



# A Semantic Review of Qur'ānic Near-Synonyms, English and French Translations

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**Abstract:** This study examines the nuances among the chosen near-synonyms and the extent to which the translators considered such nuances in the selected translations of the Qur'an. It seeks to identify the meanings of two sets of near-synonyms in their Qur'anic contexts based on the Qur'anic exegeses. It also highlights the differences in meaning that exist among these near-synonyms and the extent to which the semantic differences among those near-synonyms are preserved in translation. This study is grounded on the RC-S approach by Murphy as a theoretical framework for data analysis. The obtained results show that there are some differences in meaning among the chosen near-synonyms and that some of such nuances are not preserved in the English and French translations. Thus, the study recommends that the differences in meaning among the near-synonyms should be identified before translating the Qur'anic texts, and subsequently, the identified differences should be reflected in the translation.

**Keywords:** Nuances, Connotation, Denotation, Translation, Near-Synonyms, Qur'an.

## 1. Introduction

Synonymy has been viewed as a universal linguistic phenomenon that exists in various languages; it is defined as “a semantic relation between two words which share the same concept or sense” (Murphy, 2003:7). Rapidly and quickly, speedily and quickly, well and healthy, ill and sick are some examples of synonyms. However, it is crucial to indicate that synonyms differ in terms of the degree of synonymity (i.e., the overlapping meanings among synonyms). Based on this, there are different types of synonyms (Ishrateh, 2006; Hjørland, 2007). In this respect, Taylor (2002) identified two types of synonyms, namely, absolute synonyms as well as near-synonyms. He contended that absolute synonyms are those which bear the same sense in all contexts and are, therefore, utilized in every context without any change in meaning. Nonetheless, Taylor maintained that near-synonyms are the ones that have the same sense only in a few contexts, claiming that languages do not have absolute synonyms.

Moreover, Murphy (2003) classified synonyms into two types: logical synonyms and context-dependent synonyms. Murphy argued that sense synonyms and full synonyms are two kinds of logical synonyms. Nevertheless, every context-dependent synonym is considered a near-synonym. The synonyms which share one or more senses and differ in others are viewed as sense synonyms. Instances of such synonyms include father and daddy since the word ‘father’ could be used to mean a religious father, which is not ‘a biological father’ (Cruse, 1986). However, Murphy (2003) argued that full synonyms refer to synonyms that are identical in all senses, though these types of synonyms are not found in languages. According to Murphy, near-synonyms do not have identical meanings, and thus they have different contributions to sentential truth conditions. Examples of near-synonyms include near, close, immediate, neighbouring, close-up, next door, and so forth. It is widely accepted that this type of synonym is prevalent in all languages. Since the present study seeks to investigate the near-synonyms of the Holy Qur'an, it is vitally important to shed some light on this type of near-synonym.

In fact, the concept of synonymy in the Holy Qur'an has been studied by many scholars (e.g., Bint Al-Shāṭi', 1971; Al-Sowaidi, 2011; Abdul-Ghafour et al., 2017, 2019, 2022; Zitouni et al., 2022). In fact, the term ‘near-synonyms’ has been proposed for the Qur'anic near-synonyms in previous studies (e.g., Al-Sowaidi, 2011). It is stated that since there are preferences for utilizing one synonym in some Qur'anic contexts, these synonyms could be considered as near-synonyms (Abdellah, 2003). In this connection, it is pointed out that each near-synonym in the Qur'an has special semantic features, which make it different from other Qur'anic near-synonyms, which have a similar meaning (Abdul-Raof, 2018: 109). As for the Qur'anic synonyms, it is stated that:

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*“A word which is employed in a certain verse occurs in a context where another word which is semantically similar to it cannot be employed because the alternative word has different semantic componential features from the first word. A word contrasts with another word on a single or a number of componential features. This leads to semantic contrastiveness between two verbs, nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. However, semantic contrastiveness should not be confused with antonymy, i.e., a word of opposite meaning to another word”* (Abdul-Raof, 2018: 97).

In addition, Ali 1938 and Al-Sowaidi 2011 contended that translating the Qur’anic near-synonyms is not an easy task. This is because the Qur’anic words are so rich, and this makes it impossible to translate them word-for-word into another language. He added that the Qur’anic language provides specific lexical items for similar ideas and things that have only a general lexical item in English.

Similarly, Al-cUwa (1998) argued that there are some semantic differences among the near-synonyms in the Qur’ān, and no two Qur’ānic words have precisely the same senses. Thus, the Qur’ānic near-synonyms should be dealt with in a different way, and the nuances among them must also be taken into account in order to appropriately perceive the meanings of the Qur’ānic texts. If such nuances are not perceived by readers or translators, the Qur’ānic message will be distorted (Al-Sowaidi, 2011; Abdul-Ghafour et al., 2019).

