

The Translation of polysemous Bound Terms in the Qur'an: an Analytical study of Twelve Translations of Sūrat an-Nisā'

Ahoud Aldhafeeri¹

Abstract

Qur'anic terms are very important for understanding the meaning of the Qur'an. These terms are highly specific, i.e. bound to the place and time of the revelation of the text. Some of these terms are polysemous that have more than a sense. Understanding Qur'an-bound terms that are polysemous (including autohyponymous terms) depends on understanding the context, and this can be particularly complex when translating cultural elements between two different cultures. This study examines the translation of Qur'an-bound terms which give rise to problems when translated into English. Twelve translations of sūrat an-Nisā' are chosen to investigate the semantic and cultural challenges for the translator and to assess which translation procedures were chosen to translate the polysemous terms based on the model of Dickins (2012).

The comparative analysis polysemous QBTs translation shows that some translators consider the context by conveying proper meaning, while others inappropriately translate the QBT with a primary sense when a secondary one is intended in context. Regarding the translation procedures employed, the results show that the most frequently used procedures are culture-neutral and basic-sense literal translation equally. As a result, the Qur'anic terms rendered into English language by basic sense are synonymy oriented, while neutral words/phrases and explanation are culture-neutral procedures.

Keywords: Qur'an, Qur'an-bound terms, polysemy, context, translation procedure(s)

Introduction

Polysemy is a universal linguistic phenomenon in all-natural languages (Al-Munjid, 1999:15). Many Qur'anic term are polysemous, i.e., have multiple senses and are context-dependent. Cultural terms are very important in translating the Holy Quran from one culture to another. Some Qur'an-bound terms (QBTs) are polysemous QBTs which have been translated differently by translators on the basis of their different senses, showing that there is some incongruity in rendering these QBTs. This paper is conducted to address the question of whether such QBTs can be translated into English as obvious TL equivalents are clearly different from them semantically. Thus, when translating the Holy Quran into a TL that serves people from different cultures, there is a need to pay critical attention to how the words and phrases are translated in terms of both language and culture. The cultural gap between Arabic and English-speaking countries which have divergent cultural and religious backgrounds makes this very important to consider while translating QBTs. This necessitates different translation procedures depending on the nature of a polysemous QBT, whether a primary or secondary sense is intended in context.

The present study aims to examine the procedures for translating QBTs that are polysemous in sūrat an-Nisā' in English translations of the Holy Quran based on Dickins' (2012) model of procedures for translating culturally-specific items, and how the application of these procedures affects the degree of approximation of meaning in the translation. The paper questions are:

- 1- What is the nature of the polysemous QBTs found in sūrat an-Nisā' depending mainly on the context of culture?
- 2- What procedures are employed by translators to render polysemous QBTs in sūrat an-Nisā' utilising Dickins' (2012) model for translating culturally-specific items?

¹ University of Leeds, E-mail: mlaqsa@leeds.ac.uk, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7857-9521

3- How do the procedures employed by translators reveal the basic-sense or the intended (secondary) meaning?

Literature Review

Polysemy in Arabic language and the Qur'an

The term 'polysémie' was first introduced in linguistics by Michel Bréal in 1897. Crystal (2008:373) defines polysemy as "a term used in semantic analysis to refer to a lexical item which has a range of different meanings." Examples of this are words with multiple meanings, such as 'clear,' 'unadorned' and 'obvious' (Crystal, 2008:373). Löbner (2002:44) argues that polysemy is abundant, as opposed to homonymy, which, according to him, is rare. He (ibid:44) explains, "[a] lexeme constitutes a case of polysemy if it has two or more interrelated meanings, or better: meaning variants," going on to say that, to understand the meaning variants for each, they should be studied separately. He (ibid:45) believes that polysemy "plays a major role in the historical development of word meanings because lexemes continually shift their meanings and develop new meaning variants."

Polysemy is used in literary texts as an element of rhetorical style. As in English, words in Arabic are characterised by multiple senses. Generally, it appears in Arabic as a feature of a language rather than a problematic feature. The Qur'an has been classified as polysemous by Qur'anic exegetes, suggesting that most words in the Qur'an contain various meanings or levels of meaning (Berg, 2001). The study of polysemy in Arabic was an interest of Muslim scholars working in the science of *al-Wujūh/al-Ašbāh wa an-Naẓā'ir* (polysemes/homonyms and synonyms/analogues). Muslim scholars considered the Qur'anic terms and their various senses. They use the term *wujūh* (sg. *wajh*) to address the senses of polysemous and homonymous, while they use the term *naẓā'ir* (sg. *naẓīra*) to address near-synonyms (Berg, 2001).

