

Translating islamic religious expressions: Problems and strategies

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to investigate the problems that face the translator when translating Islamic religious expressions from Arabic into English. It also explicates the strategies that the translators used in dealing with such problems. The study is descriptive, comparative and evaluative and focuses on how Islamic expressions drawn from the Islamic Arabic book *Bidāyat al-Hidāyah* are translated by two different translators namely Muhammad Abul Quasem (1979) and Mashhad Al-Allaf (2010). Since the explored religious expressions are deeply rooted in their native culture and constitute a main part of the Arabic-Islamic identity, the findings of the study show that such expressions, in many cases, do not have equivalents in the target language and culture, and translating them into English is very problematic and pose a great challenge to the translator. The findings also reveal that meaning losses and distortions are the result of a host of reasons among which are the sensitivity and peculiarity of the religious expressions and the huge differences between Arabic and English.

Keywords: foreignization, Islamic religious expressions, problems, strategies, translation

1. Introduction

Translation is generally considered as a means of bridging the gap between languages and cultures. It is also a communicative process which transfers the message of a source language text to a target language. However, studies on translation indicate that there are certain ‘critical points’ (Munday, 2016, p.142) that are problematic for translators, especially when dealing with key cultural texts such as religious texts (Malmkjær, 2015). Religious texts, which are one of the ‘paradigm cases’ as described by Malmkjær (2015), relate to the biggest and most sensitive issue in the human life, the issue of religion and belief. From this perspective comes the importance of Islamic religious translation which includes expressions that are essential to the beliefs and culture of Muslims. There are many non-Arab Muslims around the world need to understand everything about Islam. Therefore, cultural understanding during the process of translation is extremely essential especially in the translation of religious texts, which require an effort on the part of the translator to retain the cultural information of the source text in the target text. Such cultural elements are known to be one of the most challenging aspects of translation. Accordingly, this study seeks to investigate the problems of translating Islamic religious expressions from Arabic into English. The data is drawn from the Islamic Arabic book *Bidāyat al-Hidāyah* translated into English by two translators. In order to highlight the problems under discussion, the study explores the translation of some expressions in their original context of use. It also explicates the strategies that the translators used in dealing with such problems. Translators may differ in the ways in which they translate these expressions, employing different strategies. One might adopt source-oriented strategies and, thus, foreignize the translated expression; the other might prefer using target-oriented strategies that render the TL (Target Language) natural, i.e., domesticated. In this context, the strategies the translators employ become of paramount importance since they reveal much of what goes on during the translation process and influence the translation quality.

2. Related Literature

2.1. Language, Culture and Translation

The relation between language and culture is wide and complex. Vermeer (1989, p. 222) clearly states that “language is part of a culture” and Nord (1997, p. 23) claims that “language is an intrinsic part of a culture.” Every human

gathering has its own culture of which language is one of its representations. No culture could have become known or have flourished without a language as it is the means through which culture's norms and heritage are expressed. This proves the hypothesis that language mirrors culture which is, at the same time, "the track along which language forms and develops" (Hongwei, 1999, pp. 121-122).

Various definitions have been given for the concept of culture from different perspectives. However, a standard definition introduced by the English anthropologist Edward Tylor (1903, p.1) who describes culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". Newmark (1988) defines culture as "the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression" (p. 94). Newmark here agrees with Tylor that culture is the distinct feature of the human life that characterize each community. He specifically draws more attention to the communicative function of language not only as a component of culture, but also as a means of expressing other cultural features. McQuilkin also considers language one of the components of culture and justifies that by saying:

Some knowledge of the other elements of a culture is necessary to understand the meaning of the words themselves. It is impossible to interpret the meaning of words, then, apart from the cultural context in which they are spoken. Determining the meaning intended by another person is not always easy, and least of all when the original was given in another language and cultural setting (1980, p. 113).

McQuilkin's argument above can also be linked to translation. That is, this relation between language and culture is crucial to translation. Translation plays a vital role in human communication. So, the function of the translation is to exchange meanings between different languages via text reproduction. Obviously, the translation significance consists in its contribution to language learning and transfer of cultures between countries throughout the world. Salehi (2012) points out that culture and translation are among the most determining and influential variables in human communication. It is generally believed that culture influences the translational discourse in a number of ways.

Many of the problems that face translator are not linguistic or lexical one. Words can be easily translated, but their cultural meaning is oftentimes not. Translators have to look at words as part of the culture they belong to as their meaning are shaped and determined by their cultural context.

2.1.1. Culturemes

As stated earlier, language and culture are closely related to each other. This is because language is considered as the mirror of culture and its expression. However, a given language may contain words and expressions that refer to things peculiar to culture X but unknown to culture Y. Hence, all cultural phenomena that belong only to the source culture, when compared to the target culture in translation, can be categorized as culture-specific features. Nord (1997) calls specific cultural features as ‘culturemes’. He points out that a cultureme is “a social phenomenon of a culture X that is regarded as relevant by the members of this culture and, when compared (with) a corresponding social phenomenon in a culture Y, is found to be specific to culture X” (1997, p.34). These culturemes according to Katan include all cultural features categorized by Nida (1961) and then Newmark (1988) which are composed of ecology, material culture, social culture, religious culture, linguistic culture, and gestures and habits (Katan, 2009, p.79), and are considered as *critical points* in translations. Since the realm of culture is so vast to deal with, this work is narrowed down to only religious cultural elements.

