

TRANSLATIONAL TRAJECTORIES IN ARABIC-ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF *THE HOLY QUR'ĀN*

DR. ALALDDIN TAWFIQ AL-TARAWNEH

Zarqa University, Zarqa, Jordan

Email: aaltarawneh@zu.edu.jo

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Abstract

Translation Studies (TS), as a discipline, contains many terms describing the translational dichotomies governing the choices of translators, with recent examples including domestication and foreignization. This paper reviews and discusses this binary, in order to demonstrate how the exclusive adoption of one or the other may impact on the resultant meaning in the target language (TL). It also proposes an alternative approach helping the translator to move between various approaches, with the aim of capturing meaning and delivering it in a native-like manner. This approach is known as hybridization – a blend of two independent approaches in TS – with its application determined by parameters stating when a translation should be source-oriented or target-oriented. All examples are drawn from *The Holy Qur'ān*, i.e. the book most frequently translated from Arabic into English. It seeks to highlight the deficiency of an exclusive application of domestication or foreignization, and secondly, examine the efficacy of the hybridizing approach. The paper concludes that hybridization is both effective and meaning-oriented. The paper is qualitative and conceptual in nature. After a critical discussion of translation theories, the results are applied to a number of textual cases considered representative of mistranslated verses of *The Holy Qur'ān*, that is, the interpretive paradigm to analyze multiple case studies. The results are then compared with the original text, followed by proposed alternative translations. Finally, there is a conclusion and recommendations.

Keywords: *Translation Studies; Foreignization; Domestication; Hybridization; The Holy Qur'ān.*

1. Introduction

Translation Studies (TS) is a relatively recent and highly interdisciplinary academic discipline, focused on examining the practice and theory of translation. The practice of translation has evolved over several centuries, preserving and transmitting knowledge through the literary and philosophical works of the Western Roman Empire in Arabic.¹ It has also been subject to an evolutionary process in how it is both commissioned and theorized, indicating a process of improvement in the discipline of TS, in order to meet the emerging demands of both translators and their clients. However, some practice previously considered acceptable is as no longer viewed as appropriate, and thus in need of being replaced. Moreover, a unanimous agreement has not yet been established between TS scholars concerning a clear concept of translation,² which tends to be seen in light of its assigned objective(s). This indicates a potential variation in techniques and approaches according to a work's function and objective. This is known in TS as Skopos, as discussed in more detail below.

2. Background

Translation tasks are not all identical, with each commission, having its own specificity. However, the general aim is to deliver the meaning as understood in the Source Text (ST) into the Target Text (TT) according to the norms of TL, i.e. a native-like use of the relevant styles and norms. This current discussion therefore focusses on a specific work translated from Arabic into English, in the form of *The Holy Qur'ān*, which, according to *Index Translationum*, the World Bibliography of Translation,³ is the book most translated from Arabic into other languages. *The Holy Qur'ān* is the holy book of Islam and Muslims. Unlike the Bible, *The Holy Qur'ān* is only sacred in Arabic, with any translation thus lacking any sacred status. Apart from having been frequently translated, this work is also recognized as including many translational errors, which are generally attributed to the definition of *The Holy Qur'ān* as being the 'literal' word of Allah Almighty revealed in Arabic. This results in translators tending to adopt a highly literal (i.e. formal or foreignizing) approach when translating the work into English, believing that this is the most accurate method of maintaining its sacredness and avoiding changing the meaning of Allah Almighty's word.⁴

3. Research Objective

This current article critically examines the issue of such translations and proposes new means of improving both the process and quality of translation from Arabic into English. These propositions are particularly applicable for non-technical texts, in the form of specialized writings undertaken by experts in the

relevant fields, i.e. science, technology, law and medicine. Translators of such texts tend to vary in their approach, as such work requires prior understanding of the field, as well as awareness of ad hoc translational techniques.⁵

4. Methodology

This current article is primarily qualitative and conceptual in nature. Firstly, there is a critical discussion of both the main and recent translational approaches currently in use. Secondly, the results are applied to a number of textual cases considered representative of mistranslated verses of *The Holy Qur'ān*. The article therefore adopts an interpretive paradigm to analyze multiple case studies, as this is considered an effective method of establishing an in-depth understanding of translational issues. Thirdly, the results are compared with the original text, followed by proposed alternative translations. Finally, there is a conclusion and recommendations.