Words involving *wujūh* occur in the Qur'an in different contexts, having different meanings. A large proportion of terms in the Qur'an are polysemous, having one or more non-religious meaning, they are context-dependent and consulting exegeses is required to extract their intended meaning (Al-Mulla, 1989:210). This plurality of senses may be problematic in translation, as most Qur'an terms rely on different exegeses, as well as context. Translating religious texts is sensitive, as in the case of Qur'anic terms having different meanings depending on the contexts in which they are used. This accentuates the issue of the Qur'an's untranslatability, as the meanings depend on *tafsirs*, which may propose different senses.

Polysemy has primary and secondary senses. The primary sense is known by the people of the language spoken, while other senses are secondary (Beekman and Callow, 1975:00; Larson, 1998:00; Barnwell, 1981:00; Dickins et al., 2017:00). Cruse (2011:115-116) divides polysemy as 'linear polysemy' and 'non-linear polysemy'. Linear polysemy is where one sense of a word is a subset of the other, while non-linear polysemy is where a word is used figuratively in relation to its basic sense to provide a different way of looking at the new subject (ibid:115-116). He (ibid:116) classifies linear polysemy into autohyponymy, automeronymy, autosuperordination and autoholonymy (The first type is found with the Qur'an and the data used in this paper, so it will be defined briefly). Cruse (ibid:110) defines autohyponymy as a situation in which "a word which has a default general sense, and a contextually restricted sense which is more specific in that it denotes a subvariety of the general sense." An example is 'drink', which has a basic sense (default general sense) 'Take (a liquid) into the mouth and swallow' and a more specific contextually restricted sense 'consume or be in the habit of consuming alcohol' (definitions from Lexico online dictionary). Autohyponymy involves a hyponymy-hyperonymy relationship.

The relationship between Qur'an-bound terms and polysemy in the Qur'an

The context, according to Alhaj, can be linguistic, situational, or cultural (2015: 24-25). Cultural context refers to the environment relevant to cultural beliefs, values, and practices in the societies of which speakers are a part (Alhaj, 2015:25). Qur'anic terms are culture-specific which are linguistically, as well as culturally untranslatable. Polysemous terms in the Qur'an frequently appear also to have a cultural meaning. That is to say that there is an interrelationship between polysemy and cultural terms in the Qur'an. This study will investigate polysemous words in *sūrat an-Nisā'* from their cultural context to determine whether translators handle QBTs' meaning and their cultural context, or by their basic-sense in isolation from its cultural context. In other words, studying Qur'anic cultural terms is inextricably related to studying linguistic context (e.g., polysemy).

Translation procedures for translating culturally-specific items

A review of the previous studies by Abdul-Raof (2005) and Azzam, Alahaydib, and Alhuqail (2015) who address culture as the main obstacle in translation for translators. These two studies mention briefly some cultural problems found in the translation of Qur'anic cultural concepts. In terms of translation procedures employed in the Qur'an, the studies of Amjad (2013), Moradi (2014), and Shetab and Suzani (2016), focus on culture-specific

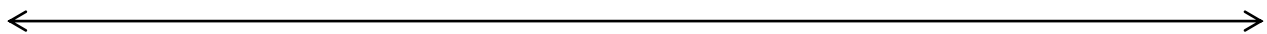
items (CSIs) in terms of different strategies and have mainly used Ivir’s (1987) strategies and Chesterman’s (1997) taxonomy to investigate how various translators attempted to retain the existing linguistic and cultural elements of the Quran. These studies are based only on quantitative analysis. This study aims to fill the gap regarding how QBTs are rendered in different English translations of the Qur’an, addressing cultural problems that arise during the translation process and evaluating the different procedures used by translators to retain the original cultural concepts of the Quran, specifically in *sūrat an-Nisā’*. This study will also help to gain knowledge about the importance of context in grasping the meaning of the cultural terms. This is particularly important when translating polysemous QBTs.

Theoretical framework

This study will utilize Dickins (2012) model of the translation of culturally-specific items. Dickins’ model establishes several dichotomies for understanding the previous typologies for translating certain culture-specific terms: (1) source culture-/source language-oriented (foreignising) vs. target culture-/target language-oriented (domesticating); (2) non-lexicalised/ ungrammatical vs. lexicalised/grammatical; (3) semantically systematic vs semantically anomalous; (4) synonymy-oriented vs. non-synonymy oriented; (5) situationally equivalent vs. culturally analogous; and (6) lexical vs. structural. As can be seen in the figure below, a conceptual ‘grid’ is established that compares three influential typologies for the translation of culturally-specific items: Ivir (1987), Newmark (1988), and Hervey and Higgins (1992) referring also to Venuti (1995, 2018). The SL-oriented procedures cover cultural borrowing, basic-sense literal translation, calque and exoticism. The TL-oriented procedures cover omission for cultural reasons, communicative translation and cultural transplantation. While culture-neutral procedures are culture-neutral word, culture-neutral phrase and explanation. The procedures will be presented adapted from the dichotomies suggested by Dickins (2012) in the following columns (see figure 1):

