

Strategies and problems of translating euphemism in two selected English translations of the holy Quran: an analytical study

1

Ahmed Hakami

*Department of English Language and Translation, Saudi Electronic University,
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia*

Received 9 September 2023

Revised 17 October 2023

11 November 2023

Accepted 11 November 2023

Abstract

Purpose – The present paper aims at defining and analyzing the techniques, strategies, and challenges in translating the euphemism of two English interpretations of the Holy Quran. The first is the translation of Abdullah Yusuf Ali (14 April 1872–10 December 1953), whereas the second is the translation of Arthur John Arberry (12 May 1905–2 October 1969).

Design/methodology/approach – The study adopts a qualitative approach that is introduced through a theoretical framework that discusses and elaborates on the term “euphemism”. After that, the study uses analytical approaches in order to define and analyze the techniques and strategies in translating the euphemism of two English interpretations of the Holy Quran.

Findings – The results elaborate on the techniques used by the two translators to translate the euphemisms of two English interpretations of the Holy Quran.

Originality/value – The reason for selecting these two translations is to find the different techniques and approaches of both Eastern and Western translators. The main analysis of the study is based on Newmark's perceptions about the techniques and strategies of translation.

Keywords Euphemism, Quran, Translation

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Generally, translation is transferring the author's thoughts from a source text (ST) to a target text (TT). However, in case of the Quran, the divine text not only represents divine thoughts but also it introduces religious and secular principles of all Muslims, namely *'ibadaat* and *mu'aamalat*. What distinguishes the Quran as a divine text is the originality and rhetoric of its language. Here, it is worth mentioning that the miracle of the Quran is its language that represents linguistic, scientific, legislative and historic implications. Thus, the translator of the Qur'anic text must be aware of these implications in order to introduce the real meaning of the text.

There are certain techniques that are used in Qur'anic translation, including overtranslation, undertranslation, transliteration, narrowing the cultural gap, considering sociocultural circumstances and using the communicative strategy of translation. Overtranslation is associated with the additional language that must be added to TT to make it untestable and logical (Newmark, 1976). Undertranslation is related to reducing the speech that the target language (TL) contains to be less than that of the source language (Newmark, 1976). Transliteration is the use of the same sounds of the ST equivalent and attributing it to the TT. This technique is used when the equivalent is missing in the TL



© Ahmed Hakami. Published in *Saudi Journal of Language Studies*. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at <http://creativecommons.org/licences/by/4.0/legalcode>

Saudi Journal of Language Studies
Vol. 4 No. 1, 2024
pp. 1-10
Emerald Publishing Limited
e-ISSN: 2634-2448
p-ISSN: 2634-243X
DOI 10.1108/SJLS-09-2023-0038

(Habash *et al.*, 2007). Using communicative translation helps to produce the effect of the original text on the reader. In other words, the translated text must be as original as the ST (Newmark, 1981). The sociocultural circumstances that control the translation aim at setting the procedures and strategies used to bridge cultural references. The reception of TT readers is inextricably affected by these procedures/strategies (Schäffner and Adab, 1997).

The Quran is the central religious book of Islam; it was orally transmitted to the Prophet Mohammed to challenge Arabs of *Jahilia* (pre-Islamic era) on the rhetorical and linguistic level (Al-Imam, 2006). The main miracle of the Quran is its language. The Qur'anic language is unique as it represents the supreme point of grammatical, rhetorical, stylistic and figurative Arabic language. Among many Qur'anic-linguistic styles, euphemism is one linguistic style that elaborates how the Quran conveys unpleasant expressions in a polite and comprehensive way.

2. Methodology and sampling

The study utilizes a qualitative approach that is introduced through a theoretical framework that discusses and elaborates on the term "euphemism." After that, the study uses analytical approaches in order to define and analyze the techniques and strategies in translating the euphemism of two English interpretations of the Holy Quran. The first is the translation of Abdullah Yusuf Ali (2000), whereas the second is the translation of Arthur John Arberry (1996). The reason for selecting these two translations is to find the different techniques and approaches of both Eastern and Western translators. The samples of the study are Qur'anic verses in which the Muslim Holy Text uses euphemism as a linguistic technique for avoiding unpleasant expressions.