The translations employed for the discussion are as follows:

1. *The Koran Interpreted: A Translation*.(Arthur John Arberry, 1996)
2. *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*.(Pickthall, 1997)
3. *The Holy Qur'ān Translated*.(Shakir, 1999)
4. *The Holy Qur'ān: Translation and Commentary*.(Yusuf Ali, 2001)
5. *The Holy Qur'ān Translation* (Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, 2010)

These translations have been selected due to being well-known and frequently employed by many Western institutions and Internet websites.⁶It should be clarified that these translations are not quoted for the sake of any assessment of their quality, but are rather used to instantiate cases in which the proposed translation trajectory is applied to highlight its applicability.

5. Literature Review

Although translation is a recent discipline, its practice is deeply rooted in history. This is indicated by the many terms coined to describe the methods espoused by translators while working on texts. The significant aspect of these terms is their dichotomy, i.e. being described as polar opposites. Thus, Cicero (46 BC) identified two types of translators: (1) the free translator (i.e. an orator) and (2) the literal translator (i.e. an interpreter). In addition, Saint Jerome (4th Century AD) distinguished between sense-for-sense translation and word-for-word translation.⁷Schleiermacher addressed this dichotomous nature of translation with the following statement: “either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible,

and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him.”⁸A number of further notable dichotomies in TS include: (1) harmonizing and literal translation by Benjamin; (2) domesticating and archaizing translation by Pound; (3) illusionary and anti-illusionary translation by Levy; (4) dynamic and formal equivalence by Nida; (5) formal correspondence and textual equivalence by Catford; (6) indirect and direct translation by Gutt; and (7) domestication and foreignization by Venuti.⁹This reveals that translation has a long history of dichotomies when it comes to the different approaches adopted by translators. This current article focuses on the most recent dichotomy governing the discussion within TS, i.e. domestication and foreignization,¹⁰ as discussed in more detail below.

6. Discussion

6.1. Domestication

Venuti proposed the term ‘domestication’ for the strategy of normalizing ST by reducing its strangeness, so as to create a fluent and transparent language in TL. This accords with Schleiermacher’s (1963) description (as cited above) of translation as leaving the reader in peace and moving the author towards him/her.¹¹This strategy seeks to minimize the cultural and linguistic strangeness of ST, employing cultural and linguistic norms to achieve readability and intelligibility in TL. This ensures that there is nothing recognizably ‘foreign’ in the text, either culturally or linguistically. Nida, an important proponent of this approach, proposed the use of dynamic equivalence to establish the naturalness of the TL reader’s reaction to a text:–“that is, the way he would say it” or “to relate the receptor to modes of behaviour relevant within the context of his own culture.”¹²

This approach can be viewed as both practicable and beneficial, with its focus being on establishing readability and fluency. However, it also contains a number of drawbacks. Domestication acts like an ethnocentric tool, reducing ST foreign to the intended target reader, thus eliminating the cultural values of TL.¹³Here, the criticism concerns the issue of cultural values, rather than the language itself, with a translated text required to be presented in a native-like manner, void of any stylistic or grammatical mistakes. This overlooks the importance of cultural values, which donate the uniqueness of the original text. TS views translation as a bridge between different civilizations, so minimizing the differences and enhancing the intercultural dialogue, in order to know the ‘other.’ Many translators are thus dichotomous when it comes to the application of translational approaches, particularly the use of the domestication technique to fulfil the need for readability in TL. Their application is exercised at both the cultural and

linguistic level, facilitating the translator as the “person who can draw aside the curtains of linguistic and cultural differences, so that people may see clearly the relevance of the original message.”¹⁴ Domestication therefore creates a naturalness of response in terms of linguistic and cultural references, which can also be responsible for creating misconception or deception, i.e. the translator changes the foreign text, with all its uniqueness, in order to create a copy concomitant with the linguistic norms and cultural values of the target reader in TL. By doing so, the target reader is prevented from identifying the differences and so the opportunity of coming to understand the ‘other’, i.e. the text represents their own views and expectations. Therefore, the application of domestication to achieve a natural response places a considerable degree of pressure on TT to accurately mirror and exchange knowledge and all cultural differences. This criticism arises from the fact that translation is “a more complex negotiation between two cultures.”¹⁵