SC-/SL-oriented

TC-/TL-oriented



	<i>COLUMN 1</i>	<i>COLUMN 2</i>	<i>COLUMN 3</i>	<i>COLUMN 4</i>	<i>COLUMN 5</i>	<i>COLUMN 6</i>	<i>COLUMN 7</i>	
	FOREIGNISING			CULTURE NEUTRAL	DOMESTICATING			
	Non-lexicalised/ Ungrammatical	Lexicalised / Grammatical						
	Semantically anomalous		Semantically systematic				Situationally equivalent	Culturally equivalent
			SYNONYMY-ORIENTED			PROBLEM-AVOIDANCE ORIENTED		
ROW A: LEXICAL	Cultural borrowing proper	Basic-sense literal translation ('Literal translation)	Lexicalised cultural borrowing	Culture-neutral word	Omission	Communicative translation	Cultural transplantation	
	Ungrammatical calque Ungrammatical quasi-calque	Grammatical Calque Grammatical quasi-	Exoticism Quasi-exoticism	Culture-neutral phrase Explanation				

Figure 1: *Procedures for translating culturally-specific items: adapted from Dickins (2012)*

Procedure 1: Column 1, row A Cultural borrowing proper

Translation procedure is termed by Ivir, Newmark and Dickens et al. ‘cultural borrowing’. An example is the use of *mizmar* in English as a translation of the Arabic *مزمار*. In principle, this procedure could also be extended to include invented words which bear no obvious sound relationship to the ST word that they are used to translate.

Procedure 2: Column 1, row B, Column 1, row B Ungrammatical calque (semantically anomalous), Quasi-calque

Calque which is (semantically anomalous), quasi-calque procedures introduce forms in the TL which are ungrammatical (non-lexicalised) and semantically anomalous. These cases belong to Column 1 (non-lexicalised/ungrammatical), Row B (structural–syntactic). For a discussion of exoticism, see Column 3, Row B below. An ungrammatical quasi-calque is a phrase which is not a calque but uses a grammatical form which is not a standard part of English, and therefore sounds like a calque.

Procedure 3: Column 2, row A Basic-sense literal translation

Basic-sense literal translation involves a single word. The ST word should be polysemous and one of the ST word's senses is basic, while the other relevant senses are secondary. The TT word must have the same primary sense as the ST word and must not have the same secondary sense as the ST word (Dickins, 2017:176). An example is provided for the English word 'comet' is polysemous; in computing, i.e. a web application model in which a long-held HTTP request allows a web server to push data to a browser, without the browser explicitly requesting it, in relation to a literal translation *مذئب*. Accordingly, it is suggested to refer to this procedure as 'basic-sense literal translation', rather than a literal translation.

Procedure 4: Column 2, row B Calque (grammatical/ semantically anomalous)

A grammatical quasi-calque is a phrase which is not a calque and uses a grammatical form which is a standard part of English, but also sounds like a calque because it is not a normal (idiomatic) usage in English and does not conform to the standard semantics of English. These belong to column 2, row B.

Procedure 5: Column 3, row A: Lexicalised cultural borrowing

While Dickins (2012:54) confines cultural borrowing to non-lexicalised forms, what might be called 'lexicalised cultural borrowing' also occurs. In this case, it belongs to Column 3, Row A.

Procedure 6: Column 3, row B Exoticism

One of the striking aspects of the TT in using exoticism, according to Dickins (2017), is that "it goes beyond the mirroring of grammatical and cultural features including replication of prosodic features (rhythm and rhyme) of the ST" and can be considered as a hypernym of 'calque'. A quasi-exoticism falls within procedure 6: column 3, row B, is a phrase which is not a calque and uses a grammatical form which is a standard part of English, but also sounds like a calque because it is not a normal (idiomatic) usage in English but does conform to the standard semantics of English.

Procedure 7: Column 4, rows A & B culture-neutral word, culture-neutral phrase, explanation

Culture-neutral word/phrase includes similar procedures of Ivir's 'definition' and 'addition', Newmark's 'descriptive equivalent' and 'functional equivalent'. These procedures lie in the middle of the two extremes which are SL-oriented and TL-oriented that give clarification or expansion of the culture-specific term. A culture-neutral word is a single word in the TL whose meaning is not culture-specific to the target culture, but which is used to translate an ST word or phrase whose meaning is culture-specific to the source culture (Dickins, 2012:55). Similarly, a culture-neutral phrase is a phrase (normally expected to be a standard phrase) in the TL whose meaning is not culture-specific to the target culture, but which is used to translate an ST word or phrase whose meaning is culture-specific to the source culture (Dickins, 2012:55). The third element of this procedure is an explanation. These three procedure falls under cultural neutralism which is not synonymy or non-synonymy oriented. Cultural 'neutralism' (or neutralisation) as a procedure is referred to as "an intercultural contact or relationship that is the source of neither benefit nor harm for the parties involved" (Tyulenev, 2014:39).