Both Ali and Arberry represent different school of translation: the first represents the Eastern school of translation that aims at following each linguistic and cultural element in the ST. That makes his translation less smooth than that of the other translator. On the other hand, Arberry's translation is much more communicative than Ali's. Using these two different schools and cultures enriches the analyzed techniques and strategies of the two selected translations. Consequently, this paves the way for other scholars to use this mixed style of Quranic translation.

3. Research questions

- RQ1. What are the main strategies used in translating euphemism in the holy Quran?
- RQ2. What are the differences of translating "euphemism" in both translations?
- RQ3. What are the differences of Arberry's Western style of translation and Ali's Eastern style of translation?

4. Theoretical framework

4.1 Euphemism

The Quran is a divine text; it is the main source for teachings, social norms and legislation in Islam. The major tenet of Islam is that Muslims believe that God orally revealed the Quran to the final prophet, Muhammad, through the archangel Gabriel (Jibril), over a 23-year period, beginning in the month of Ramadan when the Prophet Muhammad was 40 and ending in 632, the year of Muhammad's death (Nöldeke *et al.*, 2006). Muslims consider the Quran to be Muhammad's greatest miracle and proof of his prophethood. As a sacred text, the language of the Quran heavily uses euphemism to avoid any unpleasant expressions.

The linguistic miracle of the Quran includes the subtle use of euphemism as the text uniquely utilizes euphemism without losing any details of the divine discourse. Ramzi Al

Balbaky (1990) defines euphemism as avoiding unpleasant expressions within a language, whereas Wahba and Al Mohaned (1990) define euphemism as the substitution of an unpleasant expression metaphorically with one or more other words to avoid embarrassment, so euphemism has a very specific function for making the discourse available for all people (Shoira and Umidovich, 2022).

In Islamic theology, translating the Quran from Arabic into other languages has always been a challenging task. Muslims regard the Quran as miraculous and unique text that should not be separated from its original language or written form, at least not without the Arabic text being intact (Addim, 2021).

4.2 Euphemism in the Quran

Arabic is the language of the Quran and also the language of communication for most Muslims. Thus, Qur'anic language has become part and parcel of Muslims' everyday language. Consequently, euphemism in the Quran is a linguistic, social and religious issue. Translating euphemism in the Quran is problematic as the translator must deal with two main elements: the divine message and the linguistic pattern. In other words, the translator of the Quran, as a divine text, must be totally aware of the content as well as the language in order to convey the real divine message sent by God through His book.

In terms of linguistic analysis, the translation of the Quran, especially in the case of euphemism, must consider five main levels. The first is the lexical level which includes synonyms, polysemy, proper nouns, geographical names, compound words, phrasal verbs, loan words, jargon, acronyms, abbreviation and technical terms. The second is the semantic level which deals with contextual meaning, connotation and denotation, collocation, idioms, proverbs, sayings and homonymy. The third is the syntactic level which includes the grammatical issues such as passivation (agentless passive, agentive passive) and finite and nonfinite clauses. The fourth is the figurative level: simile, metaphor, irony, personification and ambiguity. The fifth level is the cultural level that aims at narrowing the gaps between the two languages socially and religiously.

The embarrassment caused by dealing with such issues does not prevent the comprehensiveness of the divine text from dealing with them. In other words, the Quran deals with all issues and cases of human life. The Quran represents a legal and religious constitution for all Muslims. That is why it must deal with all aspects of life, no matter if they are embarrassing or unpleasant. Thus, the most challenging point in the translation of euphemism is keeping the linguistic and religious contents of the ST of the Quran.