A well-known example of how domestication miscommunicates cultural-embedded messages in order to achieve naturalness is one given by Nida. He stated that Philips (1954) translated the biblical verse 16:16 in Romans “greet one another with a holy kiss” as “give one another a hearty handshake all around.”¹⁶ This example is used by the proponents of domestication to demonstrate the benefits of native-like translations. Nevertheless, it is not without controversy, as it instantiates the negative engagement of the translator when it comes to the issue of “the holy kiss”. This is not merely a linguistic component void of any cultural connotations, but remains a cultural practice used in everyday situations in the context of the Middle East where the verses of the Bible were first revealed. Furthermore, it has subsequently acquired a religious attribute, becoming a religious ritual,¹⁷ now known as “the kiss of peace”, i.e. a gesture of union of love in some Churches during the celebration of the Eucharist.¹⁸ This can be seen to validate the criticisms levelled against domestication, as the translator’s choice of words miscommunicates the network of ideas present in the original text. Thus, the translator has intervened in the text and by so doing devalued the original culture, as kissing, particularly between males, may not be a familiar practice in British culture. ST can therefore be seen as having been culturally tamed to fit the norms of TL, resulting in the loss of the intellectual conversation. This then results in the dialogue between the two cultures being reduced to a monologue, particularly as TT already resonates with the target culture. In their attempt to study the Swedish novel *Bert Dagbok* as translated from Swedish into English, Åsman and Pedersen stated that:

Anyone reading it with the hope of learning more about the SC, i.e. Sweden, is likely to be

disappointed [...] In other words, as much as the ST is a novel about the everyday life of a Swedish boy, the TT is a novel about the everyday life of an American boy.¹⁹

This issue concerns the authority the translator awards him or herself to create such a misleading translation under the pretext of naturalizing TT. This is an ethical concern of which all translators need to be aware.

6.2. Foreignization

The term ‘Foreignization’ was proposed by Venuti, being inspired by Schleiermacher, who described it as a process in which the translator directs the reader towards the author, while at the same time leaving the author in peace. Foreignization is an approach through which the translator places his/her translation into TL by deliberately breaking its conventions and expectations, so retaining the foreignness of ST.²⁰

This approach was supported by Venuti who viewed it as “an ethno deviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad.”²¹ This approach views translation as an inter-lingual transcription of the original text in terms of the style and language, as well as the cultural connotations and foreign ideas present in TL, i.e. minimizing or overriding its influence in determining the linguistic and cultural imports of ST. Unlike domestication (which reduces the ST to fit the norms of TL), foreignization highlights the differences between SL and TL, while at the same time emphasizing the role of translation in improving intercommunication and introducing the culture of the original text. This implies that the uniqueness of ST is lost if it is forced to abide by the norms and established knowledge of the TL reader. However, it should be acknowledged that foreignization acts to counter the misconception of viewing translation as a fluent product in TL, i.e. void of foreignness. Instead, foreignization places its emphasis on accuracy over the nativity of the language, so mirroring the distinctive linguistic and cultural elements of ST. this results in the TL reader gaining a deeper understanding of a culture along with new insights. Foreignization does not therefore aim to achieve a smooth readability and language fluency in translation, but rather focuses on TL’s ability to add new knowledge and facilitate intercultural dialogue between cultures. Accordingly, translation is “more than using home-brewed variants and deleting unfamiliar references to the source culture.”²²