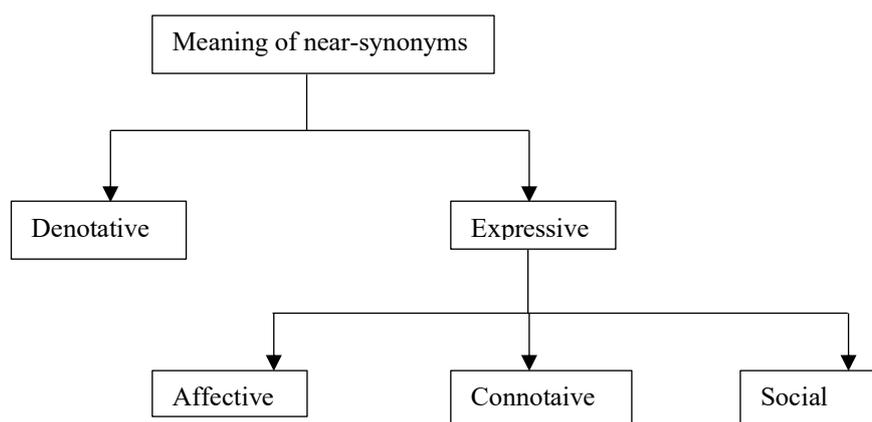
More importantly, it is not easy to perceive the semantic differences among some Qur’ānic near-synonyms even by non-specialist native Arabic speakers, in that some of these synonyms are utilized to express the same thing in Modern Standard Arabic. For example, the Qur’ānic pair *سنة* and *عام* (year) in the Holy Qur’ān are semantically different, and therefore they could not be used interchangeably (Al-Shacrāwī, 1991). The word *سنة* (year) has a negative meaning as it implicates the year in which people suffer from challenges and difficulties, such as shortage of food and rain, while *عام* (year) has a positive meaning as it implicates a blessed year (AlQinai, 2011). More importantly, these two near-synonyms cannot be utilized interchangeably in the Qur’ānic texts, and if one is used in the context of another, the Qur’ānic message will be distorted. Therefore, the nuances among the Qur’ānic near-synonyms should be considered by readers and, most importantly, by translators of the Qur’ān so that the intended meanings of the Qur’ānic texts can be perceived appropriately.

Since this study deals with a linguistic issue in translation, i.e., a semantic analysis of near-synonyms and their French and English translation, it is of vital significance to explain how the current study meaningfully and significantly contributes to the existing knowledge. It is well known that linguistics plays a vital role in translating from one language to another. In fact, translation involves more than just replacing original language words with others in the target language. This is because translators need to decipher and decode all functions and facets of the original language into the target language. This is where understanding and studying linguistics come into play in translation. To translate a text from one language to another, translators need to address the functions of linguistics, including the meanings of source language words as well as the nuances that exist among them. Besides, translators need to find out the differences and similarities between languages so as to translate accurately. All these contribute to providing an accurate translation from one language to another. Consequently, it is widely accepted that careful use of the findings provided by a linguistic study could substantially enhance the accuracy and quality of a translated document. This study is an attempt to investigate the semantic differences among two sets of Qur’ānic near-synonyms and how such nuances are preserved in the English and French translations. It could offer insight into the Qur’ānic synonymy and an illustration to the translators of the Qur’ān that the semantic differences among the near-synonyms of the Qur’an need careful consideration. This study aims to examine the meanings of the chosen sets of near-synonyms based on their Qur’anic contexts, the semantic differences among them, and the extent to which such semantic differences are considered by translators while rendering the meanings of these near-synonyms from Arabic to English and French.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

The present study is grounded on Murphy’s (2003) approach, namely, the Relation by Contrast Approach to Synonyms (RC-S). Such an approach explicates the concept of synonymy in relation to the slight semantic differences which exist among synonyms. While describing this approach, Murphy argued that in any set of different word forms, there is a slight nuance in either expressive or denotative meaning or both. Thus, the nuances among synonyms could be identified on the basis of these parameters: 1) denotative meaning and 2) expressive elements of meaning.