5. Data analysis

Euphemism in the Quran can be found in five major categories where the divine text avoids the unpleasant terms associated with them. These positions include (1) women's issues (such as menstruation) and sexuality; (2) adultery; (3) the reproductive organs; (4) defecating; and (5) distress. Sexuality includes two main elements: the first is the lawful *Halal*, sexual relations between a husband and wife, whereas the second is forbidden sexual relations or adultery. The following example elaborates how the Quran euphemizes the sexual expressions:

Source text:

(وَاللَّاتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاصْرَبُوهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ

سَبِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا)

(Quran, 4:34)

wa-llāti takhāfūna nushūzahunna fa-ʿizūhunna wa-hjurūhunna fī l-maḍājiʿi wa-ḍribūhunna fa-ʾin ʾaṭaʾnakum fa-lā tabghū ʿalayhinna sabīlan ʾinna llāha kāna ʿaliyyan kabīran

First target text:

As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (Next), refuse to share their beds, (And last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them Means (of annoyance): For Allah is Most High, great (above you all) (Ali, 2000, 4:34).

Second target text:

Righteous women are therefore obedient, guarding the secret for God's guarding. And those you fear may be rebellious admonish; banish them to their couches, and beat them. If they then obey you, look not for any way against them; God is All-high, All-great. (Arberry, 1996, 4:34).

Both Ali and Arberry euphemize the language like the Quran does as they metaphorically use the expressions "refuse to share their beds" and "banish them to their couches" (Ali; Arberry, 4:34) as equivalent to the Qur'anic expression *أَهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ*. Both the translations introduce the implications of "abandoning" and "refusing to share beds" in order to refer to the *Halal* sexual relations between a husband and his wife.

Concerning sexuality, the Quran has very stringent and accurate provisions. For example, it deals with both consummated and unconsummated marriage. In this regard, the Quran uses the expression "لامستهم" "touch" in order to refer to all lawful, *Halal*, sexual intercourse between a husband and wife:

Source text:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرُبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ وَلَا جُنُبًا إِلَّا عَابِرِي سَبِيلٍ حَتَّىٰ تَغْتَسِلُوا وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِنْكُمْ مِنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَامَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوْهِكُمْ...

(Quran, 4:43).

yā-ʾayyuhā lladlūna ʾāmanū lā taqrabū ṣ-salāta wa-ʾantum suḵārā ḥattā taʾlamū mā taqūlūna wa-lā junubān illā ʾābirī sabīlin ḥattā taghtasilū wa-ʾin kuntum mardā ʾaw ʾalā safarīn ʾaw jāʾa ʾahadun minḱum minā l-ghāʾiṭi ʾaw lāmastumu n-nisāʾa fa-lam tajidū māʾan fa-tayammamū ṣaʿīdan ṭayyiban fa-msahū bi-wujūhikum

First target text:

O ye who believe! . . . If ye are ill, or on a journey, or one of you cometh from offices of nature, or ye have been in contact with women, and ye find no water, then take for yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub therewith your faces and hands. For Allah doth blot out sins and forgive again and again (Ali, 2000, 4:43).

Second target text:

O believers . . . or you have touched women, and you can find no water, then have recourse to wholesome dust and wipe your faces and your hands; God is All-pardoning, All-forgiving (Arberry, 1996, 4:43).

Ali uses the expression, "contact with" to refer to any sexual relation; however, the expression is too general. Moreover, it does not present the implications included within the original Qur'anic text (Al-Hamad and Salman, 2013), whereas Arberry utilizes the expression "touch" to refer to this relation. Here, it is worth mentioning that any translated text of the Quran will never reach the accuracy of the original text. However, Arberry's use of the word "touch" may be more accurate than Ali's use of the expression "in contact with." Here, it serves to add that even Arberry's translation is not sufficient because mere touching is not what is meant in the *Aya*; what is meant is intercourse that requires a full-body wash, غسل *ghusl*.