Procedure 8: Column 5, rows A & B Omission for cultural reasons

This procedure is placed in the middle between synonymy-oriented and non-synonymy-oriented. This procedure is used to avoid "the normal problems associated with translating a culturally specific element" and it is considered "domesticating in that it removes mention of the foreign element in the target text" (Dickins, 2012:56).

Procedure 9: Column 6, rows A and B Communicative translation

In communicative translation, the translator substitutes an SL word with an existing equivalent in the target language which has a similar impact on the target reader and which is a standard usage in the specific context (Dickins et al., 2017:41)

Procedure 10: Column 7, Rows A and B: Cultural transplantation

At the opposite end of the scale to exoticism is cultural transplantation. It refers to "the wholesale transplanting of the entire setting of the ST, resulting in the entire text being rewritten in an indigenous target culture setting" (Dickins et al., 2017, 38). This strategy is similar to Ivir's (1988) 'substitution,' Newmark's 'cultural equivalent,' Baker's (2018) 'cultural substitution' and the notion of 'cultural analogy' by Dickins (2012).

Procedure 11: Combination of two procedures

Combination of two procedures or more mainly used with culture-neutral word/phrase or basic-sense literal translation procedures. One of which is flowed by explanation or footnotes to refer to other parts of the meaning. Yet, this is not always the case as sometimes explanation procedure is combined with footnotes or combing culture-neutral word twice in translating a QBT by the selected translators. In the Qur'an translation, footnotes are usually located as marginal notes.

Method

. The study is an empirical one which involves mainly a comparative analysis between the Arabic text of the sūrah and its twelve translated versions in English. The twelve translations were chosen for this study as they are popular among different groups of readers, both Muslim and non-Muslim. The selected works have also been produced by translators from divergent backgrounds, including native Arabic speakers and non-Arabic native speakers, Muslims and non-Muslims. The selected works were produced over a long period extending from 1734 by Sale to the most recent one in 2020 by al-Amri. The translations are also different in terms of the translator's purpose. Twelve English translations of the meaning of the Holy Quran will be studied: (1) The Koran by George Sale, 1734; (2) The Koran by John Medows Rodwell, 1861; (3) The Meaning of the Glorious Koran by Marmaduke Pickthall, 1930; (4) The Koran by N.J. Dawood, 1956; (5) Qur'an, the Final Testament by Rashad Khalifa, 1992; (6) The message of the Qur'an by Mohammed Asad, 1980; (7) An easy to understand the translation of Qur'an by Bijan Moeinian, 2005; (8) The Quran: A New Interpretation by Collin Turner, 1997; (9) The Qur'an: A New Translation by Thomas Cleary, 2004; (10) The Noble Qur'an: A New Rendering of its Meaning in English by Abdulhaq & Aisha Bewley, 2005; (11) The Grand Qur'an: the First Third by Waleed Bleyhesh al-Amri, 2020; (12) The Koran by Sami A. Aldeeb Abu-Sahlieh, 2016.

Procedures

This paper will highlight the translation of QBTs, which are polysemous (including autohyponymous) between Arabic and English. Firstly, each QBT will be analysed, including its origin and derivation; the range of meanings of each QBT (primary and secondary senses) in different contexts in the Qur'an will be determined and analysed linguistically and contextually. The translations selected for this study will then be examined by comparing and explaining them in terms of the procedures employed to render each of the selected QBTs in the translation process. These procedures will be discussed by applying Dickins's (2012) proposed model for translating culturally-specific items. Finally, a summary of how the translators achieved equivalence in the TL rendering the contextual intended meaning of the verse will be presented, including whether they refer to the primary or secondary sense depending on the context.

Results

As figure 2 below shows, the most commonly employed procedure in the translation of polysemous terms is culture-neutral word/phrase and basic-sense literal translation at 27% for the former and 26% for the latter. The least employed procedure is cultural borrowing and grammatical quasi-calque, at 1% and 2%, respectively. Non-synonymy-oriented procedures are rarely used in the translation of Qur'anic polysemous terms. Cultural transplantation is used in 7% of cases. The third most commonly employed procedure in the translation of polysemous QBTs is explanation at 20%, followed by a combination of two procedures at 17%.

Moving on to consider the use of procedures by each translator (see table 2 and figure 2), most translators convey the polysemous QBTs using the culture-neutral word/phrase: Sale, Rodwell, Pickthall, Dawood, Cleary, and the Bewleys at 38%, 25%, 62%, 25%, 38%, and 50%, respectively. Turner and Moeinian employ explanation procedure at 50%, each. Abu-Sahlieh also uses basic-sense literal translation, which is semantically anomalous, at 50%. Al-Amri employs a combination of two procedures at 62% each. While Khalifah employs culture-neutral word/phrase, basic-sense literal translation and a combination of two procedures at 25% each. Translators who opt for semantically systematic procedures to some extent stand a better chance of conveying the precise meaning of the ST word than do those who choose synonymy-oriented procedures.