2.2. Religious Translation

Religious translation is a very sensitive task since it deals with transcendental language and conveys God's words and commandments. Being a social-cultural system of designated behaviors and practices, morals and beliefs, religion can be understood only by its cultural language; and in order to translate this religious context, translators face some obstacles that cause problems in translation. In fact, religion is an integral part of culture and peculiar in its sacred nature. It addresses the human mind together with the soul so that people accept it by the core of their hearts. Moreover, religion should not be changed or distorted by any one, otherwise it leads to stimulate people and evoke negative reaction by them. In this regard, scriptures and religious texts function as the backbone of a religion. They provide structure, clarity and a means of perpetuating the religion, and also enable the rapid proliferation and establishment of the religious beliefs. Interestingly, religious texts are one of

the sources from which people gain their cultural repertoire. It provides guidelines and advice about good and evil. It also teaches people about acceptable and unacceptable behavior. The didactic nature of religious text is intended to regulate not only people's relationship with God, but also their relationship with other human beings (Muhaidat & Neimneh, 2011, p. 15), thereby creating the need to translate them and thus make them accessible and suitable to the needs of various populations from various cultural contexts.

On the importance of translating religious texts, Elewa emphasizes that “translation of religious texts has been a key element in disseminating the divine message throughout history. It was employed also for teaching converts the basics of religion and for mirroring the beauty of faith and morality around the globe” (2014, p.25). It seems, however, that translating religious texts causes an intellectual challenge for translators as they must avoid any distortion or work which is against a religion in the process of translation. In contrast to the language of human beings, which is subject to change, divinely produced language is basically conservative and has its own secrets. Nida (1997, p. 194) maintains that religious terminology has always been conservative because the words themselves are regarded by many as being essentially dictated by the deity. The longer these words have been in use, the greater and stronger the importance attached to them. However, religious concepts come under the culture-specific expressions which need culture-specific background knowledge in order to render them from the source text into the target text correctly (Khalaf, Tengku, & Moindjie, 2016). Besides, the comprehension of the sacred books meaning demands a multistage expansion of linguistic and rhetorical restrictions that constrain the meaning (Abdul-Raof, 2001).

Farsian and Esmaili (2004) argue that these days as Islam spreads around the world and as the number of Muslims increases significantly, the importance of translation of Islamic discourse becomes more and more obvious than before. Jahanshahi and Kafipour (2015) are among all those who emphasize on translation of Islamic-religious discourse, they see that “the translation of Islamic texts is of great importance since these texts are considered as the key texts for spreading out the Islamic thoughts. Therefore, if the translator commits an error in this sensitive realm, the content may be altered” (Jahanshahi & Kafipour, 2015, p. 239).

Therefore, the transmission of Islamic discourse from its Arab-Islamic lingua-cultural context into another, particularly English lingua-cultural context and for a new audience, sheds light on some important features in this kind of discourse. Translating religious discourse is susceptible to the problem of non-equivalence. Larson (1984, p. 180) considered “terms which deal with the religious aspects of a culture” to be the most difficult in terms of analyzing their lexical source text as well as finding the best TL equivalent. The speakers’ unawareness of the “various aspects of meaning involved” is the cause of this. Therefore, much difficulty is encountered in translating the expressions that are not used in the TL discourse. In other words, translators inevitably will face the problem of shifting between two discourse worlds with different ideologies when dealing with Islamic vs. Western discourses (Al-Mohannadi, 2008).

2.3. Islamic Religious Expressions

2.3.1. Definition

Linguistically, an expression is a word, phrase or sentence. According to *Longman Dictionary*, it is defined as “a word or group of words with a particular meaning” (2003, p. 551). As long as Islamic religious culture is concerned, Islamic religious expression can be defined as “a sort of idiomatic expression that is generated by Muslim culture and Islam religion norms” (Khammyseh, 2015, p. 103). Generally, religious expressions are so sensitive ones because they describe ideas such as identities, nationhoods, and sacredness that reflect different cultural values (Malmkjær, 2015). Harrison (2007) holds the idea that religious expression is a type of language which is used routinely by religious experts so that they can express their beliefs and ideas. Thus, one could find a lot of idiomatic expressions in sacred and religious texts as well, which will surely call for translators’ competences and skills. Accordingly, Ghazala (1995) classifies the Islamic religious expressions into three categories; 1) new expressions that were not existed in the Arabic language before the advent of Islam such as *Qur’an* and *martyrdom*; 2) familiar Arabic expression that Islam gave it new implications such as *Ṣalāh*, and *Ḥajj*; and 3) expressions that are already known and used in the Arabic language such as *Ka’bah*.

2.3.2. Problems in Translating Islamic Religious Expressions

Translating Islamic expressions presents a problem for the translator as they do not exist in the TL culture or the TL usually has no equivalents for those terms (Xue-bing, 2006). Here, a lexical gap is created in the TL thus leaving the translator with no option but to search for appropriate means to transfer the concepts denoted by those terms to that language. The magnitude of such a problem depends on the extent of differences between SL and TL. Islam's great influence on the Arabic language and the Arab society and culture created a big distance between the Arab culture and the Western culture that is dominated by Christianity. Hence, translation between languages of distant cultures such as English and Arabic is more difficult than translating between languages that are culturally related or similar, such as English and German; the translator is thus expected to encounter more problems and difficulties when translating.