The following verse elaborates on two important examples of euphemism in the Quran. The first example refers to avoiding sexual relations during menstruation in order to prevent any bad health effects related to such relations. Consequently, avoiding sexual relations during menstruation is referred metaphorically in the Quran as “avoiding” or “abandoning” women temporarily:

Source text:

(وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيضِ قُلْ هُوَ أَذَى فَأَعْتَزِلُوا النِّسَاءَ فِي الْمَحِيضِ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوهُنَّ حَتَّى يَطْهُرْنَ فَإِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ

فَأْتُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُنتَهِرِينَ)

(Quran, 2:222)

wa-yas'alūnaka 'ani l-mahīḍi qul huwa 'adhaḥ fa-'taẓilū n-nisā'a fi l-mahīḍi wa-lā taqrabūhunna ḥattā yathurna fa-'idhā tataḥḥarna fa-'tūhunna min ḥaythu 'amarakumu llāhu 'inna llāha yuḥibbu t-tawwābina wa-yuḥibbu l-mutaṭahhirīn'

In Ali's (2000) translation, he uses the expression “keep away from women in their courses” in order to euphemize “the sexual relation” (2:222), whereas Arberry (1996) uses “so go apart from women” (2:222). Here, both translations avoided the unpleasant expression of “sex” as they convey the accurate message of the target text with a subtle use of euphemism.

In the same verse, God elaborates when this ban ends, as He stipulates two conditions: the first is the end of menstruation, whereas the second is making *ghusl* after the end of menstruation. When these two conditions are fulfilled, God asserts that only *Halal* sexual relation is allowed “فَأْتُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ.” In this part of the verse, God presents a euphemism in an implicit way. In other words, He asserts that it is not allowed for a husband to have sexual relations with his wife through the anus. As the Quran keeps the language polite and descent, God avoids using this expression. The two translators utilize the same style of euphemism adopted in the Quran, as Ali (2000) translates this part as “ye may approach them in any manner, time, or place ordained for you by Allah” (2:222), whereas Arberry (1996) translates this part into “then come unto them as God has commanded you” (2:222). Thus, the two selected translations adopt euphemism in their translation through using an implicit meaning that conveys the same meaning of the original text without using unpleasant expressions.

The second issue dealt in terms of euphemism in the Quran is adultery. Adultery is completely forbidden in Islam. According to *Shari'ah* Law, a married Muslim who commits adultery must be stoned to death (Baroody, 1961). In many places of the Quran, adultery is mentioned explicitly as *zinaa*. These places aim to set a strict law that forbids *zinaa* (adultery); however, other positions use euphemism in order to avoid mentioning the explicit meaning of this forbidden act. For example, in the verse, “إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ” (Quran, 29:45), God substitutes the expression *zinaa* (adultery) with the expression *fahshaa*. This expression is translated by Ali (2000) as “shameful and unjust deeds” (29:45), whereas Arberry (1996) translates it as “indecent and dishonor” (29:45). Ali utilizes the technique of over-translation, whereas Arberry tries to narrow the cultural gap through using accurate equivalent. That is to say, both translations utilize euphemism by avoiding the expressions “adultery” or “sex.”

Mentioning the reproductive organs in the Quran represents one of the most complicated parts of rhetorical and linguistic proficiency in the Holy Text due to the highly physical euphemism utilized in the Quran. For example, the word, “vulva” is implicitly translated into “chastity” (Ali, 2000, 66:12), or “guarded her virginity” (Arberry, 1996, 66:12).

Source text:

(وَمَرْيَمَ ابْنَتَ عِمْرَانَ الَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِنَا وَصَدَّقَتْ بِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّهَا وَكُنْتِ مِنَ

الْقَانِتِينَ)

(Quran, 66:12)

wa-maryama bnata 'imrāna llati 'ahṣanat farjahā fa-nafakhnā fīhi min rūḥinā wa-ṣaddaḡat bi-kalimāti rabbihā wa-kutubihī wa-kānat mina l-qānitina

First target text:

And Mary the daughter of 'Imran, who guarded her chastity; and We breathed into (her body) of Our spirit; and she testified to the truth of the words of her Lord and of His Revelations, and was one of the devout (servants) (Ali, 2000, 66:12).