Procedures / translations	QBT1 Muḥṣanāt	QBT 2 ṣalat	QBT 3 Zakāt	QBT 4 Salām	QBT 5 ʿUjūr	QBT6 Fatayāt	QBT 7 Ġusl	QBT 8 ʿUlī al-amr
Translator								
Sale	Culture-neutral phrase	Basic-sense literal translation	Cultural transplantation	Culture-neutral word	Basic-sense literal translation	Culture-neutral word	Basic-sense literal translation	Culture-neutral phrase
	such as are modest	prayers	legal alms? Footnotes in Sale's translation: These were some of Mohammed's followers, who readily performed the duties of their religion so long as they were commanded nothing that might endanger their lives.	saluteth	reward	maid-servants	wash	those who are in authority
Rodwell	Culture-neutral word	Basic-sense literal translation	Combination of two procedures	Combination of two procedures	Cultural transplantation	Culture-neutral word	Basic-sense literal translation	Explanation
	chaste	prayer	the stated alms	meeteth you with a greeting	dowry	maidens	washed	those among you invested with authority
Pickthall	Culture-neutral word	Culture-neutral word	Grammatical quasi-calque	Basic-sense literal translation	Culture-neutral word	Culture-neutral word	Basic-sense literal translation	Culture-neutral phrase
	honest	worship	the poor due	peace	portions	maids	bathed	those of you who are in authority
Dawood	Explanation	Basic-sense literal translation	Combination of two procedures	Basic-sense literal translation	Cultural transplantation	Culture-neutral word	Basic-sense literal translation	Culture-neutral phrase
	provided they are honorable and chaste	prayers	the alms levy	peace	dowry	slave-girl	washed	those in authority
Khalifah	Explanation	Combination of two procedures	Combination of two procedures	Basic-sense literal translation	Cultural transplantation	Culture-neutral word	Basic-sense literal translation	Culture-neutral phrase
	They shall maintain moral behaviour	Contact Prayers (Salat)	obligatory charity (Zakat)	peace	dowry	slave women	bathing	and those in charge

Moeinian	Explanation	Culture-neutral phrase	Culture-neutral phrase	Explanation	Explanation	Combination of two procedures	Basic-sense literal translation	Explanation
	They should behave accordingly	worship God	charitable actions	greeted and received a peace offering	upon a gift (or a sum) upon the wedding;	a slave woman or the one who does not have materialistic concerns	bathing	and your [righteous] leaders
Asad	Explanation	Basic-sense literal translation	Grammatical quasi-calque	Explanation	Cultural transplantation	Culture-neutral word	Basic-sense literal translation	Explanation
	they being women who give themselves in honest wedlock	prayer	The purifying dues	the greeting of peace	dowers	maidens	bathed	those from who have been entrusted with authority
Turner	Explanation	Basic-sense literal translation	Combination of two procedures	Explanation	Combination of two procedures	Culture-neutral word	Explanation	Explanation
	they should therefore be chaste	prayers	pay your zakat so that your spirit may be strengthened	greet you with the phrase, "Peace be with you!"	dowries as a gift; if you seek temporary marriage, give as much as is deemed fair in return	captives	full ablution	those who have been authorised by the Prophet to rule over you.
Cleary	Culture-neutral phrase	Basic-sense literal translation	Cultural transplantation	Explanation	Basic-sense literal translation	Culture-neutral word	Basic-sense literal translation	Culture-neutral phrase
	chaste women	pray	alms	greet you with peace	recompense	bondmaids	wash	those with authority
The Bewleys	Culture-neutral phrase	Basic-sense literal translation	Lexicalised cultural borrowing	Explanation	Cultural transplantation	Culture-neutral word	Explanation	Culture-neutral phrase
	as married women,	Prayer	zakat	greet you as a Muslim,	dowry	slave girls	washed yourselves completely	those in command
Al-Amri	Combination of two procedures	Basic-sense literal translation	Combination of two procedures	Combination of two procedures	Explanation	Culture-neutral word	Combination of two procedures	Combination of two procedures
	'marry those of whom who seek 'joining together' under 'holy' matrimony	Prayer	the prescribed alms	peace	'bridal' dues	maids	bathe <i>A footnote in al-Amri's translation:</i> While in a state of ceremonial impurity, one is allowed to pass through a place of	those who are in charge <i>A footnote in al-Amri's translation:</i> As much as those who are in charge (uĒ al-amr) are instructed to be fair and

							Prayer but not stay in it unless ghusl (washing) is performed	equitable and to uphold justice, those who receive their judgement are encouraged to obey. Believers are told to obey those who are put in charge of their affairs given that what they tell them to do or follow is in accordance with the precepts of Islam, as detailed in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and is fair and equitable.
Abu-Sahlieh	Combination of two procedures	Basic-sense literal translation	Cultural transplation	Basic-sense literal translation	Basic-sense literal translation	Culture-neutral word	Basic-sense literal translation	explanation
	Preserved	Prayer	the tith	peace	wage	maidens	washed	those charged with authority among you
	<i>A footnote in Al-Abu-Sahlieh's translation:</i> this term indicates people who remained chaste or got married.							