The strict categorization of Islamic culture-specific translation problems is not possible because of the commonality of each category. However, one of the greatest difficulties in cultural translation is different perspective of word meanings among cultures. At first glance, many words may look like equivalents, but in fact, they are not. Words may have special connotations, or have different focuses in different cultures. Expressions referring to cultural features, such as ecology (e.g. geographical factors), material culture (e.g. food, clothes), social culture (e.g. habits), religious culture (e.g. names of prophets) and linguistic culture (e.g. intertextuality) are cited as major obstacles for translators of the Islamic texts (Ghazala, 2002/2014). There will be definitely distinct 'mental images' that are triggered in the ST and TT readers' minds when encountering expressions such as (a) God associated with the notion of the Trinity in Christianity, and God/Allāh referring to the only one worshipped God in Islam, (b) veil as a headdress resting on a nun's shoulders or a covering on a bride's face vs. veil/ *hijāb* covering ladies' hair and bosoms as an Islamic rule, and (c) pilgrimage as a journey to any of the Holy places around the world in contrast to pilgrimage/Ḥajj as a journey to the Holy Mosque in Mecca for Muslims (Abdul-Raof, 2005, p.172).

Furthermore, one of the problems that arises when translating is the rich implications included in the religious expression, which makes the equivalent

even if it is available in the target language unable to convey the same message, for example, when translating a word like ‘إنفاق-*infāq*’ which is one of the main pillars of the Islamic economic system and of Islam itself as a religion/faith and a way of life. Literally, *infāq* is an Arabic word for spending. However, it implies other meanings related to the purpose as well as the intention of spending which is not included in the word ‘spending’ (Mahmoud, 2014, p.8). Another problem is that some Islamic expressions are culturally untranslatable; this means that the cultural context where we use the language to express meanings in the SL does not exist in the TL. The expression such as (*mahram* - محرم) is so religiously and culturally loaded that it will not be accurately translatable.

More difficult yet is the translation of ecological terms. Ecology is a major factor in word development, as man sometimes creates and shapes lexical items according to ecological features. These lexical items are hard to represent in other ecological environments. For example, the fauna term “العشار” (the pregnant she-camels) which occurs in the description of the Day of Judgment, when people are so shocked that they forget about everything including their most valuable property, i.e. the pregnant she-camels in Arab culture. The Qur’an employs this cultural feature with a ‘luxuriant imagery’ to achieve a certain ‘impact’ on its intended readers which is totally lost in the English lingua-cultural context (Abdul-Raof, 2005, p. 172).

Moreover, Halahla (2010) stresses that Islamic religious texts are bound up with archaic Arabic expressions (e.g. الوسواس الخناس , i.e. the evil of the retreating whisperer), *hapax legomena* (e.g. الموقودة), religious terms with different shades of meanings (names of the deity such as “الصمد”, which indicates ‘total perfection of might, power, wisdom, knowledge and honor in Arabic’, usually translated as ‘*Eternal or Almighty*’) or that form lexical gaps (e.g. سحور , a meal to be eaten before the dawn as a preparation for fasting), polysemy (e.g. كفر , which means unbelief, cover, or unthankfulness), collocation (the word ‘honorable’ is collocated in the religious text with the Prophet’s ‘sayings’, ‘head’, ‘hand’, etc. to indicate the writer’s/speaker’s attitude, e.g. ‘His honorable face’) and connotation (there are, for example, three words in Arabic for “sword”, each of which has a different connotation: سيف is neutral, مهند means the sword in its sheath, while حسام refers to a very sharp one). Another example provided by Halahla (2010, p. 24) is the

proverb “الساكت عن الحق شيطان أخرس” which literally means ‘He who keeps his mouth shut concerning what is right is a dumb Satan’ or ‘To refrain from saying the truth is satanic’; it is difficult for TT readers to infer this proverb. They may not understand or agree upon the similarity between the two situations. Thus, a loss in the connotative meaning and/or the image is inevitable in this case (Halahla, 2010).

2.3.3. Translation Strategies

Translating religious texts is different from other types of translation and involves a high level of accuracy and faithfulness. Accordingly, the use of translation strategies in translating religious texts is necessary to achieve the purpose of translation and to overcome the cultural and linguistic gaps between Arabic and English and, hence, make the meaning comprehensible to the target reader. The strategies that can be used to render Islamic religious expressions are multiple and varied, and it is the responsibility of the translator to choose the best one in a particular communicative situation. Thus, in trying to achieve cultural transfer, i.e. to translate a cultural content which is a feature of the source but not the target culture, the translator faces two problems: 1) the problem of finding possible strategy for the translation of the unmatched element of culture, and (2) the problem of choice from among the possible translational strategies since not all of the possible strategies are equally suitable for each act of communication (Ivir, 1998, p. 118).

Through reviewing literature for the translation of cultural items, it was clearly obvious that there are different strategies suggested by different theorists among them is Davies (2003) who divided all the treatments of cultural specific items in translation in two approaches:

- 1- when the distinction is made between two basic goals of the translator, i.e. preserving the characteristics of the ST or adapting it to the target audience, e.g., Venuti’s principles of domestication and foreignization;
- 2- when a list of alternative procedures for dealing with individual CSI is listed, e.g., Davies’s proposed translation strategies: preservation, addition, omission, globalization, localization, transformation, and creation (Davies, 2003, p. 69-70).

One of the attempts to rank Davies' translation strategies along the continuum Venuti's domestication and foreignization is that made by Jaleniauskiene and Čičelytė (2009, p. 33). According to Jaleniauskiene and

Čičelytė's model, the translation strategies of preservation and addition fall under the foreignization principle, whereas the strategies of localization, transformation and creation fall under the domestication principle. The strategies of omission and globalization fall in between foreignization and domestication, as the CSI is either omitted or globalized in the TT (Jaleniauskienė & Čičelytė, 2009, p. 33). However, in such cases the TT reader does not feel any strangeness of the foreign text, thus, the strategies of omission and globalization will be considered closer to the domestication principle.