Denotative meaning is concerned with the essential meaning of a word (Murphy, 2003: 148). However, expressive meaning includes different types of meanings, such as affective, connotative, and social (ibid). Affective meaning is related to the attitudes of speakers toward the subject at hand. Moreover, connotative meaning is the associative meaning of a lexical item besides its central meaning (ibid). Finally, social meaning is related to the meaning of a word in some dialects, jargon, and so forth. This approach has been extensively used in previous studies (e.g., Abdul-Ghafour et al., 2017, 2019, 2022 & Zitouni et al., 2022) to highlight the contextual differences of the meanings of the near-synonyms in the Qur’an and then to assess the translations of synonyms in other languages



**Figure 1:** Types of meaning of near-synonyms based on Murphy's (2003) approach

### 3. Previous Studies

As pointed out in the introduction, synonymy is considered a universal phenomenon that exists in various languages. In fact, this phenomenon has been examined by several researchers worldwide. For instance, Orioli (2011) examined the word *'fair'* and its near-synonyms in Swedish and English. It analyzed the differences and similarities between this word and its near-synonyms in both languages. Ćarapić (2014) also examined an approach of near-synonym analysis in English and Serbian. He proposed an approach which is described by him as a helpful means of choosing near-synonyms within the forthcoming thesauri of the Serbian and English languages. Additionally, Alisherovna et al. (2021) studied the strategies for translating phraseological synonyms from English to Uzbek. Their study could be considered a synthesis of the linguistic nature of phraseological synonyms and organizing translation methods. Furthermore, Le and Kim (2018) examined the collocational behaviours of two near-synonyms, employing a corpus analysis, aiming to analyze the differences and similarities of the two selected adjectives regarding nominal collocates, semantic prosodies, semantic preferences, and general usage patterns. However, this study did not investigate their translation into other languages.

In terms of research on the Qur'ānic near-synonyms, literature has investigated the Qur'ānic synonyms and their translation into English. For example, Al-Azzam (2005) investigated the concept of synonymy in translation, providing some examples of the Qur'ān and Hadith. His research tackled three English translations of the Qur'ān and a translation of the Hadith. He focused on the challenges facing the translators while translating some Islamic terms of observations. His study revealed that the nuances among the Qur'ānic near-synonyms posed some challenges to the translators of the Holy Qur'ān. Moreover, Al-Sowaidi (2011) studied the difficulties faced while translating four pairs of near-synonyms into English. Her research was mainly concerned with the extent to which the expressive and referential meanings are retained in the English translation and how the standards of textuality are also reflected in the English translation. Al-Sowaidi claimed that some challenges were faced by translators while translating the chosen Qur'ānic near-synonyms, adding that the intended Qur'ānic message was not appropriately conveyed in the chosen English translations of the Qur'ān. Furthermore, her research revealed that nuances among the chosen near-synonyms in terms of connotative and denotative meanings are not preserved in English translations.

Moreover, Al-Hammadi (2017) investigated eight pairs of near-synonyms in four translations of the Holy Qur'ān in terms of the accuracy of their translations, claiming that the translators faced difficulty in translating the selected eight pairs of near-synonyms. She proposed that more accurate translation should be provided to reduce the distortion which is common in translating, such as Qur'ānic near-synonyms. Besides, Abdul-Ghafour et al. (2019) examined the interplay of two linguistic phenomena, namely, Qur'ānic polysemy and synonymy, and how the semantic differences between the selected pairs are preserved in the English translation and how different meanings of the selected polysemous word are considered in translation. The results of the study showed that there exist some semantic differences between the chosen near-synonyms and that these semantic differences are not preserved in English while translating the Qur'ānic texts. Besides, the study showed that the polysemous word *al-kutub* (the books) as well as *al-kitāb* (the book), i.e., its singular form, are rendered literally in the target language while translating the Holy Qur'ān.

In addition, Al-Abbas and Al-Khanji (2019) investigated the translation of two root-sharing Arabic synonyms in five popular English translations. The findings of the study revealed that the translators were not consistent in their choices of English equivalents for the selected lexical items. The translators did not also preserve the slight semantic differences between the selected near-synonyms in their translations. Alduhaim (2021) also examined the reflection of both the denotative and connotative meanings of some chosen Qur'ānic near-synonyms in English. The findings showed that all three translations could not differentiate between the

selected near-synonyms and could not capture the precise senses throughout the Qur'an; this led to a semantic void. According to her, the linguistic complexity of the Holy Quran posed a challenge to translators, leading to a loss of meaning and accuracy. Moreover, Salleh and Ahmad (2021) conducted a literature review on the translation of near-synonyms of the Holy Qur'ān into Malay and other languages and concluded that most of the relevant studies focused on Arabic-English translation of Qur'ānic near-synonyms. However, the studies on the translation of the Qur'ānic near-synonyms into other languages, such as Malay, are too limited. They proposed that much research should be conducted on investigating the translation of Qur'ānic near-synonyms into other languages.