Table 1: Procedures employed by the translators in the translation of the selected QBTs in sĒrat an-NisĒ'

Procedures Translator	culture-neutral word/phrase	explanation	Basic-sense Literal translation	lexicalised cultural borrowing	Grammatical quasi-calque	Cultural transplantiati on	Combination of two procedures
Sale	3	0	3	0	0	1	1
Rodwell	2	1	2	0	0	1	2
Pickthall	5	0	2	0	1	0	0
Dawood	2	1	3	0	0	1	1
Khalifah	2	1	2	0	0	1	2
Moeinian	2	4	1	0	0	0	1
Asad	0	3	2	0	1	1	1
Turner	1	4	1	0	0	0	2
Cleary	3	1	3	0	0	1	0
The Bewleys	4	2	1	1	0	0	0
Al-Amri	1	1	1	0	0	0	5
Abu-Sahlieh	1	1	4	0	0	1	1
Total	26	19	25	1	2	7	16
Per cent	27%	20%	26%	1%	2%	7%	17%

Table 2: Overall summary of the translation procedures employed by each translator in the translation of the selected polysemous QBTs in sūrat an-Nisā'

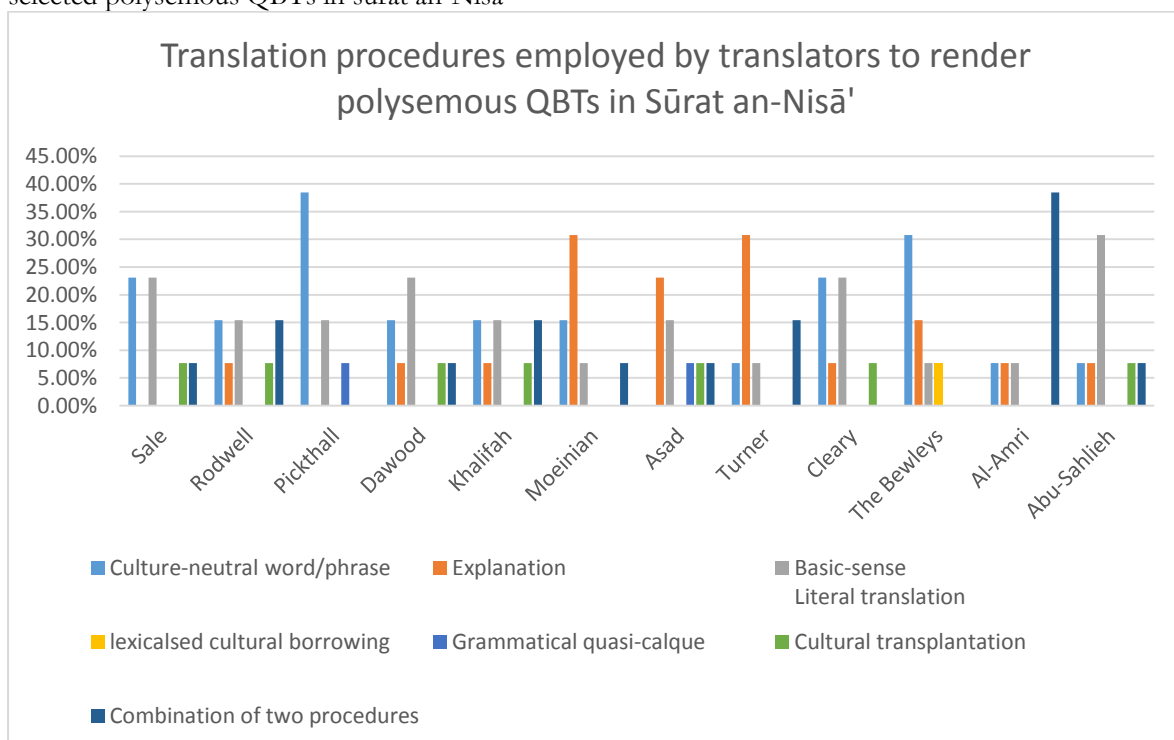


Figure 2: Overall summary of the translation procedures employed by each translator in the translation of the selected polysemous QBTs in sūrat an-Nisā'

Discussion

This section will provide an ST analysis of the selected eight QBTs, followed by a TT analysis of the translation and discussion.