2.3.3.1. Foreignization vs. Domestication

The concept of the global strategy of translation that the translator uses in the rendition of Islamic expressions in a given source text is a necessary step for determining whether the translator leaned more toward source-oriented translation (foreignization) or target-oriented translation (domestication) in translating these expressions in a given text. This means that the translator should choose between two opposing methods in translation: either to domesticate the foreign text by emphasizing the language and culture of the target text or to foreignize the source text by emphasizing the language and culture of the source text.

What concerns us at this point is which approach should be followed when translating religious expressions. Being a missionary and Bible translator, Nida (1964) went beyond the boundaries of the sentence and distanced himself from the early literal and word-for-word forms of translation. He calls for 'naturalness', to produce the dynamic equivalent (i.e. domesticating translation) of a text rather than the formal one. Nida (1964) gave priority to the cultural aspects of the target text. For him, the functional nature implied in the meaning of words is more important. Therefore, Nida (1964) adopted such an approach to give importance to the cultural context of the language into which the Bible is translated. One example was the translation of '*Lamb of God*' into the Eskimo language. Here '*lamb*' symbolizes innocence, especially in the context of sacrifice. As a matter of fact, Eskimo culture does not know '*lamb*'. Thus, the word does not symbolize anything. Instead of '*Lamb of God*', he prefers '*Seal of God*' to transfer the message. Here Nida gave priority to the target reader's understandability and to the fluency of the translation at the expense of the faithfulness to the source text. He, therefore, selected the

dynamic equivalence as the most appropriate solution for overcoming this problem.

Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence has come under much criticism, most significantly by Venuti (1995), who regards it at the outset as one of the manifestations of 'ethnocentric violence' in translation, on the grounds that it imposes Anglophone culture upon other cultures. Venuti (1996, p.204) adds that Nida's approach leads to "an imperialist appropriation of a foreign text" rather than to "an exchange of information". Concerning the Islamic text translation particularly the primary sources of Islam, the Qur'an and Sunnah, the translator is not allowed to adopt the dynamic equivalence as it is prohibited in Islam to alter, modify or change any word mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Therefore, Nida's strategy when dealing with religious culture might be considered good by some people, but others might see it as changing the word of God, a distortion of the reality of things and a misrepresentation of the truth. For a devout Muslim, for instance, such a strategy is categorically refused in translating the Qur'an since God's words cannot be changed; they have to remain as they are. The word '*nāqah*' (she-camel) in *sūrat Al-Shams* (Qur'an 91:13), for example, cannot be replaced by any other word just because it is not known among the people of a certain culture (Mahmoud, 2014). Therefore, translation would aim to make target readers more aware of the Islamic cultural elements in the text. Accordingly, an adequate translation would be the one that would highlight the foreignness of the source text and instead of allowing the dominant target culture to assimilate the differences of the source culture, it should rather signal these differences.

2.3.3.2. Davies's Translation Strategies

- (1) Preservation: This translation strategy is usually employed by the translators when an entity does not have any close equivalent in the TL and target culture, so they decide "to maintain the source text term in the translation" (Davies, 2003, pp. 72-73). Davies distinguishes two types of preservation: *Preservation of form* (transliteration) and *Preservation of content* (literal translation).
- (2) Addition: This strategy can be used when translators decide to keep 'the original item' of the source text in their translations while adding to the target text some information about that item (Davies, 2003).

Davies states that such a translational strategy is regarded as a solution when preservation leads to obscurity. She (2003) subdivides the addition strategy into two types: *Addition inside the text* (i.e. intratextual gloss) and *addition outside the text* (i.e. intertextual gloss/footnotes).

- (3) Omission: This strategy, according to Davies, is to omit the culture-specific items in the source text, and to make the target text readers unaware of their existence.
- (4) Globalization: Globalization can be defined as “the process of replacing culture-specific references with ones which are more neutral or general” (Davies, 2003, p. 83).
- (5) Localization: Localization occurs when translators instead of using ‘cultural-free’ descriptions, they “try to anchor a reference firmly in the culture of the target audience” (Davies, 2003, pp. 83-84). This strategy refers to a change of a message of the ST in the TL text because of different viewpoints in both languages.
- (6) Transformation: This strategy goes beyond globalization or localization. This strategy changes the content of the cultural specific item used in the SL and may be defined as “an alternation or distortion of the original” (Davies, 2003 p. 86).
- (7) Creation: Creation appears when “translators have actually created CSIs not present in the original text” (Davies, 2003, p.88), i.e. this involves the addition of a cultural specific expression in the target text that is not in the source text.

3. Research Methodology

The current study is divided into two parts: the first is theoretical, whereas the second is applied. The study first of all sets out the theoretical framework, discussing basic issues in translation studies with regard to relevant cultural and linguistic-based concepts, and reviewing the literature of translating religious texts and Islamic discourse. Those will serve as the backbone for analysis and shed light on anticipated difficulties in translating such a genre. The study then undertakes a descriptive comparative analysis of two English translations of a number of expressions chosen from the Islamic book *Bidāyat al-Hidāyah* written by Abu Ḥamid Al-Ghazālī. These expressions were selected on the basis of the classifications that are labeled by Nord (1997, p.34)

as culturemes, i.e. items that exist in SL culture but not TL culture, or exist in both but somehow differ. Such expressions were selected carefully to serve the purposes of this study and present an array of various translational problems and issues in the Islamic text.

