

## Contextual vs. Verbal Consistency in the Translations of the Qur'anic Polysemous Verb *ata*: A corpus-based Study

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### Abstract

This corpus-based study investigates how translators of the Qur'an have dealt with the verb *ata* that seems to represent a case of polysemy. It examines nine English translations of all tokens of the verb *ata* in the Glorious Qur'an with the aim of determining which of the two policies referred to by Nida and Taber; "Contextual Consistency" and "Verbal Consistency" translators have adopted. It attempts to investigate whether the translators have been able to recognize when *ata* in the Qur'an is being used in a primary or a secondary sense or they have fallen into the trap of translating it literally. It also attempts to determine whether the syntactic and semantic behavior of the verb *ata* has an implication for the translating process. It is mainly a descriptive study where an attempt is made to descriptively – rather than prescriptively – discuss the translation product. A statistical analysis is conducted to identify the English equivalents of *ata* in the corpus. The selection includes the translations of Rodwell, Palmer, Pickthall, Y. Ali, Arberry, Shakir, Al-Hilali and Khan, Ghali, and Khalifa. Corpus analysis reveals that the polysemous verb *ata* has not been translated by a single word in the English translations under study. On the contrary, it has a large number of translation equivalents. This difference in translation equivalents could be a sign of the possibility of a difference in the semantics of the original verb. It means that *ata* in the Qur'an expresses various meanings and that in translating it most of the translators have adopted the policy of contextual consistency.

**Key words:** *ata*, corpus analysis, polysemy, translation equivalents, contextual consistency, verbal consistency.

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