However, foreignization is not without controversy, and this current article is also critical of its attempt to represent ST

linguistically in TL in a radical manner. Languages are considered the conduits through which knowledge is passed and so the application of foreignization to the linguistic aspect of ST results in an exotic form of language being introduced into TL, one that fails to communicate the intended meaning of the original. Thus, if the language in TL contains many aspects of grammar or style unfamiliar to TL readers, information may be neither communicated nor apprehended. Meaning is paramount in the process of translation, with language the means of communicating an idea or meaning. This can be illustrated by the use of English as the official language of both the Anglosphere and the Indian subcontinent, despite these being culturally remote. This raises the possibility that two literary works can be written in perfect English in India and the UK representing a distinct cultural content, particularly when it comes to the exotic cultural representation of India in the West.²³ However, foreignization also has a number of benefits when it comes to communicating the distinct cultural elements of ST in TL, in particular, due to its ability to identify cultural uniqueness, rather than the language *per se*. This confirms the advantages of applying foreignization to highlight cultural differences, as it facilitates intellectual communication and bridges the gap between different cultures. Ghandhi (1869-1948) stated, “I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible.”²⁴ This can be seen as the potential benefits of applying foreignization to capture cultural differences.

6.3. An Alternative Approach: Hybridization

As previously discussed, domestication and foreignization inhabit exclusive domains, i.e. once one is adopted by the translator, it is applied at both the linguistic and cultural levels. The exclusive application of one of these approaches for the same ST would generate two contrasting texts in TL: (1) offering fluent and smooth language, while omitting the cultural trace of the original context and (2) providing an inarticulate, foreign language, but capturing the cultural nuances of ST. Domestication can therefore be seen to naturalize the ST, as if (particularly in terms of the language and culturally-embedded elements) the original had been written in TL. Foreignization, on the other hand, overcomes the deletion of the original cultural elements by projecting them as understood in their original context. However, in doing so, it imports linguistically foreign stylistic elements, which can fail to make sense to the target reader. This debate concerns exclusive naturalization or exoticization, i.e. being source-oriented or target-oriented. This discussion identifies the benefits of a blend of both aspects in overcoming this dichotomous tendency to achieve fluent and

comprehensible language, while at the same time mapping the cultural uniqueness of ST. This necessitates the implementation of a demarcation line highlighting the domain and workability of each term. This current article therefore, suggests the combining of domestication and foreignization within the same ST. This intermediary translational approach is known as hybridization. It is neither source-oriented (i.e. foreignization) nor target-oriented (i.e. domestication), but rather moves between these polarities, in order to capture the meaning and cultural specificity of ST, so resulting in a fluent and smooth use of language, one that is void of foreign instances.

This approach recognizes that the target audience is unconcerned with the process of translation, preferring to read a text capable of fully representing the content of the original. The translated text opens up new horizons, so introducing the target reader to a new culture, and therefore demanding the preservation of the cultural specificity (or foreignness) of ST in TT. Furthermore, readers' linguistic expectations demand such foreignness be delivered in language that is clear, smooth and natural. This can be seen as the philosophy of hybridization, which focuses on striking a balance between maintaining the cultural nuances and naturalizing the means of communication, i.e. the language in TT. Respected UK TS scholar, Mona Baker, suggested that "translators oscillate within the same text between choices that Venuti would regard as domesticating and ones he would regard as foreignizing. And, importantly, this oscillation serves a purpose in the real world – it is neither random nor irrational."²⁵

Hybridization places no demarcation line in relation to being source-oriented or target-oriented. The transition is governed by the objective²⁶ assigned to the commission concerning a non-technical translation, which generally focuses on communicating the meaning in TL as understood within its original context. Hybridization recognizes the following two forms of meaning.

1. The linguistic meaning. This is generated solely from the interaction between linguistic constituencies, being divided into literal (or plain) and figurative.
2. The culturally embedded meaning. This cannot be easily determined by relying solely on language and is divided into firstly, false cognates (otherwise known as 'false friends')²⁷ and concepts that are culture-specific and unique to the ST in terms of meaning and wording.
3. During the application of hybridization, meaning forms the criterion determining whether it is source-oriented or target-oriented, i.e. delivering the meaning from the SL into the TL as understood within the original context. All linguistic components (words or phrases) are made up of firstly, form (i.e. the oral or written symbols used to express meaning) and

secondly, content (i.e. understanding of the symbols (form) to determine meaning.²⁸

In addition, any linguistic component related to form and content is divided into four cases:

1. A linguistic component whose form is easily traceably between SL and TL, with the content directly established as found in any dictionary. For example, looking up *car* in a bilingual dictionary gives the equivalent Arabic word سيارة (*sayārḥ*).
2. A linguistic component whose form in SL does not match that in TL, yet the content is easily established in both SL and TL. For example, the English expression to *warm someone's heart* is expressed in Arabic as to *freeze someone's heart/chest*, i.e. to have pleasant feelings.
3. A linguistic component whose form does match in SL and TL as found in dictionaries, yet the content or meaning is irrelevant. For example, although the concept of *pilgrimage* exists in both English and Arabic حج (*ḥajj*) and is easily found in dictionaries, they do not match on the level of meaning, as both differ in terms of how, where and when this ritual is performed. What is meant here is that both Muslims and Christians perform the ritual of pilgrimage which sounds identical for the two parties. However, they are incomparable as Muslims have fixed conditions to be met to consider what they perform is Hajj. In contrast, Christians are not consistent in terms of the conditions of pilgrimage and vary in terms of the application depending on the Christian sect.
4. A linguistic component whose form and content do not match in SL and TL. Such components are language-specific and mark the uniqueness of a language. For example, in English, *boyfriend* has no match in Arabic dictionaries, in terms of either wording or meaning, while the same is also true of the Arabic جهاد (*Jihād*). This lack of any equivalent results in such cases requiring transliteration and explanation.

The hybridization approach can, therefore, be seen as leading the translator to oscillate in order to convey the intended meaning as it occurs within its context. This requires four techniques within hybridization, concomitant with the four cases noted above.

1. The naturalization technique. This is applied when the linguistic components in both SL and the TL are equivalent in terms of content and form. The technique naturalizes ST in TL, with TT appearing as if written by a TL native speaker, i.e. meeting the linguistic norms of TL and the linguistic expectations of the audience. This is intended to break down the message of ST, to be subsequently restructured according to the linguistic TL norms (i.e. plain language). This is the dominant technique used

in translation unless the meaning in the ST deviates from the first case to move to other cases.

2. The functional technique. This is employed in cases where the meaning, but not the form, of the linguistic component is traceable between SL and TL. This technique is concerned with the function of the expression rather than the words. The process entails capturing the intended meaning of ST and presenting in an equivalent style in TL, i.e. ensuring the meaning is the same in both languages, but the words differ (figurative language). Both the naturalization and functional techniques are concerned with cases of a purely linguistic nature, whether using plain or figurative language.
3. The thickening technique. This is concerned with culturally embedded messages across languages, being used when a linguistic component of SL and TL can be easily found and appear superficially mutual in dictionaries, while the content differs. This technique is employed to enhance the text by inserting additional information to that in ST.²⁹ This preserves the equivalent component in TL as found in dictionaries, adding a footnote to highlight the differences when it comes to how such a component is perceived in the original context. This breaking of expectations enables the TL reader to recognize the distinctiveness and uniqueness of the other. This technique helps “to permit the reader to identify himself as fully as possible with a person in the source-language context, and to understand as much as he can of customs, manner of thought, and means of expression.”³⁰
4. The annotated transliteration technique. This also focuses on culturally embedded messages across languages, being employed when number of linguistic components instantiate a perfect example of uniqueness in being language- and culture-specific, making it impossible for them to be reproduced by means of one-to-one equivalents. As with the thickening technique, the annotated transliteration technique uses footnotes to insert additional information, in order to overcome the issue of any divergence in content between SL and TL. Thus, transliteration can resolve the issue of correspondence between forms, with the sound of the SL component being expressed in the alphabet of TL, with a footnote added to provide the relevant information.

6.4. The Application of Hybridization

As stated earlier, this study applies the hybridization technique to *The Holy Qur’ān*, as the book most frequently translated from Arabic into English. This comparison is also beneficial due to hybridization being generally applied to non-

technical texts. This section compares the outcome of hybridization to a number of well-known translations of *The Holy Qur'ān*, with the aim of highlighting the feasibility of this approach, as well as its added value. As noted above, these translations are:

1. *The Koran Interpreted: A Translation*. (Arthur John Arberry, 1996)
2. *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*. (Pickthall, 1997)
3. *The Holy Qur'ān Translated*. (Shakir, 1999)
4. *The Holy Qur'ān: Translation and Commentary*. (Yusuf Ali, 2001).
5. *The Holy Qur'ān Translation* (Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, 2010)

Four examples have been taken from *The Holy Qur'ān*, representing the four cases of any linguistic component made up of form and content. Three translations are used to highlight the common mistakes in each example, followed by the proposition of a new version through the use of hybridization.