Hans Vermeer's (2013) 'Skopos Theory' is used as a framework for this study. This theory was adopted by the researcher as it is so flexible that it may admit any translation methodology so long as there is a skopos. Additionally, skopos theory gives the translator the freedom to move from one strategy or approach to another to deliver the implied meaning of the ST by preserving faithfulness and loyalty to its contextual literal meaning (Tawfik, 2003). Besides, the model proposed by Jaleniauskienė and Čičelytė (2009, p. 33) is applied by the researcher in order to analyze the translation strategies used in translating the Islamic expressions. This model illustrates the relation between Venuti's (1995) *foreignization* and *domestication* as main strategies, and the ones proposed by Davies (2003) *preservation*, *addition*, *omission*, *globalization*, *localization*, *transformation*, and *creation* as micro-strategies. In translation practice, domestication and foreignization identify the translator's strategy in addressing the linguistic and cultural differences of the source text. Foreignization focuses on transferring the foreign culture of the source text to the target reader, whereas domestication adapts and changes the foreign text to fit the target culture. In the analysis of the selected expressions the researcher tries to compare and contrast both source and target expressions to check whether they match each other. Mismatches and errors are also pointed out and discussed. The potential reasons to such differences or incongruities are analyzed from different angles.

4. Data Analysis

This section deals with the analysis of some Islamic religious expressions that show some problematicity in translation as they are used in Arabic to express concepts in Islamic thought that can only be understood with reference to a culture that Arabs and Muslims share. With reference to the translations of Abul Quasem (1979) and Al-Allaf (2010) who will be marked in the analysis with T_1 and T_2 respectively, the section focuses on how the two translations reflect and maintain the cultural aspects of the Islamic expressions and the extent to which the translated expressions are relatively equivalent to the original. It also discusses the strategies adopted during the translation process

to see how the decisions taken led to a loss of the source culture, and how these strategies negatively affected translation. It is worth pointing that the skopos (purpose) of the translation will only be achieved if the translations are faithful to the ST and seek not only to convey the intended meaning but to preserve its cultural elements.

Example (1):

ST: *أشهد أن لا إله إلا الله ... وأشهد أن محمداً عبده ورسوله*

T₁: I bear witness that **there is no god except God alone** ... I [also] bear witness that **Muhammad is His servant and Messenger**

T₂: I bear witness that **there is no god save Allāh alone** ... and I bear witness that **Muhammad is His servant and His Messenger**

Shahādah is the first pillar of Islam. The noun ‘*Shahādah*’ derives from the Arabic root (*sh-h-d*) meaning ‘to attest’, and ‘to give a decisive word’. *Shahādah* is composed of two affirmations: *لا إله إلا الله*, *lā ilāha illallāh*, *Muhammadun rasūluallāh* (lit. there is no god but Allāh, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allāh). Concerning the translation of *Shahādah*, it seems that both translators rendered the meaning of this pillar literally, without any further explanation or footnoting. Translating this pillar in this way into English involves many cultural and linguistic problems. Al-Hilali and Khan (1984, p.894) state that “it has been noticed that most mankind, who embrace Islam, do not understand the reality of the meaning of the first fundamental principle of Islam ... so it is essential to explain something of the meanings of this great sentence”. Target readers need to gain a background and understand the meaning of this sentence. Therefore, literal translation is less adequate and the loyalty of the translator to both the ST and the TT reader will be secured if a compensation strategy is employed.

There is a set of associations which cannot be conveyed in the most apparently straightforward translation. Only sufficient provision of details can explain these meanings which lurk behind the denotative level. For example, when pronouncing a testimony of *Shahādah*, one should know and understand the *Shahādah* well and the main skopos behind its utterance that requires one to believe in his/her heart that there is no god has the right to be worshipped except Allāh alone. In Islam, *Shahādah* is used to denote the all-important

confession and affirmation of the uniqueness and oneness of God (Allāh) and that Allāh is the only God who is truly worthy of worship, and the finality of His revelation to the Prophet Muḥammad ρ. However, the purpose of the original utterance of the first part لا إله إلا الله (*lā ilāha*) which implies the meaning that *no god has the right to be worshipped* and the second part لا إله إلا الله (*illallāh*) which is to establish and confirm that *only Allāh is entitled to be worshipped*, is only partially conveyed into the TL due to a missing part in the translation. Translators should have added the phrase ‘*has the right to be worshipped*’ to clarify the meaning to the TT reader, rendering the first part of *Shahādah* as ‘*There is no god has the right to be worshipped except Allāh alone*’. With this addition, the translation could be more adequate and faithful to the ST. Also, the second part of the *Shahādah*, namely ‘*Muḥammadun rasūlullāh*’ (lit. Muḥammad is Allāh's Messenger) means to testify that none has the right to be followed after Allāh, but the Prophet Muḥammad ρ as he is the last of His Messengers. Some English readers may not know anything about the Prophet Muḥammad ρ. The translator should employ a foreignizing strategy to transfer this religious and cultural issue. Therefore, if the literal translation of this part of *Shahādah* is not followed with some kind of brief explanation about the Prophet Muḥammad ρ, it will not help the English reader to grasp the meaning in a better way.

According to the Islam religion, pronouncing the *Shahādah* is the key to convert Islam and one becomes a Muslim to uphold throughout their lifetime and embody in all of their actions and intentions. *Shahādah* is the greatest and most obligated duty to be known; and Allāh I sent the Messengers (peace be upon them) and revealed the divine Books to call and confirm this fact. Allāh I revealed the Glorious Qur’an with this aim and the authentic *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muḥammad ρ also aims at this. It is a declaration that the Muslims proclaim in their daily lives; in their call to Prayer (*adhān*), their call to establishing the Prayer (*iqāmah*), their sermons and their speeches. Therefore, the translator has to explain the content and meanings of *Shahādah*, both denotatively and connotatively, in the target language.

