Translation Techniques applied in the Translation of Euphemisms for Hardship in the Quran.

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ABSTRACT

Most sacred texts are filled with denotative and connotative meanings, thus making these texts holy and sacred. This results in making these texts sensitive when dealing with the original text or the translated text. The reason for this sensitivity can be due to the content of the taboo or hidden message within the text. Euphemism is one of the used and evident linguistic features of many holy and sacred texts. This paper investigates and compares three different translations of the Quran with special focus on euphemisms for hardship in the Quran. It aimed at answering the question of what translation techniques and euphemism types are used to translate euphemism for hardship in the Quran. The paper argues that literal translation is the most applied technique in the translation of such euphemism.

INTRODUCTION

Translation both as a practice and as an academic discipline has been the center of focus and attention for a very long period of time. The need for translation has always been important in that throughout history, people of different languages communicated through translation. Translators play a vital role in human communication and in making the world seem much smaller, and the people closer. When translating between two language systems the translator needs to pay particular attention to linguistic and rhetorical features such as euphemisms and metaphors. According to Hatim and Mason (1997, p. 111) “translators deal with elements of meaning that can often lie above the level of propositional content and beyond the level of the sentence”. Euphemisms pose a cultural and linguistic issue in translation due to their function in any language, let alone when it comes to translations between Arabic and English, and the issue is far more complicated when dealing with sacred texts such as the Quran. This is because “Translators often deal with both denotative meanings and pragmatic meanings (i.e. the intended meaning) in euphemistic utterances” Albarakati (2019, p. 2).

Statement of the problem

The Quran is a sacred and sensitive text and it needs to be dealt with in a special way in the translation process. Translating any sacred text “with a long and sensitive tradition creates the feeling of having some 2000 years of translators looking over one’s shoulder” Nida (as cited in Simms, 2006, p. 189). As a text, the Quran is filled with euphemistic expressions. Consequently, the translator has to make some difficult decisions as to whether to reduce the loss of meaning, or to lose the intended function of the euphemism.

The following is an example of such difficulties:

(Quran 2:197)

الجَيْحُ أَشْهُرٌ مَعْلُومٌ فَمَنْ فَرَضَ فِيهِنَّ الْحَجُّ فَلَ رَفَثَ وَلَ فُسُوقَ وَلَ جِدَالَ فِي الْحَجِّ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَعْلَمُهُ اللَُّ وَتَزَوَّدُوا فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَى وَاتَّقُونِ يَا أُولِي الَْلْبَاب

Abdel Haleem (T1)

Khan & Al-Hilali (T2)

Ali (T3)

There should be no indecent speech

Then he should not have sexual relations (with his wife).

Let there be no obscenity

In the above example, the Quran uses a euphemistic expression related to a sexual connotation. It is clear that the
translators adopted three different approaches in translating the euphemistic expression. This clearly illustrates the difficulty of translating euphemisms in the Quran.

Through the comparison between three English translations of the Quran this research aims to identify the accuracy and quality of the translation of euphemisms for hardship in the Quran.

**Purpose of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to discuss and investigate the translation of euphemisms for hardship in the Quran into English. Furthermore, the aim is to establish the translation technique used to translate the selected euphemisms and the euphemism type selected. Additionally, it examines the accuracy and quality of the translation under consideration by comparing the source text and its context with the target text translation of the chosen euphemism.

**Significance of the Study**

Studies discussing and analyzing the Quran and its translations are important. This study is worth undertaking as it aims to explore issues related to the translation of euphemism for hardship in the Quran, thus contributing to the improvement of the quality of the translations.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Data Collection**

The main aim of this study is to discuss and investigate euphemisms for hardship in the Quran. The data will be collected from the Quran based on the categories of euphemism identified by Al-Hamad and Salman (2013). The euphemisms in the source text will be compared and discussed in terms of their translations. The three translations selected for the purpose of this study are:

3. The Quran English Meanings and Notes By Saheeh International (2012)

**Data Analysis**

This study will adopt a content analysis approach. The study will also use Nord’s, (2005, p. 42) “text analysis of translation” approaches which frequently involves asking a number of questions related to the source text prior to its translation.