The first case is not problematic, as it instantiates the mutuality of form and content between SL and TL. However, linguistic specificities in both SL and TL can mean that such linguistic mutuality is not always attained. Space constraints have dictated that this paper focuses on only two issues in this verse to examine on the workability of the naturalizing technique. The Quranic verse 43, chapter 4 consists of a case that is highly mistranslated due to the foreignizing approach, resulting in the miscommunication and misrepresentation of the original content. Adopting the foreignising approach leads to depict women as 'dirty' creatures that necessitate men to cleanse themselves once they touch them, particularly before initiating any form of religious ritual like the recitation of *The Holy Qur'ān*.³¹ Such a thing results in creating misconception in Islam and misrepresentation of Muslim women amongst non-Muslims who reads the translations of *The Holy Qur'ān*.

1. Yusuf Ali: ““...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...”³²
2. Shakir: “...if you are sick, or on a journey, or one of you come from the privy or you have touched the women, and you cannot find water, betake yourselves to pure earth, then wipe your faces and your hands...”³³
3. Arberry: “...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...”³⁴
4. Usmani: “If you are sick, or in travel, or if one of you has come after relieving himself, or you have had contact with women,

and you find no water, go for some clean dust and wipe your faces and hands (with it).”³⁵

In these translations, touching women means that the ablution of men is nullified. In point of fact, the interpretation of this verse has nothing to do with the literal meaning of ‘touch’; it is the euphemistic function that is used to stand for sexual intercourse, meaning that the ablution is nullified by having sexual intercourse, not the accidental touch.³⁶ Therefore, the correct translation of the original Arabic word *لامستم* (*lāmastum*) – Literally, touch– should be ‘to have sexual intercourse’

The second case is also of a linguistic nature, while at the same time being concerned with figurative language, i.e. alluding to, without literally stating, a meaning. This employs the functional technique and seeks to establish a natural response to the facilitating of linguistic elegance and intelligibility in TL. This technique avoids any literal correspondence between words as found in dictionaries, because “meanings are not found exclusively in the words listed individually in the dictionary.”³⁷ This can be illustrated as follows: the Quranic verse 29, chapter 17 instantiates a clear example of how figurative language is lost in translation in the following examples:

1. Yusuf Ali: “Make not *thy hand tied (like a niggard's) to thy neck...*”³⁸
2. Shakir: “And do not make *your hand to be shackled to your neck...*”³⁹
3. Arberry: “And keep not *thy hand chained to thy neck...*”⁴⁰
4. Usmani: “And do not keep your hand tied to your neck...”⁴¹

Ensuring a hand is tied/shackled/chained to the neck conveys nothing but the image as read in these examples, and thus an expression meaningless for any native speaker of English, i.e. the imagined recipient of this translation. This indicates a need to revisit this translation in order to deliver the meaning of the original, i.e. the main aim of any translation. A native speaker of Arabic would understand the meaning of the original verse as ‘do not bestingy’. However, this is not a sense conveyed by the existing translations, due to the foreignizing approach having failed to capture the intended meaning. This implies the need to activate the functional technique to ensure mutuality of expression in terms of the intended meaning, rather than the form, i.e. the meaning of the original is expressed in the idiomatic style of Arabic. This is not the same of TL, inferring the need to use a different style to establish an identical meaning in English, i.e. an equivalent semantic impact.

The Quranic idiom ‘do not make your hand tied/shackled/chained to the neck’, meaning ‘do not be stingy’ has an equivalent in English, which expresses the same meaning but takes a different form, i.e. ‘don’t be so tight-fisted’. This is the essence of the functional approach that seeks to capture the intended meaning, or function, of an expression, regardless of the form. The translator

can render the original expression directly as ‘do not be stingy’, but, in this case, the intelligibility of the text is somewhat compromised by the original expression being interpreted in English by means of simple words. The provision of equivalent expressions denoting an identical meaning would allow the translated text to appear native-like, thus ensuring its readability.

