentive subject (Ag.) in (a, b, d), followed by the verbal element “let” as a directive, and the phrases “put their trust” and “trust in God,” which function idiomatically. Shakir’s translation (Goal + Aux. + Ag. + VI) aligns more closely with the original structure, supporting semanto-syntactic equivalence. Still, sentence rank analysis indicates that translations (a, b, d) are acceptable but do not achieve full semanto-syntactic equivalence.

TABLE 2  
 SEMANTIC ROLES (SRs) AND EQUIVALENCE OF QUR’ANIC CONSTRUCTION 2 AND ENGLISH EQUIVALENTS

	Origin	Pickthall	Ali	Shakir	Abdel Haleem
Semantic Roles	Goal	Goal	Goal	Goal	(Ag.)
	Mod.	(Ag.)	(Ag.)	Aux.	VI
	Aux. VI	VI	VI	Ag.	Erg.
	Ag.	Erg.	Erg.	VI	S
		S	S		
Semanto-Syntactic Equivalence		X	X	✓	X

### 3. Qur’an 42:53

Arabic: *أَلَا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَصِيرُ الْأُمُورُ*

Transliteration: *'ala 'ila Allah tasiir al'umur*

English: Indeed, to Allah do all matters return.

This *ayaa* (“verse”) of the glorious Qur’an contains one proposition. As an abstract deep structure, it starts with an *ألا/ala*, which has no function as far as parsing in Arabic is concerned (Al-Kurbasi, 2010), which may have the function of paying the listener’s attention to be suitable as a modality according to Fillmore’s model. Additionally, *إلى الله/ila Allah* (“to Allah”) in Qur’anic construction has a locative semantic role that involves the direction or the goal to which all things return. The verb phrase, or what Al-Khuli calls verbal (VI), contains the main verb *تصير*, transliterated as *tasiir*,

which is an imperfect verb (intransitive) denoting the meanings “to go to” or “to return to” (Badawi & Abdel Haleem, 2008, p. 543). Moreover, the noun *الأُمُور/al’umur* (“affairs”) is an agentive subject.

Consequently, the selectional restrictions and co-occurrence of the verb *تصير/tasiir* (“return”) in this construction indicate that it requires a subject with the semantic features (+ animate, + human, + concrete, + noun, + plural). Another noun is *الله/Allah*, which has the features (+ power, + superior, + deity, + abstract, + noun, + singular) attached to the preposition “to,” denoting the goal semantic role to which all things return. Moreover, the verb can be classified within the semantic field of destination or end (Omar, 2002). Likewise, this *ayaa* (“verse”) has no transformation except the fronting of *الله الى/ila Allah* (“to Allah”) before the verb and the subject of the sentence. Likewise, the base rules or semantic roles of this Qur’anic construction are as follows:

ألا + الى + الله + تصير + الأُمُور  
*Ala + ’ila Allah + tasiir + al’umur*  
 Mod. + Loc./Goal + Aux. VI + Ag.

For the sake of comparison, the four selected translations of this Arabic Qur’anic construction into English are:

- Pickthall: “Do not all things reach Allah at last?”
- Ali: “Behold (how) all affairs tend towards Allah!”
- Shakir: “Now surely to Allah do all affairs eventually come.”
- Abdel Haleem: “Truly everything will return to God.”

The translations of this *ayaa* (“verse”) exhibit variations in modalities and semantic roles according to Fillmore’s base rules. Modalities, expressed through adverbs of time, interrogatives, and negatives, appear in the translations but are absent in the original. Regarding propositions, translations (a, b, d) differ in the number of semantic roles, while translation (c) aligns with the original. The verb *تصير/tasiir* is rendered as “reach,” “tend,” “come,” and “return,” indicating lexical divergence. Selectional restrictions and co-occurrence analysis indicate that the verbs require subjects with features (+ animate, + human, + concrete, + noun, + plural) and a noun (“Allah” or “God”) with features (+ power, + superior, + deity, + abstract, + noun, + singular, + trusted).

Concerning the two constraints C1 and C2, or the word and sentence ranks, the word constructions “all things,” “all affairs,” “all things,” and “everything” are synonymous, and they have a reference to *الأُمُور/al’umur* (“matters”), and Allah and God are synonymous and have a reference to *الله (Allah)* in Arabic. As far as the lexical item of the verb phrase is concerned, the verbs “reach,” “tend,” “come,” and “return” are not absolute synonyms, but they have a reference to the Arabic verb *تصير/tasiir*, which falls into the same semantic field of “trust in God” and “returning.”