For the purpose of analysis, a number of references will be used:

- The Arabic monolingual dictionaries *Majm alm-any* and *Alqamws alm-fayt*. These dictionaries are used in order to identify the different meanings of the euphemistic expressions in Arabic.
- *Asbab alnzwl* (reasons of revelations) to understand the contextual context of the analyzed expressions.
- Quranic exegetical books *Tafsir* (Explanations), *Tfsyr ibn khyt*, and *Tfsyr aljalyn* to shed light on the different interpretations of the euphemisms.
- Longman’s Dictionary of Contemporary English.
- The following dictionaries of euphemisms:
  1. Dictionary of Euphemism and other double talk (Rawson, 2002)
  2. How not to say what you mean. A dictionary of Euphemisms (Holder, 2007)

**DEFINING EUPHEMISMS**

Euphemisms are used in place of unfavored words for the purpose of saving one’s face or making people around one feel more comfortable and less embarrassed. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the term euphemism as “A mild or indirect word or expression substituted for one considered to be too harsh or blunt when referring to something unpleasant or embarrassing”. According to Mofarrej and Al-Haq (2015, p.111) “Euphemistic expressions are used as a tool that helps people communicate politely and effectively”. Euphemisms are widely used across many languages around the world, and they are applied to religion, sex, death, sickness and many other topics based on the cultural use and function of euphemism in a certain community. Rawson (2002) states that euphemisms are so deeply rooted in the language used by people that even those who consider themselves to be direct, explicit and outspoken, will eventually use them in their common speech. Allan and Burridge (1991, p. 14-18) divided euphemisms into 12 types:
EUPHEMISMS IN THE QURAN

Euphemisms are a common feature of the Quranic language. They are used to discuss sensitive topics such as sexually-related issues, genitalia, death, sickness, divorce and many other topics. Al-Omoush (2011) cited in Al-hamma and Salman (2013, p. 198) distinguished two main categories of euphemisms in the Quran. These are euphemisms for moral decency and euphemisms for hardship. Euphemisms are used to deal with moral decency topics including sexual intercourse, adultery, body parts, excretory functions and other topics. Euphemisms related to hardship are used to deal with topics such as sickness, disability, death, divorce, defeat, hunger and poverty. Such sensitive topics must be translated with great accuracy and equivalence.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Sample 1: (Quran 2:280)

وَإِن كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ مَيْسَرَةٍ

Euphemism 1

Transliteration: usrh,t

Translation: Table 1

Linguistic and context analysis

This chapter was revealed in Madinah. The Chapters revealed in Madinah are usually more informative and legalistic, outline and relate to Islamic law (Sharia) (Al-Qahtani 2017, 21). The euphemism is a noun which means ‘in difficulty’ (mu-amalat) al-maany, 2010, The Quranic Arabic Corpus 2017.

According to Al Jalalyn (2007) and ibn Kathyr (2016) this verse refers deals with debtors who are in difficulty. It is encouraging the postponement of the debt until the debtor is at a time of ease or even waiving the debt in return for being placed under the shade of Allah.

Translation analysis and assessment

Cleary (hereafter T1), and Saheeh International (hereafter T3) applied a literal translation to translate the euphemism. They used a general-for-specific euphemism to convey the meaning of the expression. A general-for-specific euphemism, according to Linfoot-Ham (2005, p. 232) is the use of the extremely general word in place of the more specific. On the other hand Edip Yuskel et al.(hereafter T2) also used the same type of euphemism but applied an oblique translation which is substituting one word class with another without making any change to the meaning of the message Vinay & Darbelent (cited in Elowa, 2017, p. 27).

Sample 2: (Quran 10:12)

وَإِذَا مَسَّ الِْنسَانَ الضُّرُّ دَعَانَا لِجَنبِهِ أَوْ قَاعِدًا أَوْ قَائِمًا فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُ ضُرَّهُ

Euphemism 2

Transliteration: alduru

Translation: Table 2

Table 1. Euphemism 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cleary (T1)</th>
<th>Edip Yuskel et al. (T2)</th>
<th>Saheeh International (T3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If someone is in straits wait until it is convenient.</td>
<td>If the person is facing insolvency, then you shall wait until he become able.</td>
<td>And if someone is in hardship, then (let there be) postponement until (a time of) ease.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Linguistic and contextual analysis

The place where this verse was revealed is Makkah. رضٌ يُعْسِكَ لَهُ إِلَّ هُوَ duru is a noun which means harm, hurt, injury, and impair-ment (mu-jm al m-any, 2010; The Quranic Arabic Corpus 2017). This verse the actions of nonbelievers during misfortune or poverty and how they call upon God in any way possible but when their misfortune ends they continue in their disbelief (Al Jalalyn, 2007; Ibn Kathyr, 2016).

Translation analysis and assessment

T1 and T3 have translated the noun semantically by render-ing the contextual meaning of the ST expression. T2 seems to have only translated one meaning of the euphemism which is poverty thus neglecting any other sort of trouble, affliction, and harm.