Moreover, there will be definitely distinct ‘mental images’ that are triggered in the ST and TT readers’ minds when encountering expressions such as God associated with the notion of the Trinity in Christianity, and God/ Allāh

referring to the only one God in Islam. It is also worth pointing that T₁ translated the proper name of the deity الله (Allāh) into 'God'. This rendition might be unjustified on the grounds that this expression exists in so many cultures; however, it differs drastically. Disregarding such differences between religious beliefs in the two different cultures may result not only in an inadequate translation but also in an erroneous one.

Another obstacle results from the difficulty of producing the same ST stylistic effect. That is, the exception particle لا has been rendered as 'except' by T₁ and 'save' by T₂ where the two elements are not stylistically equivalent to the 'emphatic negation' produced by what is called in Arabic restricted expression (the exceptional particle 'لا' preceded with a negative particle 'لم') (cf. Halahla, 2010, p. 21); and in order to fill this linguistic gap both translators tried to add the word 'alone'. However, because of the linguistic idiosyncrasies of Arabic, there is still unavoidable meaning loss (Halahla, 2010) that involves some compensation. Moreover, in addition to the great importance of learning its denotative and connotative meanings, the Muslim target reader is highly recommended to pronounce the two parts of *Shahādah* in Arabic 'lā ilāha illallāh, Muḥammadun rasūlullāh'. This would involve the use of more than one strategy such as preservation of the form through transliteration and intratextual gloss; and in order to make the implicit meaning more comprehensible and apparent in the TT, the translator should also use extratextual gloss as an additional procedure.

Example (2):

ST: صلاة بسواك أفضل من سبعين صلاة بغير سواك

T₁: A ritual prayer performed after the use of **a tooth-stick** is better than seventy ritual prayers performed without its use.

T₂: A prayer before which one has used **a toothstick** is better than seventy prayers without having used the **toothstick**.

Siwāk or *miswāk* derives from the Arabic verb 'sāka' which mean to clean the teeth and remove its waste. Using the *siwāk* is one of the desirable Islamic rituals. It seems that Islam played a great role in spreading the use of *siwāk* to other parts of the world. Al Sadhan and Almas (1999) maintains that "the influence of Islam on the use and spread of it in the world is significant" (p.

86). *Siwāk* is mentioned in a number of Ḥadīths and its use is strongly recommended by the Prophet Muḥammad ρ. For example, one of the prophetic Ḥadīths that shows the importance of using *siwāk* before each *ṣalāt* is that which Abū Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet Muḥammad ρ said “If it were not that it would be difficult on my nation, then I would have ordered them to use the *siwāk* at every time of prayer” (cf. Al-‘Asqalānī, 2000, p. 435). This oral hygiene tool, as described by Al Sadhan and Almas, is a pencil-sized stick of various plants; it is fashioned from certain plant-parts and is chewed on one end until it becomes frayed into a brush. “The brush-end is used to clean the teeth in a manner similar to the use of a toothbrush” (1999, p. 80).

Although the *siwāk* is a more general term which seems to include all types of sticks used as tooth-cleaning aids, *Salvadora persica* (known as *Arāk* in Arabic) is the plant that was used by the Prophet Muḥammad ρ. Muslim, therefore, believes that cleaning sticks from *Arāk* tree are highly recommended and more preferable as the most suitable tree for making the *siwāk* stick. It has also been scientifically proven that *siwāk* has many health and medical benefits (see Al Sadhan & Almas, 1999). Its use, therefore, is not only a means of cleaning the teeth but also a means of obtaining healthy teeth and mouth. These are the main reasons behind Islam's encouraging its followers to use it regularly. Due to its medical benefits it became a *Sunnah* that Muslims are advised to practice, even with the presence and use of the modern methods of cleaning teeth.

As seen in example (2), the term *siwāk* is translated as ‘toothstick’; both translators opt for domesticating the term using localization strategy. The rendition the translators gave for this expression is not only an inaccurate, but also drops its religious and spiritual flavor. The image the term ‘toothstick’ creates in the reader's mind is the image of nowadays' regular toothstick, i.e., the small pointed stick that is used for removing food from between the teeth (also called a toothpick) or that brush usually used in private or in a bathroom, but not in public or in front of people. Yet, if the Arabic term *siwāk* is used, the native reader observes that it can be used anywhere and anytime; people might use it in private or in public. The English translation is therefore somehow vague and misleading. Not only do the translators replace the Islamic Arabic *siwāk* with another ‘tool’ that has nothing to do with *siwāk*, but they also

sacrifice informativity of this Islamic expression and its religious dimension which represented in that it is a prophetic *Sunnah* that a Muslim will be rewarded for, as well as it maintains the cleanliness of the Muslim who is required to always be clean. The Qur'an did not mention directly the commandment of *siwāk* practice; however the general principle of hygiene has been strengthened in Qur'an (9:108). Obviously, the use of the transliteration *siwāk* in the English text, with a brief footnote, if necessary, would help maintain a lot of information and reflect some of its connotative meanings.

