Untranslatability and Quranic Terms

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Abstract:

The present paper is exclusively concerned with translatability and untranslatability of some Quranic terms under a linguistic study. The main focus of the study is to discover the main problems which encounter the translators in translating Quranic terms. The study attempts to touch up on the strategies adopted by the translators to come to terms with these problems

Keywords: *Untranslatability, Quranic, Quranic Terms.*

Untranslatability and its Types

In Western and Chinese nations, translation has a more than a thousand-year history. Translation is an ongoing practice that consistently demonstrates linguistic portability. Some terms, such adaptation, borrowing, pharma-phrasing, and footnote, cannot be translated in the lack of cultural equivalency and must instead be compensated in some other way.

Modern translation theories, according to Ebel (1969) in *Translatability and Poetic Translation*, refute the conventional earlier conception of translation as the substitution of an utterance in one language for another, rendering the two equivalents. 'Faithfulness' in translation is therefore impossible because no two languages have exact equivalents. According to Gipper (1972) in *Translatability and Poetic Translation*, translation entails the transfer of viewpoints from one linguistic standpoint to another, and this process is ineluctable without alterations to form or character. A person becomes a prisoner of his language when their local language dominates their outlook on the world. For many years, translation theories were confined to the study of linguistics. As long as target readers, the translator's goals, and the purpose of translations were taken with consideration, there was content and form adherence to the original until new ideas emerged. The study of linguistics has been used to create ever-sophisticated explanations of the language of translation. Translation study was considered at first as a branch of applied linguistics; nowadays, it is being recognized as an independent discipline. Translation undergoes two orientations linguistic and culture interest. In the second half of the twentieth century. When translation studies were fighting to launch its own place in academic fields, linguistics had already achieved great development as a scientific field as Baker records during the 1960s. Baker (1992) claims that language is the starting point for translations. Naturally, linguistics became the primary source of the philosophical and educational insights. On the other hand, Catford (1965) asserted that language is connected to human social contexts in his book *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*. He claims that behavior with patterns is language. In fact, the language follows a pattern.

What's Untranslatability?

Translation obstacle is untranslatability. The translator exerts his effort to achieve the culture effect of the original text. Some languages have equivalent words but they don't share the same connotation. Words have the same form with different meanings in Arabic. In English some words

don't have a single word denoting the meaning of one-form word in Arabic. There are proverbs that are culturally specific to Arabic Islamic culture.

The concept "Equivalence" stirred a lot of controversy in 1960's and 1970's by different scholars. Pano II states that equivalence was meant to indicate that source text (hence forth SI) and target text (hence forth TL) share some kind of sameness. The question was to the kind and degree of sameness which gave birth to different kinds of equivalence. Because of differences in linguistic structure and terminology there cannot be a complete equivalence between two words in different languages. Finding T L translation equivalents is the primary issue in translation practice, according to Catford (1965). Translation, according to him, is the process of replacing textual elements in one language (SL) with equivalent textual materials in a different language (TL).

In *Toward a Science of Translation,* Eugenie Nida (1964) focuses on conveying the meaning and style of the source-language message as closely as possible in the target language. According to Nida and Taber (1969), there are two different kinds of equivalent: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. They believe that dynamic equivalence is a more efficient translation technique. According to Nida and Taber, the concept of dynamic equivalence should be defined in terms of the extent to which the readers of the target language react to the message in the target language in the same way that the readers of the source language react to the message in the source language. Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence is replaced by Newmark's (1981) semantic and communicative translation. The two approaches may be employed concurrently during the translation process; Newmark does not favor one way over the other.

In the 1950s and 1960s, translation studies had a stronger linguistic focus and used terms like word-for-word versus sense-for-sense translation. Free translation contrasts with literal translation. The cultural approach underwent a fresh turn in the 1970s. The source language culture and the target language culture both have an impact on translation, according to many academics. The translator must choose which norms of the source language or the target language are more important than the others.

