

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)

الْحَجُّ أَشْهَرُ مَعْلُومَاتٍ فَمَنْ فَرَضَ فِيهِنَّ الْحَجَّ فَلَا رَفْتٌ وَلَا فُسُوقَ وَلَا جِدَالَ فِي الْحَجِّ وَمَا تَفَعَّلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَعْلَمُهُ اللَّهُ وَتَرَوُودُوا فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ الرَّادِ التَّقْوَى وَاتَّقُوا يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ البقرة آية ١٩٧

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:

- 1: The Qur'an A New Translation By Thomas Cleary (2004)
- 2: Quran A Reformist Translation By Edip Yuskel, Layth Saleh al Shibani, and Martha Schulte-Nafeh (2010)
- 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:

- a. The Arabic monolingual dictionaries *Majm al-mʿany* and *Alqamws almhyt*. These dictionaries are used in order to identify the different meanings of the euphemistic expressions in Arabic.
- b. *Asbab alnzw*, (*reasons of revelations*) to understand the contextual context of the analyzed expressions.

- c. Quranic exegetical books *Tafsir* (Explanations), *Tfsyr ibn kthyr*, and *Tfsyr aljaly* to shed light on the different interpretations of the euphemisms.
- d. Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English.
- e. 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)
 3. Euphemisms & Dysphemisms. Language used as a shield and weapon (Allan and Burridge, 1991).

TRANSLATABILITY OF THE QURAN

Baker (2001, p. 273) defines translatability as follows: "Translatability is mostly understood as the capacity for some kind of meaning to be transferred from one language to another without undergoing radical change."

The issue of the translatability of the Quran has always been at the center of debate. According to Pickthall (2006, p. ix), the Quran is untranslatable, and it is beyond the ability of the translator to produce the very sound and symphony "...which move men to tears and ecstasy". Irving (2010) is of the view that the Quran is untranslatable and that only through reading the source text will the reader be able capture the real beauty of it. Nonetheless, this should not imply that efforts to translate the Quran should not continue. Tibawi (2004) is against any attempt to translate the Quran. According to him, since the Arabic language is very rich in its vocabulary and full of metaphors, it would be difficult to find equal equivalents in other languages. Baker (2011) views any translation of the Quran as a form of exegesis, or at very least a translation based on the understanding and point view of the translator. This shows that many consider the translations that exist not to be exact translations of the Quran, but simply a translation of the meaning of the Quran based solely on the understanding of the translator.

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:

1. Figurative expressions (go to the happy hunting ground = die).
2. Remodellings (darn = damn).
3. Circumlocutions (little girl's room = toilet).
4. Clippings (jeez = Jesus).
5. Acronyms (snafu = situation normal, all fucked up).
6. Abbreviations (pee = piss).
7. Omissions.
8. One-for-one-substitutions (casket = coffin).
9. General for specific (person = penis).
10. Part for whole (spend a penny = go to the toilet).
11. Hyperbole (flight to glory = death).
12. Understatement (sleep = die)

On the other hand, Nichol (2011) categorizes euphemisms into seven types:

1. Abstractionss (The big C = Cancer).
2. Indirection (Call of nature = Urinate or defecate),
3. Litotes (Not attractive = Ugly).
4. Mispronunciations (Jeez= Jesus).
5. Modifications (eff off = fuck off)
6. Personifications (giving personal names to genitals)
7. Slang (many slang words used as euphemisms).

Rawson (2002, p. 1) divided euphemisms into two main types: positive and negative. Positive euphemisms make the expression seem bigger and more important than it really is. Negative euphemisms on the other hand, “deflate and diminish. They are defensive in nature, offsetting the power of tabooed terms and otherwise eradicating from language everything that people prefer not to deal with directly”.

In Arabic the word euphemism is referred to as *altalatuf* or *altalyf* which means kind, gentle, soft, polite and many other meanings. Mofarrej and Al-Haq (2015) mention that *lutf* refers to being kind and friendly to others, or to soften and treat with kindness. For example using the expression *intaqala ila rahmah,t* alah (passed away) instead of saying simply the person died, to make it gentler on the family or relatives of the deceased, is an example of the usage of euphemism.

Al-knayh,t in Arabic can also be referred to as a euphemism. Sybwyh (790) defined al-knayh,t as concealing and covering something. Al-hyany (2014) stated that it is using polite words or expressions in place of an overt and explicit meaning. Al-Husseini (2007, p. 336) elaborates on the functions of al-knayh,t in Arabic, and states that it is used to convey three points of view:

1. “to describe a socially offensive, or unpleasant thing or expression, or socially unacceptable to be mentioned instead of another expression”
2. “Arabs used to call each other by using their euphemistic name ‘surname’ rather than the first name because such a euphemistic name will maximize and increase the honorific and respectable character of the person”
3. “to exaggerate the meaning of certain words”

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-hammad 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)

وَإِنْ كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ مَيْسَرَةٍ

Euphemism 1: عُسْرَةٌ

Transliteration: ‘usrh,t

Translation: Table 1

Linguistic and contextual 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’jm al many 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 (hereafterT1), and Saheeh International (hereafterT3) 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 Elewa, 2017, p. 27).