Example (3):

ST: ولازم هذه الأوراد

T₁: Continue these ten forms of **praise of God**

T₂: Read this **litany**

Example (3) shows that T₁ translated the Arabic expression *awrād* as 'praise of God'. The translator is not accurate in his dealing with this religious expression. The word *awrād* in religious context is not restricted to praise of God; it may also include invocations, supplications that Muslim reads and/or says before and after *ṣalāt*, or even at different times of the day. Another translation to this expression is 'litany' given by T₂. Here, the translator resorts to transformation strategy. 'Litany' refers to a specific type of prayers in Christianity; and it is defined by *Longman Dictionary* as "a long prayer in the Christian Church in which the priest says a sentence and the people reply" (2003, p. 944). The English term 'litany' does not show the Islamic particularity of *awrād*. 'Litany' is a form of prayer unique to the Western and Christian. In addition, Christians utter formulae in their litanies that are quite different from those articulated by Muslims. *Awrād*, as a religious expression, is particular to Islam because all supplications, petitions and invocations are said for the sake of Allāh I (the only one worshipped God) alone, unlike the Christians who say their litanies for the sake of Trinity. Therefore, in order to avoid misunderstanding by the target reader and to be more faithful and loyal to the ST, transferring this expression through transliteration might be a better translation strategy. A footnote or a glossary entry might also be furnished for a brief definition.

Example (4):

علم: أَنْ أَوْامِرَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى فَرَائِضَ وَنَوَافِلَ

T₁: Know that God's commands (exalted is He!) prescribe **obligatory acts and supererogatory acts.**

T₂: **KNOW THAT THE** commandments of Allāh Most High pertain to **the obligatory and voluntary.**

Frā'id (فرائض) and *nawāfil* (نوافل) are commonly religious expressions that typically occur in the same collocational contexts. The Islamic expression *frā'id* is the plural of *farḍ*. In Islam, the term *farḍ* (also called *wājib*) refers to those actions, rituals and/or duties that a Muslim should do and observe; failing to perform them, unless excused, is a punishable sin. Denying these obligatory duties or deliberately insisting on not doing them nulls the person's 'Muslimness'. Put differently, a Muslim will not be a full or faithful Muslim without doing them. An example of this is the five daily prayers. In contrast with the religious expression *frā'id*, the *nawāfil* (the plural of *nāfilah*) refer to non-obligatory or voluntary religious acts of worship ('*ibādāt*'). Performing the *nawāfil*, however, are recommended and desired in Islam. If a Muslim performs them s/he will be greatly rewarded and if s/he does not, s/he will not be punished. In other words, doing *nawāfil* will please Allāh and will, thus, bring in more Godly reward, but not doing it will not lead to any breach of the religion's rules, nor will it displease Allāh. So, the *nawāfil* are optional, additional, voluntary and supererogatory. In these senses the expressions *frā'id* and *nawāfil* are used in the ST. However, all these meanings which are likely to come immediately to the mind of the Arabic Muslim reader when encountering such religious expressions may not be conjured up in the TR's mind.

In their translation of *frā'id* and *nawāfil*, T₁ and T₂ opt for globalization strategy rendering them as *the obligatory (acts)* and *voluntary/supererogatory (acts)* respectively. The TL words are more generic and have a wider meaning than the SL ones. In Islamic culture, the *frā'id* and *nawāfil* refer basically to those obligatory or voluntary acts prescribed and recommended by Islam religion. To English reader, the words *obligatory* and *voluntary* could refer to those acts prescribed and recommended by Islam religion or by human laws. As a result, the English translation is not adequate and less loyal to the ST.

However, if the word *religious* preceded *obligatory* and *voluntary* in the TT, it would pave the way for the TT readers expectation. Even though using this suggested foreignizing procedure conveys the meaning to some extent, some other denotative and connotative meanings associated with these Arabic expressions are unlikely to be apparent in the target language in such a translation. Target readers need to know the implied meanings in these Arabic expressions; they should know, for instance, the rewards and blessings gained as a result of performing both of these religious acts, the punishment confined on those who do not perform *frā'id*, and that the *nawāfil* are not restricted to *ṣalāt* as some people tend to think, but each and every act of worship, in Islam, has its related obligatory as well as supererogatory acts.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier '*frā'id* and *nawāfil*' often occur in the same collocational contexts; their word order makes up a collocation. Larson (1984, p.156) maintains that certain combinations which commonly occur together often occur in a fixed order. If the order is changed, the result will sound unnatural to the native speaker of the language. In the Arabic collocation '*frā'id* and *nawāfil*', the lexical item *frā'id* often occurs before *nawāfil*. This fixed word order reflects the fact that in Islamic belief the *frā'id* are more significant and essential than *nawāfil* which are voluntary. This meaning may not be grasped and appreciated by the target reader. Therefore, it would be better, first, to transfer the culturally-bound expressions into the target language by paraphrase (intratextual strategy); then to add, in a footnote, sufficient details to explain its cultural and linguistic dimensions with the provision of illustrative examples.

Example (5):

ST: ويخفض لهما الجناح

T₁: to be humbly tender to their call

T₂: to lower to them the wing of humility

In his translation of the idiomatic Arabic expression *wa yakhafid lahumā al-janāh* (lit. to lower to them the wing), T₁ gives a natural English phrasing of the idea, dropping the Arabic word *janāh* and removing the image presented in the Arabic version of the idiom. Accordingly, the cultural particularity and exoticism of the Arabic idiom in its reference is lost and the metaphoric nature

of the Arabic text is also sacrificed. The Arabic expression is stronger in effect and tone as it involves *submission and humility through mercy*, implied by the use of *janāḥ* 'wing'. It is also a very rhetorical form, hence the eloquence and emotiveness of the expression. Apparently, the English translation '*to be humbly tender to their call*' does not equal the original in light of these details. What such a translation offers is a simplified form of the meaning, given in straightforward and plain English void of any cultural elements and metaphorical tropes.