Equivalence is the translation of a term or statement into the target language that has the same meaning and the same impact. Non-Equivalence occurs when a word does not have an equivalent with the same effect in the target language as it does in the original language. Language-specific concepts that represent a community's interests and

views are what words in any language relate to rather than just their literal meanings. In deciding how to employ the word, the translators must also consider context. According on the context, the word "haram" حرام for instance, might mean forbidden, illegal, or unethical. Islam forbids some behaviors, including theft, eating pork, drinking alcohol, and others. These behaviors are all classified as forbidden. Any actions that violate the law are considered unlawful; similarly, morally wrong behavior is considered unethical. Idioms and fixed expressions are a burden placed on translators that encourages the notion of non-equivalence.

Fixed expressions and idioms, according to Baker, are frozen patterns of language that allow little or no alteration in form, and frequently have meanings that cannot be determined from their component Components. . The word "salat" is an example of an idiom since it refers to performing particular acts and deeds in accordance with certain Islamic doctrines. If the word is translated as a prayer, it does not correspond to the Islamic idea of "salat". In order to obtain the appropriate connotation in Islam, the word "salat" is thus borrowed.

Types of Untranslatability

Untranslatability is the loss that occurs during the translation process when there is no counterpart in a different tongue. J.C. Catford (1965) presents two categories of untranslatability: linguistic and cultural. The features of a language are typically revealed by the structure of that language and these characteristics only appear in related languages. Finding a similar transference in unrelated languages is difficult since it necessitates completely altering the code.

Cultural Untranslatability. Language is a key element of cultures. Culture has an effect on language, and culture also provides the framework for language. According to J.C. Catford (1965), there are two potential reasons why something cannot be translated: linguistic and cultural. In his book *Primitive Culture*, Edward Taylor (1871) defined culture as the totality of the information, beliefs, art, morals, law, tradition, and other talents and habits that a man acquires as a member of society. Peter Newmark (1988) wrote in *A Text Book of Translation* that culture is a particular way of life that expresses itself through a peculiar language. According to Nida, knowing two cultures is even more important for good translation than knowing both languages because the language only makes sense in its cultural context.

Types of Cultural Untranslatability. There are four categories of culture untranslatability according to Nida (1988) in his book *Language, Culture and Translation* as follows: 1- Material Culture: Because different nations inhabit various environments, the same object will have various representations. 2-Traditional Culture: traditions vary from country to country and from region to region. 3- Religious Culture: Each country has its own religion and words that are unique to that nation. 4- Historical Culture: certain idioms and legends that are unique to a country can only be found in that country due to its history.

Some phrases in one language that are generally regarded as being identical to other terms in another language really have very different connotations and even referents; these words are known as "false friends." It's challenging to do a translation successfully. When there are cultural disparities between languages, it becomes quite difficult. More disparities in language structure, cultural differences exacerbate translation issues. According to Nida, cultural differences may present the translator with more serious difficulties than linguistic ones. Language is a cultural reflection consequently there are numerous classifications of cultural words proposed by several researchers.

The classification of cultural terms by Newmark (1988) includes four categories:1-Ecology. 2-material culture (food, clothing, housing, towns, and transportation). 3- social culture (work and leisure). 4- organizations, customs, activities, procedures, or concepts (including artistic, religious, political, and administrative subcategories), and gestures and habits.

Additionally, Katan (1999) offers the following cultural terms: Behavior (actions and methods of acting in particular cultures), environment (including weather, housing, food, etc.) skills, techniques, and communication skills (including non-verbal) used while approaching someone with two kisses as opposed to a handshake.

Four major categories are outlined by Fernandez Guerra (2012) in *Translating Culture: Problems, Strategies and Practical Realities*: 1- Geographic and ethnographic terms 2- Words or expressions referring to folklore, traditions, and mythology 3-Names of commonplace items, actions, and events (such as food and drink, clothing, housing, tools, public transportation, dances and games, units of measurement, money, etc.) 4- Social and historical terms designating territorial administrative units or divisions; departments, professions, littles, ranks, greetings, and protocol.

Qur'an and Untranslatability

The Holy Qur'an is the infallible word of God (Allah) revealed to the prophet Mohammed to all mankind. The Holy Qur'an with its miraculous character of the linguistic composition is impossible to be translated with its original sense and unique wording. However, the Qur'an translation or interpretation achieves ultimate goal to the non-Arabic speaking world.