A thorough investigation of the literature reveals that less attention is paid to examining the meanings of near-synonyms in the Holy Qur'ān and their French and English translations. While reviewing the relevant literature, Al-Omari & Abu-Melhim (2014) pointed out that little attention is given to Qur'ānic synonyms and their translations, and this stresses the need for more studies in this area. Many Qur'ānic near-synonyms should be investigated in terms of their contextual meanings, the nuances among them, or the extent to which such nuances are preserved in translation. Thus, this study fills this gap by studying the nuances among two sets of near-synonyms in the Holy Qur'an and how such nuances are preserved in French and English while translating the Qur'anic texts.

#### 4. Methodology

This section highlights the methodology followed in the present study; it discusses the design of the study, the chosen set of data, the chosen exegeses and translations of the Holy Qur'ān, the data analysis methods, and so on.

##### 4.1 Study Design

The current study uses the qualitative method for the selection and analysis of the data of the present study. This approach is followed in the present study as it is more relevant and useful in investigating the nuances among the chosen Qur'ānic near-synonyms. This study conducts a qualitative content analysis since this technique is flexible for data analysis.

##### 4.2 Corpus of The Study

Two sets of near-synonyms are chosen from the Holy Qur'an; such Qur'ānic near-synonyms are particularly chosen as they have not been investigated yet, and most significantly, they frequently occur in various verses of the Qur'ān. The following table shows the chosen near-synonyms for this study.

**Table 1:** Corpus of the study

Selected near-synonyms	Number of occurrences in the Holy Qur'ān	English translation	French translation
ضياء، دري، سراج، سنا، مصباح، وهج	16	Light, glittering, lamp, flashing & blazing	Luminaire, brilliant, lampe
بيت، مأب، مأوى، مثنوى، مرتفقا، ملتحد، ملجا، نزلا، موثلا	123	House, abode, resting place, refuge	Demeure, séjour, échapper, refuge

##### 4.3 The Selected Translations and Exegeses

The present study adopts two translations of near-synonyms, namely, the English translation of the Holy Qur'ān by Irving (2002) as well as the French translation by Michon (2013). There are some reasons why these translations are particularly selected; for instance, the translation of Irving is chosen because his translation was addressed to Western readers. Moreover, his translation was offered in contemporary English so that it could be easily understood by several readers. Nevertheless, the French translation was chosen because it is the most recent translation of the Holy Qur'ān in the French language. In addition, the present study depends on the exegeses of Ibn cAshūr (1984) and Al-Shacrāwī (1991) since these exegetes clarified the semantic differences among the near-synonyms in several verses of the Holy Qur'an. Other exegeses, such as Al-Maḥalī and Al-Suyūfī (2003), are also referred to as they are the most prominent exegeses, as pointed out by Abdul-Raof (2001).

##### 4.4 Procedures

The current study investigates the semantic differences which exist among the chosen near-synonyms in the Holy Qur'an and how these semantic differences are preserved in translation. One verse of the Holy Qur'ān was chosen for every Qur'ānic near-synonym, and the French and English translations are provided next to the selected verse. The semantic differences among the chosen sets of near-synonyms are provided on the basis of the chosen Qur'ānic exegeses. Subsequently, the researchers discussed the extent to which the differences in meaning among the chosen near-synonyms are preserved in English and French while translating the Qur'anic texts. The obtained results are provided in the next section.

## 5. Findings

This section presents the data analysis as well as the obtained results of the present study; it offers an analysis of the meanings of the Qur'ānic verses based on the Qur'ānic exegeses, as well as the nuances among the chosen near-synonyms. Then, it shows how the differences in meaning are preserved in translation.

### 5.1 *Siraja* (سراجا) and Its Near-Synonyms

This section offers an analysis of the meanings of the lexical item سراجا (lamp) and its Qur'ānic near-synonyms, namely, ضياء (radiance), دري (glittering), سنا (flash), مصباح (lamp), نور (light) and وهج (blazing).

**Table 2:** The meaning and translation of سراجا (lamp) and وهج (blazing)

The Qur'ānic verse	English translation	French translation
سِرَاجًا وَقَعَلْنَا سِرَاجًا (النبا: 13)	“ <i>And set a blazing lamp there</i> ” (Al-Naba: 13)	“ <i>Et Nous avons placé un luminaire éblouissant</i> ” (Al-Naba: 13)

This verse is explained by Ibn cĀshūr (1984), Al-Shacrāwī (1991), and Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūṭī (2003) as follows: “*and have appointed a radiant and dazzling light which is the sun for humankind.*” Al-Rāzī (1982) explains that سراجا refers to something which emits light. Based on the interpretation of this verse, the word سراجا (lamp) implicates the sun, which is described as وهجا (radiant or dazzling).