The third case is concerned with meanings that are culturally, rather than linguistically, embedded. Arabic and English are generally considered culturally remote; however, all cultures retain a number of recurrent universal concepts, i.e. that of Allah Almighty. This concept is almost universal, but is viewed and identified in very different ways. Thus, a superficial correspondence can be observed but not completely accepted. For example, Muslims consider Allah Almighty as one and not comparable to human beings, whereas Christianity sees God as understood through the prism of the Trinity. Such cases may need to be handled carefully during the process of translation, so as to convey an accurate and comprehensive set of ideas between the two languages. These words represent the specificity of a culture, while translation is presented as a facilitator of communication between two cultures, because, as noted by Lotman, Uspensky and Mikaychuk, “no language (in the full sense of the word) can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have, at its center, the structure of natural language.”⁴²

Such language/culture-specific elements consequently need to be defined and introduced into TL with reference to their meaning in relation to specific cultures through the use of footnotes: “for those who do not know the background facts of which the author wanted his readers to think. The footnotes provide the needed information, but in a way that indicates they are not part of the text itself.”⁴³ The application of footnotes to give supplementary information is accomplished by means of the thickening technique, i.e. the translator expands the text by indicting that specific information does not form part of the original. The recipients of the translation are therefore introduced to:

(A) thicker context of the original and informing them of the shared knowledge between the original author and his/her readers, thick translation represents the original culture in a deeper and fuller manner, helping to reduce, even avoid, misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication.⁴⁴

This can be illustrated by the Quranic verse 17, chapter 19, which presents how the lack of any additional information may lead to misunderstanding in target readers.

1. Pickthall: “And had chosen seclusion from them. Then We sent unto her *Our Spirit* and it assumed for her the likeness of a perfect man”⁴⁵

2. Shakir: "So she took a veil (to screen herself) from them; then We sent to her *Our spirit*, and there appeared to her a well-made man"⁴⁶
3. Arberry: "And she took a veil apart from them; then We sent unto her *Our Spirit* that presented himself to her a man without fault"⁴⁷
4. Usmani: "Then she used a barrier to hide herself from them. Then, We sent to her Our Spirit, (Jibra'il) and he took before her the form of a perfect human being."⁴⁸

The context of this verse is Mary, the mother of Jesus, who left her people to remain in seclusion. There, God (Allah Almighty) sent her His messenger, the Archangel Gabriel, in the form of a human being to address her.⁴⁹

The above translations, and in particular the italicized words, could be seen to indicate the word 'spirit' as related to the Trinity. 'Spirit' is the result of the domesticating approach to the original word روح (*rūḥ*), as found in any dictionary. It is also recurrent in *The Holy Qur'ān*, but represents the Archangel Gabriel, rather than any reference to the Christian Trinity of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁰ It can therefore be observed that the words روح (*rūḥ*) and spirit are superficially identical, but are perceived in a completely separate manner. A footnote is added to clarify this concept as understood in the original context and so dispel any potential misunderstanding arising from TL, as noted by Hassaballa and Helminski:

The word *spirit* is the literal translation of the original Arabic word روح (*rūḥ*), but it refers in the Quranic context to the herald of God (Allah Almighty), Archangel Gabriel, when making any contact with humans. This has not to be confused with the Christian understanding of this concept.⁵¹

This enables the reader of translation to identify differences of understanding when it comes to identical concepts in the two languages.

The fourth case represents a radical example of the cultural role of translation. This tackles the linguistic elements unique to a specific culture and its language, resulting in no equivalent (in either form or content) existing in any other language. Unlike the previous case, there is no matching word in the dictionary in TL, resulting in a need for a transliteration, along with a footnote, i.e. annotated transliteration. The sounds of the original words are expressed by means of the TL alphabet, with a footnote inserted to clarify their meaning in the original. This can be illustrated by the Quranic verse 61, chapter 19, which consists of a case focusing on a concept highly unique to the culture of Arabs and Muslims.