QBT 1: Muḥṣanāt in [Q4:25]

The term *مدصنات* (muḥṣanāt) (sg. *مدصنة* ‘muḥṣanah’) and *مدصنين* ‘muḥṣinīn’ is derived from the root *h-ṣ-n* which denotes something protected, to be inaccessible and fortified as in [Q. 59:14] (Oxford Arabic Dictionary; Badawi Abdel and Haleem, 2008:215; ar-RĒzī,1986:59). The QBT *muḥṣan* occurs 6 times in the Qur’an-in this sūrah in verse (24), where it appears twice and in verse (25) 4 times. It is a polysemous term which has three different senses in the Qur’an ‘free person,’ ‘chaste person,’ and ‘married person’ (Badawi Abdel and Haleem, 2008:215; ar-Rāzī,1986:59).

QBT 2: ṣalat in [Q. 4:77]

The term *صلاة* (ṣalāt) can be related to the word *صيلة* (ṣilā) ‘fire,’ and the root *ṣ-l-y*. Accordingly, the word *صلى* (ṣallā) ‘prayed’ implies that a person removes ṣilā’ from themselves when praying. The term is etymologically derived from the Syriac word *ṣeloṭā*, whose basic meaning denotes the act of bowing (Böwering, 2001). Ṣalāt has a number of interrelated meanings, which are ‘praying,’ ‘invocation,’ ‘blessing’ and ‘praising’ (al-Aṣfahānī, 1961:285). In this paper, it is only sense three which is concerned. This can also be regarded as the primary sense of ṣalāt in Islam. In Islam, the term ṣalāt, as used in the sense *ṣibādah* (‘worship’) is culture-specific.

QBT 3: Zakāt in [Q. 4:77]

The term *زكاة* (zakāt) was borrowed from the Jewish Hebrew-Aramaic usage *zakāt* (Bashear, 1993:85). It is derived from the trilateral root, *z-k-w*, which implies blessing, increase, and purity (al-Aṣfahānī,1964:213). Ad-DamgānĒ, (1983:284) summarizes eight different senses of *zakāt* in the Qur’an, of these senses is the levied *zakāt* as in [Q. 4:162]: the third pillar of Islam which involves paying a specific portion of wealth (2.5% of their money, properties or jewellery) annually when it reaches *نصاب* (niṣāb), which is a certain wealth threshold, every year as an obligation, to specified needy people (Majmaʿ al-Luġah al-ʿArabiah, 2004:396; al-Aṣfahānī, 1961:213).

QBT 4: Salām in [Q. 4:94]

The term *سلام* (salām) ‘peace’ is derived from the trilateral verb *سلم* *s-l-m*, which means being safe from scourges as in [Q. 26:89] (az-Zamaḥṣarī, 1998:470). The QBT *salām* in the Arabic language has various meanings, and also in the Quran, *salām* also has different senses, i.e. it is polysemous. Its primary sense is ‘peace’, as in [Q. 15:46], while other secondary senses are: ‘Islamic greeting’ as in [Q. 24:61]; one of Allah’s names and attributes as in [Q. 10:25] and [Q. 59:33]; ‘safety and security’ as in [Q. 11:48] and [Q. 11:4]; ‘benevolence and well-considered speech’ as in [Q. 25:63] and [Q. 25:63]; ‘praising somebody’ as in [Q. 37:130] (ad-Damgānī, 1983:245; al-Aṣfahānī, 1961:239).

QBT 5: ’Ujūr in [Q. 4:24]

The word *أجور* (ujūr sg. *ajr*) ‘wage’ is mentioned 105 times in the Quran, six of which are related to marriage *ṣadāq*. Its primary sense is a payment or wage as in [Q. 42:23], while other secondary meanings are: *ṣadāq* as in [Q. 33:50], [Q. 4:24] and [Q. 28:27]; granting a reward as in [Q. 16:96]; and breastfeeding fee or maintenance as in [Q. 65:6] (ad-Damgānī, 1983:17). In addition to the multiple senses of this QBT, contextual meaning of *ujūr* in verses, according to Qur’anic exegetes, has two different interpretations: the first one is that the meaning of *ujūr* is ‘giving women maintenance’, while the second interpretation of *ujūr*, which is agreed on by most interpreters, is ‘giving a woman her *ṣadāq* when marrying her as a right’ (Ibn Kaṭīr, 2002:432; ad-Darwīš, 1999:392; al-Qurṭubī, 2006:192). In this verse, *ujūr* refers to what the husband should offer his wife before consummating the marriage, demonstrating that marriage is a holy bond and women are precious (ad-Damgānī, 1983:17).