**Table 3:** The meaning and translation of دري (glittering)

The Qur'ānic verse	English translation	French translation
كَأَنهَا كَوَكَّبٌ دُرِّيُّ يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ (النور: 35)	“ <i>The glass is just as if it were a glittering star kindled from a blessed olive tree</i> ” (Al-Noor:35)	“ <i>Le cristal est pareil à un astre brillant qu'allume un arbre béni</i> ” (Al-Noor :35)

The meaning of this verse is explained by Al-Shacrāwī (1991), Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūṭī (2003), and Ibn cĀshūr (1984) as follows: “*the glass with the light inside it is similar to a glittering and shining star.*” According to them, the lexical item دري (glittering) is derived from the Arabic word يدرء (to repel), as it repels darkness. This lamp is kindled from a blessed tree, i.e., the olive tree. The whole verse describes the light of Allah. In the Arabic dictionary, “*Alqamous Almuḥid*,” دري means ‘glittering.’ Based on the verse interpretation, it is noticed that the word دري (glittering) means glittering or shining.

**Table 4:** The meaning and translation of سنا (flash)

The Qur'ānic verse	English translation	French translation
يَكَادُ سَنَا بَرْقِهِ يَذْهَبُ بِالْأَبْصَارِ (النور: 43)	“ <i>A flash from His lightning almost takes one's sight away!</i> ” (Al-Noor: 43)	“ <i>L'éclat de la foudre obnubile presque les regards</i> ” (Al-Noor : 43)

Ibn cĀshūr (1984), Al-Shacrāwī (1991), and Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūṭī (2003) interpreted this verse as follows: The brilliance and vivid flashing emanated from lighting would almost snatch the sight away due to the light intensity. Al-Rāzī (1982) illustrates that سنا means ‘light.’ Therefore, it is noticed that سنا (flash) denotes vivid flashing or brilliance.

**Table 5:** The meaning and translation of مصباح (lamp)

The Qur'ānic verse	English translation	French translation
تعالى: ﴿النور: 35﴾ مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِثْقَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ	“ <i>His light may be compared to a niche in which there is a lamp</i> ” (Al-Noor: 35)	“ <i>Sa Lumière est semblable à une niche dans laquelle se trouve une lampe</i> ” (Al-Noor : 35)

Al-Shacrāwī (1991) and Ibn cĀshūr (1984) explained the meaning of the verse as follows: “*Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth and the likeness of His Light is as a niche wherein there is a lamp.*” This description of Allah's Light is offered as it resides in the believer's heart. Thus, it can be stated that مصباح in this Qur'ānic context denotes ‘lamp.’

**Table 6:** The meaning and translation of ضياء (radiance) and نور (light)

The Qur'ānic verse	English translation	French translation
تعالى: ﴿يونس: 5﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ الشَّمْسُ ضِيَاءً وَالْقَمَرَ نُورًا	“ <i>He it is Who has placed the sun for radiance and the moon for (reflected) light</i> ” (Yunus: 5)	“ <i>C'est Lui qui fait du soleil une clarté et de la lune une lumière</i> ” (Yunus : 5)

The meaning of this Qur'anic verse is explained by Ibn cĀshūr (1984), Al-Shacrāwī (1991), and Al-Mahālī & Al-Suyūṭī (2003) as follows: He who appointed the sun a splendor and glitter, and the moon a light for humankind at daytime and night, respectively. Based on the interpretations of the Qur'anic verse above, the analysis of سراج (lamp) in this context showed that this Qur'anic lexical item has some near-synonyms in the Holy Qur'an like ضياء (radiance), دري (glittering), سنا (flash), مصباح (lamp), نور (light) and وهج (blazing). Nevertheless, there are some semantic differences between them. For instance, ضياء (radiance) refers to the source of light while نور (light) denotes 'reflected light.' Moreover, it is noticed that the word سراج (lamp) denotes light, and this word is used to implicate the sun as revealed in the Qur'anic exegeses. Furthermore, the word مصباح refers to a 'lamp' which emits light. Besides, the lexical item دري means 'glittering', which is used to describe a star (i.e., a glittering star). Similarly, the word وهج (glittering) is used to describe سراج (lamp). In terms of سنا (flash), it is used to denote brilliance or vivid flashing.

However, it is revealed that the English translations of these near-synonyms do not reflect the nuances among some of these near-synonyms. For instance, it is found that such near-synonyms are translated into English as follows: سراج (lamp), ضياء (radiance), دري (glittering), سنا (flash), مصباح (lamp), نور (reflected light) and وهج (blazing). It is noticed that the translator dealt with سراج and مصباح in the selected Qur'anic verse as absolute synonyms and thus translated both words as (lamp). Moreover, it is revealed that the word ضياء is rendered as (radiance) in English. In fact, radiance means 'soft and gentle light' (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2005). It is shown that this word ضياء denotes a shining splendour in this Qur'anic verse, and thus the English translation does not preserve the meaning of this word as intended in the Qur'anic text.