The translation of The Qur'an first took place during the time of the prophet Muhammad to the purposes of "dawa" دعوة. The prophet Muhammed asked' Zayd bin Thabit, one of the prophets' companions, to learn the Syrian Language in order to reply to letters sent by Jews to the prophet. The Roman emperor Heracles also had a private translator Interpreted Letters sent to him by the prophet Mohammed.

The difficulty of translating Quran results in untranslatability or limitation of translatability. There are linguistic and cultural untranslatability or limitation (Newmark, etal;1988):

1.Lexical and Semantic Limitations. The TL does not have an equivalent for several lexical pieces or terms. For instance, the English equivalent of the Arabic فتيممو "fatayammumu" does not exist. It is a form of ablution since it takes the place of "al- wadu" الوضوء when there is no water available for cleansing. There are in the Islamic culture other words with delicate connotations such as "الصمد". The statement which has a comparable meaning to the word الصمد "assamad" in the source language has no single word equivalent. It represents the idea of "assamadiyya" الصمدية which calls for the absolute perfection of might, power, wisdom, knowledge, honor, Lordship of Almighty Allah, and the need of others for Him.

2. Arabic Structural Limitations. A language's linguistic pattern is typically represented by its syntactic structure. The word "order" may go through several changes (known as "iltifat" التفات in Arabic) to have a more striking or sublime effect. Some phrases that are generally regarded as being identical to other terms in another language really have very different connotations and even referents; these words are known as "false friends."

Compensation Strategies

Variations in Linguistic Translation Technique

In order to successfully translate a text, the translator can rely on a variety of methods or approaches to address the issue of bridging cultural gaps. The techniques that lead to the best resolution of a translation challenge are typically referred to as translation strategies.

In linguistics, main kinds of compensation techniques are produced. In his contrast between direct approaches and oblique translation procedures, Vázquez Ayora (1977) in *Introduction to Traductology* lists the following terms: adaptation, amplification, compensation, equivalence, exploitation modulation, omission, and transposition (calque, loan and literal translation). Variety, paralinguistic or linguistic substitution, discursive creation description, generalization, particularization, and reduction are only a few of the many techniques Nord (1991) lists.

Harvey (2003) offers four other strategies. (1) Employing a phrase that serves the same purpose as another (2) Transcription or borrowing, that could involve annotations and translation that is either illustrative or self-explanatory (3) Word-for-word translation (4) formal equivalent, or linguistic equivalent.

Mur Duenas (2003) in *Taxonomy of Translation Strategies* puts five techniques: (1) Terms that are appropriate for the culture, (2) Cultural and linguistic borrowings from the SL, and (3) Cultural borrowings from the SL that are justified. (4) A justification in the place of an SL cultural referent (6) Literal referent suppression and (5) TL referent suppression.

Marco Borillo (2004) in *translation Ideology* concludes six different strategies: 1-Literal translation 2-Generalization or particularization 3-Neutralization of description 4-pure or naturalized borrowing 5-Amplification or compression 6- Cultural sensitivity.

The aforementioned procedures will be summarized as follows:

Adaptation. What is essentially a component of SL culture is referred to by another term in the TL. The translator's primary goal when adjusting a translation is to domesticate the cultural activities of the target audience in order to get a comparable result.

Borrowing. Borrowing is the act of directly using a phrase from another language without translating it. When a term is missing from the TC or the translator wants to create a certain stylistic or unconventional effect, they will often use this method. For example, there is no English equivalent to the word "الزقوم" which is "a fruit tree whose fruit tastes and smells bad. It has a heated touch and a dark appearance. No one can stomach swallowing it" (Al-Razy,2006, P.178). Thus, to translate"الزقوم" into English, we must borrow"Zaqqum".

Calque. Calque can be thought of as a direct translation of a foreign word or phrase. It may be argued that this is a special form of lending or borrowing because the translator borrows the SL phrase and then transfers it in a literal translation.