Sample 3: (Quran 10:107) 
وَإِن يَمْسَسْكَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَ كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلَّ هُوَ Euphemism 3: 
بِضُرُّ Translation: Table 3

Linguistic and contextual analysis

This verse was revealed in the holy city of Makkah. Most of the verses revealed in Makkah are relatively short in length and usually discuss paradise and punishment in the hereafter (Al Qahtani, 2020). Arabic dictionaries mention that duru is a noun which refers to drought, adversity, and harm (Al Qamws al Muhyt, 2014), (mu-jm al m-any, 2010, The Quranic Arabic Corpus 2017).

Exegetical references suggested that this verse shows that if Allah affects you with “harm, hurt, impoverishment or illness” then no one can remove it but Allah (Al Jalalyn, 2007) and (Ibn Kathyr, 2016).

Translation analysis and assessment

T1, T2, and T3 all use a literal translation to render the expression into English. T1 and T2 use a general-for-specific expression which, according to Allan & Burridge (1991, p. 192), is used “to hint ...rather than name it directly”. T3’s choice of translation only reflects one of the meanings of the euphemism in the source text.

Sample 4: (Quran 12:84) 
فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ قَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ مَسَّنَا وَأَهْلَنَا الضُّرُّ وَجِئْنَا بِبِضَاعَةٍ Euphemism 4: 
وَابْيَضَّتْ عَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْحُزْنِ فَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ Translation: Table 4

Linguistic and contextual analysis

This verse was revealed in the holy city of Makkah. The euphemism is a verb which means ‘turned white’ (mu-jm al m-any, 2010, The Quranic Arabic Corpus 2017).

According to Al Jalalyn (2007) and ibn Kathyr (2016) this verse refers to the story of the Prophet (Yusuf) Joseph, and how his father’s eyes turned white and he lost his sight as a result of his sorrow over losing him.

Translation analysis and assessment

T1, T2, and T3 applied a literal translation to translate the euphemism. They used an understatement to convey the meaning of the expression. An understatement, according to Allan and Burridge (2009, p. 203) is used “to not to impose trouble on others.

Sample 5: (Quran 12:88) 
ذَٰلِكَ دُخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ قَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ مَسَّنَا وَأَهْلَنَا الضُّرُّ وَجِئْنَا بِبِضَاعَةٍ Euphemism 5: 
وَابْيَضَّتْ عَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْحُزْنِ فَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ Translation: Table 5

Linguistic and contextual analysis

The place where this verse was revealed is Makkah. رضٌ يُعْسِكَ لَهُ إِلَّ هُوَ duru is a noun which means harm, hurt, injury, and impair-ment (mu-jm al m-any, 2010; The Quranic Arabic Corpus 2017). This verse tells the story of the family of Joseph when they told him about the misfortune and hunger which has been inflicted upon the family.

Table 3. Euphemism 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cleary (T1)</th>
<th>Edip Yuskel et al. (T2)</th>
<th>Saheeh International (T3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And if God touches you with harm</td>
<td>If God afflicts you with any harm,</td>
<td>And if Allah should touch you with adversity,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Euphemism 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cleary (T1)</th>
<th>Edip Yuskel et al. (T2)</th>
<th>Saheeh International (T3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And his eyes became white from sorrow</td>
<td>His eyes turned white from sadness</td>
<td>And his eyes became white from grief</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Euphemism 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cleary (T1)</th>
<th>Edip Yuskel et al. (T2)</th>
<th>Saheeh International (T3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Then when they entered his presence they said, “Mighty one, adversity has befallen us and our family,”</td>
<td>So when they entered upon him, they said, “O Governor, we have been afflicted with harm, us and our family,”</td>
<td>So when they entered upon him (i.e., Joseph) they said, “O Azeez, adversity has touched us and our family,”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
occurred to them and their family (Al Jalalyn, 2007; ibn Kathyr, 2016).

Translation analysis and assessment

T1 and T3 both adopted a functional translation approach giving emphasis on the target text and the function of the expression in both the source and target text. T2 choice of translation was literal. T1 and T2 attempted a euphemistic translation and selected a general-for-specific type of euphemism.

Sample 6: (Quran 16:53)

وَمَا بِكُمْ مِّن نِّعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ ضَرٍّ أَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ

Euphemism 3:

Transliteration: alduru
Translation: Table 6

Linguistic and contextual analysis

This verse discusses the blessings and good things bestowed upon human beings by Allah, and how people ask Allah for help when they are sick or in need (Al Jalalyn, 2007; ibn Kathyr, 2016).

Translation analysis and assessment

It is evident the all three translators opted for a literal translation of the source text. T1 and T3 only conveyed one of the meanings of the euphemism, and they disregarded the other meanings. They could have chosen a general-for-specific translation as did T2.