By translating the word نور (reflected light), the translator succeeded in showing the difference in denotative meaning between نور (reflected light) and other near-synonyms such as سراج (lamp), ضياء (radiance) and مصباح (lamp). By adding the adjective 'reflected' to the word 'light,' the translator made the denotative meaning of this Qur'anic synonym explicit to the reader. In addition, the word وهج is translated into English as 'blazing.' This word, i.e., 'blazing,' means 'extremely hot' (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2005), which is not intended in this verse of the Holy Qur'an. It is shown that the intended meaning of وهج (blazing) in this Qur'anic word is radiant or dazzling. Thus, translating this word as 'blazing' does not preserve the meaning of this word. Furthermore, the word دري is faithfully rendered into English as 'glittering,' which well reflects the intended meaning in this Qur'anic verse. Finally, it is shown that سنا is translated into English as (flash), which reflects part of its meaning (i.e., vivid flashing).

As for French translations of these near-synonyms, it is found that the selected near-synonyms are rendered in French as follows: سراج (luminaire=light), ضياء (claret=light), دري (brillant=shining), سنا (éclat=flash), مصباح (lampe=lamp), نور (lumière=light), وهج (éblouissant=dazzling). It is noticed that the translator dealt with سراج، نور، and ضياء in the selected Qur'anic verses as absolute synonyms and thus translated these three words as (light) where the nuances among such near-synonyms are not preserved. Similar to the English translation, the word سنا is rendered in English as (flash), which reflects part of its meaning (vivid flashing). However, the French translations of the other Qur'anic near-synonyms, i.e., سراج (light), دري (shining), مصباح (lamp), وهج (dazzling) are faithfully rendered to the target language, i.e., French.

## 5.2 Bait (بيت) And Its Near-Synonyms

This section provides the meanings of بيت (house) and its near-synonyms in the Holy Qur'an, namely, مأوى (retreat), مَثْوَى (room), مَأْب (retreat), مرتفقا (the couch), ملجأ (refugee) and مونتلا (asylum).

**Table 7:** The meaning and translation of بيت (house)

The Qur'anic verse	English translation	French translation
قال تعالى: "تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْ سُهُولِهَا قُصُورًا وَتَجْعَلُونَ الْجِبَالَ بُيُوتًا" ﴿الأعراف: 74﴾	"You occupy palaces on its plains and carve houses out of the mountains" (Al-Nisa: 95)	"Dans ses plaines vous aménagez des palais et dans les montagnes vous creusez des maisons" (Al-Nisa: 95)

Ibn cĀshūr (1984) explained the meaning of this Qur'anic verse as follows: You select castles in the plains for the summer, utilizing mud, and hew the mountains into dwellings for the winter. Therefore, it is noticed that بيت denotes 'houses.'

**Table 8:** The meaning and translation of مأوى (retreat)

The Qur'anic verse	English translation	French translation
قال تعالى: "أَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَلَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ الْمَأْوَى نُزُلًا بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ" ﴿السجدة: 19﴾	"Those who believe and perform honorable deeds will have gardens with living quarters to relax in because of what they have been doing" (Al-Sajdah: 19)	"Pies auront les Jardins du refuge comme lieu de séjour pour prix de leurs œuvres" (Al-Sajdah: 19)

The meaning of this verse is explained by Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūṭī (2003), Al-Shacrāwī (1991), and Ibn cĀshūr (1984) as follows: As for those who believe in Allah, His Messenger, and the Holly Qur’ān and then do good deeds, they will have the Gardens of Retreat as a reward of them, a welcome for their good deeds they used to do in this life. Al-Rāzī (1982) explains that مَأْوَى is any place which people go to, day or night’. It is revealed that the Qur’ānic word مَأْوَى (retreat) is interpreted as ‘retreat.’

**Table 9:** The meaning and translation of مَأْوَى (room)

The Qur’ānic verse	English translation	French translation
قال تعالى: “أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَأْوَى لِّلْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ” (الزمر 60)	“Is there not room in Hell for the overbearing?” (Al-Zumur:60)	“La Géhenne n'est-elle pas la demeure des orgueilleux ? “ (Al-Zumur:60)

This Qur’anic verse is explained by Ibn cĀshūr (1984), Al-Shacrāwī (1991), and Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūṭī (2003) as follows: “Is there not a fitting abode in Hell for those who are very arrogant? to believe? Indeed, there is”. In the Arabic dictionary “*Alqamous Almohad*,” this word, i.e., مَأْوَى means ‘abode.’ Thus, it is noticed that the word مَأْوَى denotes ‘a fitting abode’.