Compensation. Compensation provides SL informational or stylistic elements in a different area in the TL text because it cannot be reproduced in the same way as in the SL. The translator will need to use further English words from the formal scripts to convey the degree of formality in order to retain the same level of formality. Translating the preposition "على" in Allah's saying (انا وجدنا أباءنا على أمة)(Surat Az-zukhruf, verse22) into the verb "follow" is a good example for compensation. The translator tries to give a nearby meaning:(We found our fathers following a certain religion, 43:22(Translated by A. Y. Ali). The literal meaning of this preposition is changed to a metaphorical one. Allah says (على أمة) and does not say (يتبعون أمة) because the metaphorical meaning of "على" implies that unbelievers imitate their fathers' behavior exactly. They are such obedient followers that they carry out every act that their fathers perform. The word "follow" is used by the translator in this sentence to replace the preposition "على", but it does not have the same referential meaning. Thus, by employing the compensation approach, the translator is able to make up for"على "although not to the same degree of precision. "Follow" in Oxford Advanced means " come, go, and have a place after (, space, time or order" (Hornby,2000, P.338).

Omission, Reduction condensation or Compression. The translator will typically decide to leave out a cultural phrase from the translated text of the statement if it is not necessary or could potentially lead the reader astray.

Description. It is considered to be a form of paraphrase, or even an extension or clarification of an SL word. To take an example by referring to the Quranic term "لأستغفرن" in (الا قول إبراهيم لأبيه لأستغفرن لك) (surat Al-Mumtahana, verse 4). In this verse the prophet Ibrahim makes a pledge to his father in which he expresses his deep regret for his father and his determination to seek Allah's pardon on his behalf, so he uses the verb "لأستغفرن " with the letters "لام" and "نون "which express affirmation to describe his sadness and with the letter "سين" that expresses future. Thus, there is no an English verb denotes the same meanings of "لأستغفرن". In this case using description is a suitable technique as in this translation (I will ask forgiveness for thee, 60:4 (Translated by M. M. Pickthall).

Equivalence. This basically means that the translator is using a word or phrase that has a well-defined translational equivalent. For instance, the word "يد" in Allah's saying in surat Al-Fatth verse number 10 (ان الذين يبايعونك انما يبايعون الله يد الله فوق أيديهم) can be translated into "hand" :(The Hand of Allah is over their hands, 48:10 (Translated by M.T. Al-Hilali & M. M. Khan). In this example, there is equivalence between the two

words because the word hand has the same connotation of the word "يد". The word "يد" means real hand or power: " The Hand of Allah is over their hands during the Qur'an because they pledged to Allah by making a pledge to his prophet (peace be upon him), or Allah's power is over their power in the support of his apostle because they do not make a pledge to anyone else but the apostle in order to defeat his enemy" (Al-Tabary,2000, P.94).As for the word "hand", it means in Oxford Advanced " (1) a part of body with which one holds things . (2) (Sing only) influence or agency. (3) (PL) power, possession, responsibility. (Hornby, page 394).

Explication, Expansion, and Amplification. In the target language (TL), we use more words to convey the same idea as we do concerning the source language (SL), either through explicative paraphrasing, the addition of extra details, or the addition of information that is not stated in the source language.

Generalization. The translator uses his technique, which includes utilizing hypernyms or more impersonal or generic terms, to avoid repetitions or ambiguity.

Literal Translation. The method of interpreting an SL term or phrase into a TL term or phrase without taking into account style and with only small adjustments to make sure that the translation seems correct and idiomatic is known as literal translation, sometimes known as word-by-word translation.

Modulation. A phrase must be changed to sound different in both the SL and TL in order to communicate the same idea.

Particularization. Particularization, the technique used by the translator to interpret TL hyponyms or more precise terminology, is the antithesis of generalization.

Substitution. Linguistic and paralinguistic substitution is a translation way wherein linguistic parts are replaced by paralinguistic components (intonation gestures, for example), or vice versa, to translate the Arabic gesture of laying your hand over your heart as (thank you).

Transposition. This method involves changing a grammatical category and a speech element without changing the message's meaning to produce a translation which appears as if it had been created in the target language (TL).

Variation. It involves the translator changing elements that affect a variety of dialect-related language variances, such as alterations intonation, form, and social dialect.

conclusion

There is no absolute equivalence between languages. Every language has its own cultural and linguistic nature, and consequently there is no one-to-one correspondence between the source language and the target one. Another outcome is that there is no a translation of the Holy Quran words which reflects the same effect but it is merely an interpretation of the meanings of the Quran words

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