The following are the semantic inputs, or deep structures, of translations:

- Pickthall: Do + not + all things + reach + Allah + at last?  
 Mod.1 Inter. + Mod.2 Neg. + Ag. + Aux. VI + Loc./Goal + Mod.3 (Adv. of time)
- Ali: Behold + (you) + (how) + all affairs + tend + towards Allah!  
 VI ‘imperative’ + (Ag. Implied) + S [(Mod. Inter.) + Ag. + Aux. VI + Loc./Goal.]
- Shakir: now + surely + to Allah + do + all affairs + eventually + come.  
 Mod.1 Adv. of time + Mod.2 Adv. + Loc./Goal + Aux. + Ag. + Mod.3 Adv. + VI
- Abdel Haleem: truly + everything + will return + to God.  
 Mod. + Ag. + Aux. VI + Loc./Goal.

Accordingly, since the deep structures or the semantic inputs of the original sentence are not identical to the ones in the translations above, the fourth one seems identical to the original one regarding the number of semantic roles. In contrast, the abovementioned translations are not semanto-syntactic equivalent to the original deep structure. Regardless of its order, the fourth translation is similar to the original construction, containing Goal, Ag., Aux. V and Mod. However, the sentence rank indicates that translation (d) is an acceptable word-for-word translation and a synonymous paraphrase that may be understood or rearranged as “تصير الامور الى الله/”*tasiir al’umur ila Allah*” and “Everything will return to Allah”.

TABLE 3  
 SEMANTIC ROLES (SRs) AND EQUIVALENCE OF QUR’ANIC CONSTRUCTION 3 AND ENGLISH EQUIVALENTS

	Origin	Pickthall	Ali	Shakir	Abdel Haleem
Semantic Roles	Mod.	Mod. 1	VI	Mod. 1	Mod.
	Goal	Mod. 2	(Ag.)	Mod. 2	Ag.
	Aux. VI	Ag.	S	Goal	Aux. VI
	Ag.	Aux. VI	Mod.	Aux.	Goal
		Goal	Ag.	Ag.	
		Mod. 3	Aux. VI	Mod. 3	
Semanto-Syntactic Equivalence		X	X	X	✓

### Findings

After comparing the deep structures of the original Qur'anic texts and their selected English renderings, the table shows the percentages of semanto-syntactic equivalence, ranked from highest to lowest: Shakir (65.85%), Pickthall (60.97%), Ali (55.09%), and Abdel Haleem (53.65%). Conversely, the non-equivalence percentages are Abdel Haleem (46.34%), Ali (43.90%), Pickthall (39.02%), and Shakir (34.14%). These results indicate that Shakir's translation exhibits the highest semanto-syntactic equivalence and the lowest non-equivalence among the four translations. The total number of texts analyzed is 40, with text 10 divided into A and B, giving a total of 41 for calculation purposes.

This study demonstrates that Krzeszowski's (1990) methodology, originally applied to English–Polish contrastive studies, can be effectively adapted to English–Arabic contrastive studies. The study applies his procedures for identifying semanto-syntactic equivalence by representing the semantic roles of source and target constructions, examining selectional restrictions and co-occurrence, consulting lexical references, and highlighting relevant transformational processes. Ultimately, the analysis compares the deep structures of the original and target constructions to determine whether their semantic representations are identical or non-identical.

Hence, the present study identifies semanto-syntactic equivalence as a key *tertium comparationis* within Krzeszowski's model by analyzing the deep structures of Qur'anic constructions and their four English renderings (Pickthall, 1997; Ali, 2001; Shakir, 1999; Abdel Haleem, 2005). Comparisons of the original texts with their translations in Table 4 show the highest semanto-syntactic equivalence in Shakir (65.85%), followed by Pickthall (60.97%), Ali (55.09%), and Abdel Haleem (53.65%). Conversely, non-equivalence is highest in Abdel Haleem (46.34%) and lowest in Shakir (34.14%). These results indicate that Shakir's translation most closely preserves the identical deep structures of the Qur'anic constructions. Furthermore, either Krzeszowski's Original Configuration or Fillmore's Semantic Roles were applied to analyze the deep structures of the 40 selected Qur'anic texts and their English renderings, using roles such as V, Erg, Dat, Loc, Inst, and Ag. The analysis demonstrates that Fillmore's original semantic roles and Al-Khuli's modified version apply to the underlying structures of Qur'anic constructions and their English translations, as summarized in Table 4.