**Table 10:** The meaning and translation of الْمَأْوَى (retreat)

The Qur’ānic verse	English translation	French translation
قال تعالى: “ذَلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَأْوَى” (ال عمران 14)	“That means enjoyment during worldly life, while Allah (God) holds the finest retreat” (Al-Imran: 14)	“Ce sont là des attrait de la vie de ce monde, mais auprès de Dieu se situe le meilleur retour” (Al-Imran : 14)

Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūṭī (2003) explained the meaning of this Qur’ānic verse as follows: That is the enjoyment of this world and with God is a more excellent abode in the Afterlife, i.e., Paradise, to whoever shun such joys. It is viewed that the Qur’ānic word الْمَأْوَى is interpreted as ‘abode.’

**Table 11:** The meaning and translation of مَرْتَقًا (the couch)

The Qur’ānic verse	English translation	French translation
قال تعالى: “بِعِزِّ النَّوَابِ وَحَسَنَتِ مَرْتَقًا” (الكهف 31)	“How superb will such a recompense be and how handsome is the couch” (Al-Kahf: 31)	“Quelle belle récompense et quel magnifique séjour!” (Al-Kahf: 31)

The meaning of this Qur’anic verse is explained by Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūṭī (2003) and Al-Shacrāwī (1991) as follows: “How excellent a reward a requital is Paradise and how fair a resting-place!” It could be, thus, concluded that the word مَرْتَقًا denotes ‘a resting place’.

**Table 12:** The meaning and translation of مَلْجَأً (refugee)

The Qur’ānic verse	English translation	French translation
قال تعالى: “لَوْ يَجِدُونَ مَلْجَأً أَوْ مَغَارَاتٍ أَوْ مُدْخَلًا لَّوَلَّوْا إِلَيْهِ” (النوبة 57)	“If they should find some refuge or some caverns, or an entrance they could creep into” (Al-Tawbah: 57)	“S'ils trouvent un refuge, des cavernes ou un abri quelconque, ils s'y précipitent en toute hâte” (Al-Tawbah: 57)

This verse is explained by Ibn cĀshūr (1984), Al-Shacrāwī (1991), and Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūṭī (2003) as follows: “If they could find a shelter where they can seek refuge or some caverns underground chambers or any other place to enter, they would have promptly gone to it.” Moreover, the Arabic dictionary “*Alqamous Almuhid*” by Al-Fairozabadi explains that this word is derived from the Arabic word لَجَأَ (to seek refuge) and thus, this word means ‘shelter.’ Therefore, it is revealed that مَلْجَأً refers to ‘shelter.’

**Table 13:** The meaning and translation of مَوْئِلاً (asylum)

The Qur’ānic verse	English translation	French translation
قال تعالى: “بَلْ لَهُمْ مَوْءِئِدٌ لَّنْ يَجِدُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ مَوْئِلاً” (الكهف 58)	“Instead, they have their appointment from which they will never find any asylum” (Al-Kahf: 58)	“mais il leur a été fixé un terme auquel nul ne peut échapper!” (Al-Kahf: 58)

The meaning of this Qur'anic verse is explained by Al-Shacrāwī (1991) and Ibn cĀshūr (1984) as follows: “*but they have a tryst that is the Resurrection Day, from the chastisement of Allah, they will not find any refuge or escape. It is shown that موئلا is interpreted as refuge*”. Based on the interpretations of the verses above, the analysis of بيت (house) shows that this word has some Qur'anic near-synonyms such as مآوى (retreat), مئوى (room), مآب (retreat), مرئقا (the couch), ملجأ (refuge) and موئلا (asylum). Nevertheless, there are some semantic differences among these near-synonyms. For example, the word بيت in the selected verse refers to (house) based on Al-Shacrāwī (1991) and Al-Maḥalī & Al-Suyūṭī (2003). More importantly, this word is polysemous and is sometimes used in the Qur'ān to denote الكعبة (the Kaaba) as in the following Qur'anic verse “*The first House of worship set up for mankind was the one at Becca, Mecca*” (Al-Emran, 96).

The contextual analysis also revealed that مآوى denotes ‘retreat,’ مئوى denotes ‘a fitting abode,’ المآب is interpreted as ‘abode,’ مرئقا denotes ‘a resting place,’ ملجأ refers to ‘shelter,’ and موئلا is interpreted as ‘refuge’ based on the selected Qur'anic exegeses. In terms of English and French translations of these words, it is revealed that the word بيت is translated into English and French as ‘house’, which faithfully conveys the denotative meaning of the lexical item. Moreover, it is found that the word مآوى is rendered as ‘living quarters’ in English and as ‘refuge’ in French. It is noticed that the English translation of مآوى as ‘living quarters’ is faithful and conveys the same meaning of this lexical item as discussed in the exegeses of the Qur'ān. However, the French translation ‘refuge’ does not preserve the denotative meaning of this near-synonym since this translation, i.e., ‘refuge’ denotes ‘shelter or protection for someone or something (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2005) that does not have the same senses of the Qur'anic lexical item.