Sample 2: (Quran 10:12)

وَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنْسَانَ الضُّرُّ دَعَانَا لِجَنبِهِ أَوْ قَاعِدًا أَوْ قَائِمًا فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُ ضُرَّهُ مَرَّ كَأَنْ لَّمْ يَدْعُنَا إِلَىٰ ضُرِّ مَسَّهُ ۚ كَذَلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْمُسْرِفِينَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

Euphemism 2: الضُّرُّ

Transliteration: alduru

Translation: Table 2

Table 1. Euphemism 1

Cleary (T1)	Edip Yuskel et al. (T2)	Saheeh International (T3)
If someone is in straits wait until it is convenient.	If the person is facing insolvency, then you shall wait until he become able.	And if someone is in hardship, then (let there be) postponement until (a time of) ease.

Linguistic and contextual analysis

The place where this verse was revealed is Makkah. رضدuru is a noun which means harm, hurt, injury, and impairment (mu:jm al m: any, 2010; The Quranic Arabic Corpus 2017). This verse the actions of nonbelievers during misfortune illness 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 rendering 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 فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلَّا هُوَ

Euphemism 3: بِضُرٍّ

Transliteration: bidur

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 dur 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.

Table 2. Euphemism 2

Cleary (T1)	Edip Yuskel et al. (T2)	Saheeh International (T3)
And when trouble touches man, he cries to Us laying to his side, sitting, and standing;	If any adversity inflicts people, then he calls upon Us on his side or sitting or standing.	And when affliction touches man, he calls upon Us, whether lying on his side or sitting or standing;

Table 3. Euphemism 3

Cleary (T1)	Edip Yuskel et al. (T2)	Saheeh International (T3)
And if God touches you with hurt	If God afflicts you with any harm,	And if Allah should touch you with adversity,

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)

وَأَبْيَضَّتْ عَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْحُزْنِ فَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ

Euphemism 4: وَأَبْيَضَّتْ عَيْنَاهُ

Transliteration: wa ibyadt ‘ynah

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 reflect the desire not to impose trouble on others.

Sample 5: (Quran 12:88)

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ قَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ مَسَّنَا وَأَهْلَنَا الضُّرُّ وَجِئْنَا بِبِضَاعَةٍ مُرْجَاةٍ فَأَوْفِ لَنَا الْكَيْلَ وَتَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْزِي الْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ

Euphemism 5: الضُّرُّ

Transliteration: alduru

Translation: Table 5

Linguistic and contextual analysis

The place where this verse was revealed is Makkah. رضدuru is a noun which means harm, hurt, injury, and impairment (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

Table 4. Euphemism 4

Cleary (T1)	Edip Yuskel et al. (T2)	Saheeh International (T3)
And his eyes became white from sorrow	His eyes turned white from sadness	And his eyes became white from grief

Table 5. Euphemism 5

Cleary (T1)	Edip Yuskel et al. (T2)	Saheeh International (T3)
Then when they entered his presence they said, “Mighty one, adversity has befallen us and our family,	So when they entered upon him, they said, “O Governor, we have been afflicted with harm, us and our family,	So when they entered upon him (i.e., Joseph) they said, “O Azeez, adversity has touched us and our family,

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 مِّنْ نَّعْمَةٍ مِّنْ اللَّهِ تَنْمُّ إِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضَّرُّ فَأَلَيْهِ تَجَاوَرُونَ

Euphemism 3: الضَّرُّ

Transliteration: alduru

Translation: Table 6

Linguistic and contextual analysis

The place where this verse was revealed is Makkah. *رض* duru is a noun which means harm, hurt, injury, and impairment (mu·jm al m·any, 2010; The Quranic Arabic Corpus 2017). 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 وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ

Euphemism 7: الضُّرُّ

Transliteration: alduru

Translation: Table 7

Linguistic and contextual analysis

This verse revealed in Makkah. *ضر* duru is a noun which holds a connotation referring to harm, hurt, injury, and impairment (mu·jm al m·any, 2010; The Quranic Arabic

Table 6. Euphemism 6

Cleary (T1)	Edip Yuskel et al. (T2)	Saheeh International (T3)
And when adversity touches you	Then when harm afflicts you	Then when adversity touches you

Table 7. Euphemism 7

Cleary (T1)	Edip Yuskel et al. (T2)	Saheeh International (T3)
Adversity has come upon me	I have been afflicted with harm	Indeed, adversity has touched me

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, 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)

وَإِنْ مَسَّ الشَّرُّ فَيَنْوَسْ قَنُوطٌ

Euphemism 8: الشَّرُّ

Transliteration: alsharu

Translation: Table 8

Linguistic and contextual analysis

This verse revealed in Makkah. *الشَّرُّ* 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). The verse is reflecting upon people who are quick to forget all of the good things they were experiencing and how they soon forget everything whenever they are struck by any kind of hardship (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: الْعُسْرُ

Transliteration: al·usr

Translation: Table 9

Table 8. Euphemism 8

Cleary (T1)	Edip Yuskel et al. (T2)	Saheeh International (T3)
But if <u>misfortune</u> afflicts him he gives up hope.	But if <u>adversity</u> touches him, he is disheartened, desperate.	But if <u>evil</u> touches him, he is hopeless and despairing.

Table 9. Euphemism 9

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

Linguistic and contextual analysis

This verse revealed in Makkah. سَقِيمٌ saqym is a noun which refers to hardship and adversity (mu·jam al ma·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 dur 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.

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