1. Yusuf Ali: "Gardens of Eternity, those which (Allah Almighty) Most Gracious has promised to His servants in the *Unseen*: for His promise must (necessarily) come to pass."⁵²

2. Shakir: "The gardens of perpetuity which the Beneficent Allah Almighty has promised to His servants while *unseen*; surely His promise shall come to pass."⁵³
3. Arberry: "Gardens of Eden that the All-merciful promised His servants in the *Unseen*; His promise is ever performed."⁵⁴
4. Usmani: "(They will enter) the Gardens of eternity, promised by the All-Merciful (Allah Almighty) to His servants, in the unseen world. They will surely reach (the places of) His promise."⁵⁵

The italicized word (i.e. *unseen*), is a domesticating translation of the Arabic word الغيب (*alghayb*). This is presented in dictionaries as 'unseen' (i.e. not seen or not noticed). The meaning of 'unseen' within a religious discourse in English is generally viewed as expressing a belief in Christ without seeing him, i.e. the unseen Christ, thus representing blind obedience and belief.⁵⁶ This is not the same when it comes to the Arabic context. There is no equivalent English expression for الغيب (*alghayb*), either in terms of form or content. Furthermore, no such meaning can be established, due to the lack of any existing counterparts. This results in the need for the Arabic word to be transliterated, accompanied by a footnote to explain the meaning. The word 'unseen' is therefore replaced by a transliteration of the original as 'Al-Ghayb' and illustrated by Al-Tarawneh as follows:

"It is a basic component of Islamic belief system. It includes the knowledge of God (Allah Almighty) of whatever is going to happen in the future, the world of the unseen as the Angels or Jin – a creature where the Satan belongs, God's (Almighty Allah's) plans regarding everything in this universe – being human or non-human – predestined even before the creation of universe, the knowledge of the afterlife and the resurrection, and the hell and the paradise. All that knowledge is only for God (Allah) given to whoever of His servants (prophets)".⁵⁷

7. Conclusion

This paper has established that translation cannot be considered a science, as it is not judged in terms of formulas, i.e. one plus one equals two. Instead, it established that translation is an art, requiring the negotiation of various options to make the final decision.

Firstly, it highlighted that translation is not determined by any fixed approach but is decided by the translator, who may move between a variety of approaches in order to convey the required meaning. Secondly, it identified the role of the translator as seeking to establish meaning between ST and TT, attained by neglecting the binaries in TS and adopting a hybrid approach to deliver meaning, i.e. the primary purpose of most of the translation tasks. Thirdly, it

examined how meaning cannot always be fully established between languages, resulting in the need to employ a number of different techniques. Furthermore, the meaning in TL is required to express the exact meaning of SL, including in terms of its uniqueness and foreignness, even if this breaks the norms and expectations of the target readers. Moreover, the delivery of meaning must be intelligible and elegant in TL. Thus, translation is not judged by means of quantity, but in terms of quality, i.e. it is not an imitation of ST, but rather a rewriting of the meaning in a different language.

This article therefore concludes that translation is primarily source-oriented when it comes to capture meaning, and target-oriented when it comes to delivering the meaning in TL, according to its norms and the expectation of readers. Hybridizing translation activity thus enables the translator to bridge the gap between the source and target audiences. Hybridization assists in effectively communicating the cultural uniqueness and specificity of the former, while at the same time establishing an accurate comprehension and understanding in the minds of the latter.

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- ²⁶A discussion of the objective of translation concerns the issue in TS known as Skopos. Skopos was originally a Greek word, meaning purpose or aim, which was introduced in the late 1970s by Hans Vermeer (Vermeer 198). Skopos judges the quality and process of translation according to the objective assigned to the translation commission, whether or not this can be fulfilled in TL.
- ²⁷A number of linguistic items can appear similar in SL and TL in terms of wording or dictionary-match, but differ when it comes to the intended meaning (E. A. Nida 160). For example, pilgrimage in English and حَجَّ (Hajj) in Arabic refer to the same concept and appear in dictionaries as equivalents. However, they are perceived in completely different ways by the two cultures.
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