Sample 7: (Quran 21:83)

وَأَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الضُّرُّ وَأَنتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ

Euphemism 3:

Transliteration: alduru
Translation: Table 7

Linguistic and contextual analysis

This verse discusses the story of the Prophet Job (Ayyub) and how he was affected by sickness, poverty and a loss of children after being wealthy and in good health (Al Jalalyn, 2007; ibn Kathyr, 2016).

Translation Techniques applied in the Translation of Euphemisms for Hardship in the Quran.

This verse discusses the story of the Prophet Job (Ayyub) and how he was affected by sickness, poverty and a loss of children after being wealthy and in good health (Al Jalalyn, 2007; ibn Kathyr, 2016).

Translation assessment and analysis

A literal translation was the approach selected by T1, T2, and T3. According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2018), “adversity” means a situation in which one has many problems that seem to be caused by bad luck. Based on the exegetical references, bad luck was not mentioned as result of such “adversity” which affected the Prophet Job. Hence, the translation attempted an addition – which, according to Dickins et al. (2002, p. 24), “…is translation in which something is added to the TT which is not present in the ST” - to the connotation of the euphemized expression which was not mentioned in the source text. T2 opted for a literal meaning of the euphemism, thus retaining the euphemistic function and connotation.

Sample 8: (Quran 41:49)

وَإِن مَّسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَيَئُوسٌ قَنُوطٌ

Euphemism 8:

Transliteration: alsharu
Translation: Table 8

Linguistic and contextual analysis

This verse revealed in Makkah. alsharu is a noun which refers to any harm which may affect a person (mu-jm al m-any, 2010; The Quranic Arabic Corpus, 2017). This verse discusses the story of the Prophet Job (Ayyub) and how he was affected by sickness, poverty and a loss of children after being wealthy and in good health (Al Jalalyn, 2007; ibn Kathyr, 2016).

Translation assessment and analysis

A literal translation was the approach selected by T1 and T2. T3 on the other hand attempted a word-for-word translation. According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2018), “misfortune and adversity” means a situation in which one has many problems that seem to be caused by bad luck or unfortunate events. “Evil” refers to something harmful and undesirable. T1 and T2 opted for what Nida (1964) referred to as formal equivalence.

Sample 9: (Quran 94:5)

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

Euphemism 8:

Transliteration: al-usr
Translation: Table 9

Table 6. Euphemism 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cleary (T1)</th>
<th>Edip Yuskel et al. (T2)</th>
<th>Saheeh International (T3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And when adversity touches you</td>
<td>Then when harm afflicts you</td>
<td>Then when adversity touches you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Euphemism 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cleary (T1)</th>
<th>Edip Yuskel et al. (T2)</th>
<th>Saheeh International (T3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adversity has come upon me</td>
<td>I have been afflicted with harm</td>
<td>Indeed, adversity has touched me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Euphemism 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cleary (T1)</th>
<th>Edip Yuskel et al. (T2)</th>
<th>Saheeh International (T3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>But if misfortune afflicts him he gives up hope.</td>
<td>But if adversity touches him, he is disheartened, desperate.</td>
<td>But if evil touches him, he is hopeless and despairing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9. Euphemism 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cleary (T1)</th>
<th>Edip Yuskel et al. (T2)</th>
<th>Saheeh International (T3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>So with distress there is relief.</td>
<td>So with hardship comes ease</td>
<td>For indeed, with hardship (will be) ease (i.e., relief).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Linguistic and contextual analysis

This verse revealed in Makkah. ﷺ saqym is a noun which refers to hardship and adversity (muMJ al m-any, 2010; The Quranic Arabic Corpus, 2017). In this verse Allah is telling his prophet Mohammed that with hardship comes ease (Al Jalalyn, 2007; ibn Kathyr, 2016).

Translation assessment and analysis

A literal translation was the approach selected by T1, T2, and T3. T2 and T3 adopted a semantic translation by choosing a general expression to render the meaning of the source text expression. T3 added extra information within the text which also known as notes.

CONCLUSION

Translators approach a text in different ways. Some apply particular translation procedures and techniques based on the nature of the source text. This paper examined the translation of euphemisms for hardship in the Quran. Four samples were selected, and the translations of three translators were analyzed and compared. It can be concluded that all three translators adopted mainly a literal translation technique to convey the text into English. What is evident is the different expressions used for the word ضر by T1. In sample 2, T1 used the word ‘hurt’ to convey the meaning, but then used the word ‘adversity’ in samples 3 and 5. T2 and T3 were consistent in their translations as they used the same term “harm and adversity” in samples 2, 3, and 5. This illustrates the level of awareness and care taken by the translators towards the translation of the Quran, and especially the translation of euphemisms. In addition, it shows the complexity and difficulty of translating Quranic euphemisms due to their connotative meanings.

REFERENCES

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