Second target text:

And Mary, Imran's daughter, who guarded her virginity, so We breathed into her of Our Spirit, and she confirmed the Words of her Lord and His Books, and became one of the obedient (Arberry, 66:12).

In other positions in the Quran, the reproductive organs are mentioned in the contexts of adultery. In these contexts, the Quran mentions these parts subtly and implicitly. For example, the Quran uses the expression *julodohm* (their skins) to refer to the reproductive organs which humans use in the act of adultery (Tabari, 1905):

Source text:

(إِذَا مَا جَاءُوهَا شَهِدَ عَلَيْهِمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَأَبْصَرُهُمْ وَجُلُودُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ)

(Quran, 41:20)

hattā 'idhā mā jā'awhā shahida 'alayhim sam'uhum wa-'abṣāruhūm wa-julūdūhum bi-mā kānū ya'malūna

First target text:

At length, when they reach the (Fire), their hearing, their sight, and their skins will bear witness against them, as to (all) their deeds (Ali, 2000, 41:20).

Second target text:

... till when they are come to it, their hearing, their eyes and their skins bear witness against them concerning what they have been doing (Arberry, 1996, 41:22).

In the example above, Ali translates the expression, *julodohm* into "skins," while Arberry translates it into "skins" too. Thus, the two translators avoid using any additional technique or clarification for the translation of the term, *julodohm*. Thus, both translators transferred the ST's expression directly to the TT. Here, the figurative language of the Quran is directly utilized in the TT.

The fourth condition of the Quran for which euphemism is utilized is defecation. Defecating is an important biological process that must be considered in terms of purification, washing, and ablution. However, the Quran avoids mentioning defecating directly or in an inappropriate way. The Quran metaphorically uses the expression *al-Gha'eat* (الغايط), which means in Arabic the low area or the hidden area. This expression is translated by Ali (2000) as "offices of nature" which seems unclear and ambiguous; whereas Arberry (1996) uses the expression "comes from the privy" in order to convey the Qur'anic message of the verse without depending on the strong expressive element of the target text:

Source text:

(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَارَى حَتَّى تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ وَلَا جُنُبًا إِلَّا عَابِرِي سَبِيلٍ حَتَّى تَغْتَسِلُوا وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَى أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدُكُمْ مِنْكَ مِنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَامَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا غَفُورًا)

(Quran, 4:43).

yā-ayyuhā lladhīna ʿamanū lā taqrabū s-salāta wa-ʾantum sukārā hattā taʿlamū mā taqūlūna wa-lā junuban ʾillā ʿābirī sabīlin hattā taghtasilū wa-ʾin kuntum marḍā ʾaw ʾalā safarin ʾaw jāʾa ʾahadun minkum mina l-ghāʾiṭi ʾaw lāmastumu n-nisāʾa fa-lam tajidū māʾan fa-tayammamū ṣaʿīdan ṭayyiban fa-msaḥū bi-wuḥūhikum wa-aydikum ʾinna llāha kāna ʾafuwwan ghafūran

First target text:

O ye who believe! Approach not prayers with a mind befogged, until ye can understand all that ye say, – nor in a state of ceremonial impurity (Except when travelling on the road), until after washing your whole body. If ye are ill, or on a journey, or one of you cometh from offices of nature, or ye have been in contact with women, and ye find no water, then take for yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub therewith your faces and hands. For Allah doth blot out sins and forgive again and again (Ali, 2000, 4:43).

Second target text:

O believers, draw not near to prayer when you are drunken until you know what you are saying, or defiled – unless you are traversing a way – until you have washed yourselves; but if you are sick, or on a journey, or if any of you comes from the privy, or you have touched women, and you can find no water, then have recourse to wholesome dust and wipe your faces and your hands; God is All-pardoning, All-forgiving (Arberry, 1996, 4:43).