T₂, on the other hand, preserves the original expression through literal translation but adds the expression '*of humility*' for more clarification and to retain its religious reference mentioned in the Qur'anic *āyah* (17:24). In using this foreignizing strategy, the translator succeeds in giving a foreign touch to the translation and introducing an Arabic expression into English language. However, in such a case, there is an ethical responsibility on the translator's part towards the TR. The translator should, as much as he can, make the text readable and understandable for the TR. Unless the meaning of such an expression can be easily inferred from the context, the translator should explicate it in the best possible available way; a footnote seems to be the finest and most practical way.

Example (6):

ST: ... فإذا قنعت في السنة بقميص خشن, وفي اليوم برغيفين من الخشكار, ...

T₁: If you are content with a coarse **shirt** throughout the year and with two loaves of black bread in twenty-four hours, ...

T₂: If you are content with only one rough **shirt** for the whole year, and just two coarse loaves of flat bread a day, ...

Clothes, as a part of material culture, play a pivotal role in presenting and reflecting the individual's self-image as well as constructing his/her own cultural and social identity. It goes without saying that clothes have their particularity within the culture to which they belong. People belonging to different societies wear clothes that might not commonly known or worn in other societies. Clothes reflect people's social class, level of education, and religious beliefs. For instance, if a woman is wearing *hijāb*, one immediately understands that she adheres to particular religious beliefs (Islam). These

clothes, therefore, differ in their shape, material, and symbolic meanings. There are many Arab dress items that do not have linguistic representations in English simply due to the fact that such items are not known or not used in English culture. This can cause problems in translation.

In a point of fact, Islam does not specify what type of clothing a Muslim must wear. That is, it does not dictate specific descriptions of items of clothing. However, Islam simply lays down universal mandatory principles that must be abided by in the matter of clothing. As long as these principles are conformed to, every Muslim man and woman is left free to choose what he or she wears. The core of these principles is: (1) Clothing must cover the area of the body that is considered *'awrah*. This varies between man and woman significantly. (2) Clothing must adorn the wearer. Beauty and adornment are desired by Islam, as long as they are kept within the limits of the *Sharī'ah* and, very importantly, the laws of *ḥijāb* are not violated. (3) Clothing of silk is *ḥarām* for men, but not for women. Bearing these basic principles in mind, let us now look at what type of *qamīṣ* as a clothing item mentioned in Qur'an and a number of Prophetic Ḥadīths, and how it should be translated. *Qamīṣ* as seen in example (6) is translated by both translators as 'shirt'. This translation can be considered a cultural substitution (transformation strategy). In English, the word 'shirt' is generally used to refer to a piece of clothing that covers the upper part of the body, usually has sleeves, a collar and buttons down the front. The garment that is known as the *qamīṣ* to the Arabs is not the same as the garment known as 'shirt' to the English people. Regarding this, Kashmīrī (2005) states that *qamīṣ* to the Arabs, is a long garment that extends to the ankles. It is not that one known recently (i.e. shirt) which is a very small and extends to the thighs (cf. Kashmīrī, 2005, p. 75). *Qamīṣ*, as it is reported in the books of Ḥadīth, was the Messenger of Allāh's favourite item of clothing. The *qamīṣ* that was the favourite item of clothing to the Prophet ﷺ is the *qamīṣ* of the Arabs. This *qamīṣ* is without slits to the sides and extends to the calves, above the ankles. Needless to say, this applies only to men as women are commanded to cover up to and including their ankles.

The performance of *ṣalāt* wearing only the *qamīṣ* is possible when it is without slits and extends to the calves. Otherwise, the body will not be fully covered. In other words, it is mentioned in the books of *fiqh* that if a man performs *ṣalāt* wearing only a *qamīṣ* and any part of his body between the navel

and knees is not visible through the neck opening, it does not affect the validity of his *ṣalāt* (Ibn 'Ābidūn, n.d). From this, it is understood that in the terminology of the *fuqahā'* (jurists) the *qamīṣ* is without slits and extends to the calves. Otherwise, the performance of *ṣalāt* wearing only the *qamīṣ* will not be valid. On the basis of this discussion one can infer that rendering the Arabic word '*qamīṣ*' as a '*shirt*' is inadequate and results in a denotational and cultural loss. Being an essential of the cultural, social and national identity of a given people, replacing clothes items with those ones that belong to the TL culture obliterates their original cultural specificity and symbolic signification; therefore, the best strategy is maintaining them in the translation, i.e. using transliteration. Explaining briefly its meaning in a footnote could also be an ideal strategy in dealing with such a situation.

5. Conclusion

The religious expressions that have been explored in this study constitute a main part of the Arabic-Islamic culture and rendering them to another language requires a high level of accuracy and faithfulness. Therefore, it has been shown through the analysis of some examples that establishing a complete equivalence between source and target text with respect to all desirable features is difficult because of the differences between the languages and cultures involved. The study also shows that the main causes that affect translation is the sensitive nature of religious expressions and some other related factors such as the cultural differences, context and the huge bulk of information that is hidden and implied in the use of that expression.

Moreover, the study reveals that adopting domesticating translation strategies in religious translation leads to significant loss of information, distortion of facts and truths, misrepresentation of the cultural values and religious beliefs that are presented in the source text. Subjecting the images that are presented in the ST and belong to the original culture to the target culture's values and preferences makes a huge difference. It deprives the target reader of some information about the reality of things in the source culture. Consequently, the current study indicated that the foreignization strategy that is supplemented with some basic rules of the skopos theory leans more toward achieving a hybridized text that retains the identity of the original text and can be, at the same time, a dependable and reliable source of information and knowledge for the target language reader. The foreignness and peculiarity of

the original text should not be sacrificed for the sake of the TR; on the contrary, the target reader has the right to learn about other cultures, other people, languages and ways of life.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest

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