TABLE 4  
THE PERCENTAGE OF SEMANTO-SYNTACTIC EQUIVALENCE & NON-EQUIVALENCE OF QUR'ANIC CONSTRUCTIONS AND THE FOUR SELECTED  
RENDERINGS INTO ENGLISH

Original Text No.	Pickthall	Ali	Shakir	Abdel Haleem
1.	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.	X	X	✓	X
3.	X	X	X	✓
4.	✓	X	X	X
5.	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.	✓	✓	✓	X
7.	X	X	X	✓
8.	✓	✓	X	X
9.	X	X	✓	✓
10a.	✓	✓	X	X
10b.	✓	✓	✓	X
11.	✓	✓	✓	✓
12.	✓	✓	✓	✓
13.	✓	X	✓	✓
14.	✓	✓	✓	X
15.	✓	✓	✓	✓
16.	X	✓	✓	X
17.	✓	✓	X	X
18.	✓	X	✓	X
19.	✓	✓	✓	✓
20.	✓	✓	✓	✓
21.	X	X	X	X
22.	✓	X	✓	X
23.	✓	✓	✓	✓
24.	X	X	X	X
25.	X	X	X	X
26.	✓	✓	✓	✓
27.	✓	✓	✓	✓
28.	✓	✓	✓	✓
29.	✓	✓	✓	✓
30.	✓	X	✓	X
31.	X	X	X	✓
32.	X	✓	X	X
33.	X	✓	✓	X
34.	X	✓	X	✓
35.	✓	✓	✓	✓
36.	X	X	X	X
37.	X	X	✓	✓
38.	X	X	X	X
39.	✓	X	✓	✓
40.	X	X	✓	✓
Semanto-Syntactic Equivalence	25	23	27	22
	60.97%	55.09%	65.85%	53.65%
Non-Equivalence	16	18	14	19
	39.02%	43.90%	34.14%	46.34%

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The present study arrived at the following conclusions: first, the concepts of *tertium comparationis*, semanto-syntactic equivalence, and deep structures are definable and applicable within both Arabic and English linguistic traditions, as evidenced by their application in the selected data. Second, Krzeszowski's (1990) methodology has been successfully adapted to English–Arabic contrastive studies, confirming its validity for cross-linguistic comparison. Third, the assumption that Qur'anic constructions and their English renderings have identical deep structures and semanto-syntactic equivalence was approved. As shown in Table 4, equivalence percentages were high while non-equivalence remained comparatively low. Fourth, the study confirmed that the semantic role frameworks of Fillmore and Al-Khuli apply to both Arabic and English data, accurately identifying equivalence and non-equivalence in deep structures. Fifth, the structural similarity across both languages is supported, as equivalent constructions showed no syntactic or semantic constraints violations, unlike non-equivalent ones. Finally, a quantitative approach ensures a high

degree of semanto-syntactic equivalence between the deep structures of the Qur'anic constructions and their English renderings under scrutiny. Hence, the study bridges a significant gap in English–Arabic contrastive linguistics by validating Krzeszowski's model as a model of comparison.

Other conclusions that may be drawn from the present study are that there is no absolutely identical deep structure across Arabic and English, as the quantitative approach and the table of percentages show. This result may support the rejection of the claim of absolute universality across languages made by some linguists. However, languages can share some universal deep-level properties. Thus, universality is relational, abstract and constrained.

Finally, the following recommendations are set for future studies: first, it is highly recommended that the different types of equivalence proposed by Krzeszowski be distinguished, along with the parameters for investigating each. Second, it is recommended that the steps of applied and theoretical contrastive linguistics be distinguished. Third, it is recommended that the procedures for analyzing semantic roles, selectional restrictions, co-occurrence, lexical items, and transformations in texts be followed to investigate their identical deep structures and semanto-syntactic equivalence. Fourth, investigating the deep structures or semantic inputs is highly recommended for studying equivalence across Arabic and English. Fifth, the study of *tertium comparationis* in linguistics is recommended to adopt Krzeszowski's (1990) approach. Sixth, Fillmore's (1966) model and the modified versions of Al-Khuli (1999, 2000) are recommended for analyzing the underlying structures of Arabic and English data. Seventh, it is also highly recommended that semantic representations (i.e., semantic roles) across Arabic and English be implemented as corpus tools to reduce the time researchers spend. Finally, it is recommended that the present study may lead to English-Arabic contrastive generative grammar as a future schema.

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