The fifth condition of euphemism in the Quran is dealing with distress and hardness. Generally, the Quran is a book of tenderness and good instruction. Thus, it avoids unpleasant expressions that are associated with hardness and disaster. These distresses include the horror of the Day of Resurrection, diseases, and death. All these topics are inevitable so they must be considered and discussed within the Qurʾanic discourse. Blindness is one of these distresses; however, the Quran avoids the explicit expression of blindness:

Source text:

(وَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَا أَسْفَىٰ عَلَىٰ يُوسُفَ ۖ وَأَبْيَضَّتْ عَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْحُزَنِ فَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ)

(Quran, 2: 84)

wa-tawallā ʾanhum wa-qāla yā-ʾasafā ʾalā yūsufa wa-byaḍḍat ʾaynāhu mina l-ḥuzni fa-huwa kaẓīm^{un}

The Quran describes the blindness of Joseph's father as "his eyes turned into white" in order to symbolize losing his sight. This euphemism is translated by Ali (2000) as "his eyes became white with sorrow" (2:84), whereas Arberry (1996) translates it as "his eyes turned white because of the sorrow" (2:84). Thus, the two translations transmit euphemism literally without using any additional techniques of translation for avoiding any misleading meaning.

In Islam, the Day of Resurrection or *yawm al-qiyāmah* is the final examination of humanity in which humans face their final destination, either in heaven or in hell. Consequently, this day is full of challenges, difficulties, and worry. That is why the Quran uses tender expressions in order to euphemize the hard and harsh image of this day. Consequently, it describes as "The Promised Day," "The Hour," and "The Day of Resurrection" as the following examples elaborate:

Source text:

(وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ يُبْلِسُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ)

(Quran, 30:12)

wa-yawma taqūmu s-sā'atu yublisu l-mujrimūn^a

First target text:

On the Day that the Hour will be established, the guilty will be struck dumb with despair) [Ali \(2000\)](#), 30:12).

Second target text:

Upon the day when the Hour is come, the sinners shall be confounded ([Arberry, 1996](#), 30:12).

Source text:

(والיום الموعود وشاهد ومشهود)

(Quran, 85:2)

wa-l-yawmi l-maw'ūdi- wa-shāhidin wa-mashhūdin

First target text:

By the promised Day (of Judgment) ([Ali, 2000](#), 85:2).

Second target text:

by the promised day ([Arberry, 1996](#), 85:2).

Both translations use different synonyms of *yawm al-qiyāmah* to describe the event has certain connotations which God conveys to humans. These connotations include threat, promise, patience and reward. Thus, the two translations literally translate the TT; however, [Ali \(2000\)](#) always utilizes overtranslation or paraphrasing for giving more details about the ST.

Distress about death is one of the most important topics in the Quran. Death in the Quran has various forms such as martyrdom, sacrifice and the death of Day of Resurrection. All these forms of death are euphemized for avoiding any unpleasant meanings as the following verse elaborates:

Source text:

(مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَنْتَظِرُ ۚ وَمَا بَدَّلُوا تَبْدِيلًا)

(Quran, 33:23)

mina l-mu'minina rijalun sadaqu mā 'ahadū llāha 'alayhi fa-minhum man qadā naḥbahū wa-minhum man yantaziru wa-mā baddalū tabdilan

First target text:

Among the Believers are men who have been true to their covenant with Allah: of them some have completed their vow (to the extreme), and some (still) wait: but they have never changed (their determination) in the least ([Ali, 2000](#), 33:23).

Second target text:

Among the believers are men who were true to their covenant with God; some of them have fulfilled their vow by death, and some are still awaiting, and they have not changed in the least ([Arberry, 1996](#), 33:23).