Moreover, it is found that the lexical item مئوى is rendered as ‘room’ in English and as ‘la demeure=abode’ in French. Therefore, it can be said that the French translation of this lexical item as ‘abode’ is faithful and provides the same meaning as the Qur'anic lexical item. However, the English translation does not reflect the intended meaning as explained in the Qur'anic exegeses. Besides, the Qur'anic word مرئقا is rendered as ‘couch’ in English and as ‘séjour=stay’ in French. Consequently, it can be stated that the English translation of this Qur'anic near-synonym does not have the same meaning which is intended in the Qur'anic text since ‘couch’ refers to “*a piece of furniture big enough for two or three people to sit on*” (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2005). Nevertheless, the translation of this lexical item in French as ‘séjour=stay’ is acceptable. Thus, it would have been better had the translators rendered this word as ‘resting place.’ This rendition could be faithful and preserves the intended meaning of this word in this Qur'anic verse. In addition, the word ملجأ is translated as ‘refuge’ in English and French, and such a rendition well reflects the meaning of this word as intended in that verse. Finally, the word موئلا is rendered as ‘asylum’ in English and ‘échapper=escape’ in French. It is noticed that both translations of this word are congruent with the meaning of this word in the Qur'anic verse.

## 6. Conclusions

The contextual analysis of the selected data showed that even though the chosen near-synonyms appear to share similar meanings, they have nuances when their contextual meanings are deeply analyzed. The current study identified the meanings of two sets of near-synonyms in their Qur'anic contexts, namely, سراج (lamp) and its Qur'anic near-synonyms as well as بيت (house) and its near-synonyms in the Holy Qur'an. The analysis of the data showed that some semantic differences exist among the chosen near-synonyms. This finding is consistent with the results obtained in other studies (Abdul-Ghafour, et al., 2017, 2019, 2022). The significance of Qur'anic contexts in showing the semantic differences among near-synonyms in the Holy Qur'an is emphasized by several researchers, among whom Abdul-Ghafour (2019), Al-Sowaidi (2011), and Al-Azzam (2005). Consequently, the present study proposes that translators should examine the differences among the near-synonyms in the Holy Qur'an while translating and then reflect these semantic differences in their translation. Moreover, the obtained results revealed that the Qur'anic exegeses have an important role in showing the nuances among the near-synonyms in the Holy Qur'an, and consequently, they are helpful for translators. This result is in line with those of the literature like Abdul-Raof (2001 & 2018). Therefore, the current study stresses the importance of relying on the exegeses of the Qur'ān during the process of translation. Besides, the obtained results showed that the translators of the Holy Qur'ān find it difficult to reflect the semantic differences among some Qur'anic near-synonyms. This finding is congruent with those obtained by Al-Hammadi (2017) and Alduhaim (2021), who found that translators encounter difficulty in providing accurate translations for the Qur'anic synonyms as the nuances that exist among some near-synonyms are not preserved in English during the process of translation.

As for the French and English translations of the Qur'anic near-synonyms, it is shown that the translators of the Holy Qur'ān faced some obstacles while rendering the meanings of the Qur'anic near-synonyms, particularly with regard to preserving the semantic differences among the chosen near-synonyms in French and English languages. For example, both مصباح and سراج are considered an absolute synonym and thus rendered in English as ‘lamp’ though they denote ‘lamp’ and ‘light’ respectively. Since the word سراج denotes ‘light’ and implicates ‘the sun,’ it should be rendered as ‘light’ (i.e., the sun). It is also noticed that the French translator dealt with نور and ضياء in the selected Qur'anic verses as absolute synonyms and thus translated these words as (light) where the semantic differences among such near-synonyms are not preserved. It would have been better had the

translator rendered the word نور as 'reflected light,' which faithfully provides the meaning of the original Qur'ānic word.

In conclusion, previous studies (e.g., Abdul-Ghafour et al., 2019, 2022; Al-Omari & Abu-Melhim, 2014) revealed that the semantic differences among the near-synonyms and reflecting such nuances in translation need more investigation. Much research should be, thus, carried out to scrutinize the meanings of near-synonyms and their translation into French and English. The present study only examined the differences among two sets of near-synonyms in the Qur'an and their reflection in French and English during translation. Therefore, future research should find out the extent to which the nuances among other Qur'anic near-synonyms in other significant languages. To conclude, the present study emphasizes the common fact that the translation of the Holy Qur'an into any language could be just considered as the translation of the meanings of the Qur'an but not the actual translation of this significant literary masterpiece.

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