Death in the above-mentioned verse is described metaphorically as a “promise” or “pledge” that must be completed by the believers. Consequently, both Ali and Arberry euphemize death through describing it metaphorically as a “vow.” Again, Ali (2000) uses over-translation in order to give more clarifications for the text.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, euphemism is subtly used in the Holy Quran as both a linguistic and rhetorical device. The Quran, as a divine text, uses euphemism for avoiding unpleasant expressions. However, there are a few positions in the Holy Text that cannot bear euphemism, as they set the laws and legislation in Islam. The use of euphemism in the Quran manifests the linguistic uniqueness of the Quran as the texts utilize euphemism without any change in meaning. As the two selected translations represent two different schools of translation and interpretation, the Western translation of Arberry is more communicative than Ali’s rhetorical and descriptive translation. It is clear that the two selected translations avoid transliteration as a technique of translation for avoiding misunderstanding. However, the two translations assert that the Quranic style can be interpreted rather than translated as the powerful use of authentic Arabic expressions of the Quran cannot be typically transferred into another language.

Ali’s translation, like many Eastern translations of Quran, relies heavily on over-translation for giving more clarifications and narrowing the cultural gap between the ST and TTs. As a final point, it is necessary to mention that the Quranic translation of euphemism applies three main strategies: the communicative approach, the literal approach, and transliteration, in order to fill the cultural and linguistic gap between Arabic and English expressions. The study suggests more and more studies about religious texts, namely *Hadith*, as it paves the way for more problematic expressions that need comprehensive approaches for translation. Moreover, more studies are required to discuss and elaborate the role of electronic translation in translating Quranic texts.

References

- Addim, L.F. (2021), “*I’jaz Al-Qur’an* Menurut pandangan orientalis J. Boullata”, *Ishlah: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin, Adab dan Dakwah*, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 17-33.
- Al-Hamad, M.Q. and Salman, A.M. (2013), “The translatability of euphemism in the Holy Quran”, *European Scientific Journal*, Vol. 9 No. 2.
- Al-Imam, A.A. (2006), *Variant Readings of the Quran: A Critical Study of Their Historical and Linguistic*, International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), .
- Ali, A.Y. (2000), *The Holy Qur’an*, Wordsworth Editions.
- Arberry, A.J. (1996), *The Koran Interpreted: A Translation*, Simon & Schuster.
- Balbaky, R. (1990), *Translation of the Linguistic Terms*, Dar El Elm.
- Baroodi, G.M. (Ed.) (1961), *Crime and Punishment Under Islamic Law: Being a Translation from Manār Al-sabīl in Explanation of the Text Al-Dalīl, in Accordance with the School of the Imām Ahmad Ibn Hanbal*, American University at Cairo.
- Habash, N., Soudi, A. and Buckwalter, T. (2007), “On Arabic transliteration”, *Arabic Computational Morphology: Knowledge-Based and Empirical Methods*, Vol. 38, pp. 15-22.
- Newmark, P. (1976), “The theory and the craft of translation”, *Language Teaching*, Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 5-26.
- Newmark, P. (1981), *Approaches to Translation: Language Teaching Methodology Sense*, Pergamon Press, Oxford.
- Nöldeke, T., Schwally, F. and Bergsträßer, G. (2006), *The History of the Qur’ān*, (W. Behn, Trans.) Brill.

- Schäffner, C. and Adab, B. (1997), "Translation as intercultural communication-contact as conflict", *Benjamins Translation Library*, Vol. 20, pp. 325-338.
- Shoira, K. and Umidovich, M.Y. (2022), "The event of euphemism and its functions in speech", *Journal of Academic Research and Trends in Educational Sciences*, Vol. 1 No. 12, pp. 401-405.
- Tabari, I. (1905), "Jamea al-bayan", Vol. 23.
- Wahba, M. and Al Mohaneds, K. (1990), *Arabic Dictionary of Language and Literature*, Lebanon Library.

Corresponding author

Ahmed Hakami can be contacted at: ahakami28@gmail.com