QBT 6: Fatayāt in [Q. 4:25]

The word *فاتات* (fatayāt) (sg. *فاته* *fatāt*) in Arabic is derived from the trilateral root having the root *f-t-w* / *f-t-y* in the following words: *مُفَتِّةٌ إِفْتَاءً اسْتَفْتَاءً فَتَى فَتَوَى فَتَوَى فَتَاةٌ فَتَاةٌ اسْتَفْتَى أَفْتَى فَتَى* (The Oxford Arabic Dictionary). From the entries in the Oxford Arabic Dictionary, it seems to be associated with the root. The first is ‘adolescent / young adult’, as in *فَتَى فَتَاةٌ* and *فَتَى*. In the Qur’anic context, *fatayāt* has the secondary sense of *جارية* (*jāriyah*) or *أمة* (*amah*) ‘a slave girl’ as in [Q. 24:33] and [Q. 4:25] (Ibn ʿāšūr, 1984:14; Al-Aṣfahānī, 1961:373). In

other words, it is autohyponymous, having one specific-sense ‘slave-girls,’ which is different from its basic sense that is normally found in the Arabic language as a ‘girl.’ That is to say, all fatayāt in the sense ‘slave girl’ are also fatayāt in the sense ‘girl’, but not all fatayāt in the sense ‘girl’ are also fatayāt in the sense ‘slave girl’, then there is autohyponymy. In the Qur’an, the word fatāt always has the sense ‘girl’, while the plural fatayāt always has the more specific sense ‘slave-girl’.

QBT 7: Ġusl in [Q. 4:43]

The term *غُسل* *ḡusl* (pl. *أَغْسَالٌ* *aḡsāl*) comes from the root *غ ل س* *ḡ-l-s-l*, indicating to clean something and to purify it; to ‘wash’ (Majmaʿ al-Luḡah al-ʿArabiah, 2004:652; al-Manāwī, 1990:252; al-Aṣfahānī, 1961:36). The general, and basic, sense of *ḡusl* is ‘washing something with water’, but in the Qur’an, *ḡusl* refers specifically to the ritual of washing one’s entire body with pure water, which includes a specific method and niyyah for those who have *janābah* as a cleanliness requirement (al-Manāwī, 1990:252; al-Aṣfahānī, 1961:361). This second sense is a hyponym of the first more general sense; all *ḡusl* in the second sense is also *ḡusl* in the first sense, but not vice versa. In Islamic Jurisprudence, *ḡusl* involves ‘major cleaning,’ and the states that necessitate *ḡusl* are called *al-ḥadath al-akbar* (major impurity). In contrast, minor impurity only requires performing *wuḍūʿ* ‘ablution’ (al-Manāwī, 1990:252).

QBT 8: *ʿUlī al-amr* in [Q. 4:59]

The term *الأمر أولى* (*ulī al-amar*) is originally derived from the trilateral verb *ولى* *w-l-ā*; the phrase *الأمر تولى* (*tawallā al-amar*) relates to handling and managing a situation (Ibn al-Jawzī, 2002:365; aš-Šawkānī, 2007:768). In the view of Qur’an exegetes, *walī al-amr* have seven interrelated meanings that are both valid and reliable at the same time (Ibn al-Jawzī, 2002:365; aš-Šawkānī, 2007:768). While in a political Islamic context, the term *walī al-amr* refers to the Muslim religious ruler. However, the usage of this term differs between Muslim sects. For Shias, it refers to the clergy, who have divine legitimacy, while for the Sunnis, the *walī al-amr*’s legitimacy is reserved for the political ruler. (Jamil, 2016:5).

Translations analysis and discussion

Regarding the TT analysis, the analysis of the QBT(1) *muḥṣan(at)*, translators have primarily used two procedures to render this QBT, which are culture-neutral word/phrase and explanation procedures. The combination of two procedures has been used infrequently here, possibly because the QBT in question has different meanings depending on context and appears to be translated by a single word in English, even though they are not completely semantically equivalent. Abu-Sahlieh employed grammatical quasi-calque procedure in all contexts with an equivalent ‘preserved’. His rendition, however, is not a common word in the English language (semantically anomalous). Furthermore, he completely disregarded the polysemous nature of the QBT *muḥṣan(at)*, which in different contexts refers to different meanings: ‘free’, ‘married’, or ‘chaste’. Moeinian oddly used omission procedures in the translation of this QBT. Analysis of different renditions of QBT (3) *ṣalāt* showed that the most employed procedure was basic-sense literal translation by the choice of ‘prayer’ as an equivalent in the TL communicates a similar religious general sense to that of *ṣalāt* but is different denotatively (‘prayer’ being a hyperonym of *ṣalāt*), and in terms of connotative (associative) meaning, since ‘prayer’ in the context of Anglophone culture inevitably carries some Christian associations. Although ‘prayer’ has been widely used by translators as an equivalent of *ṣalāt*, the word *ṣalāt* poses problems for translators of religious texts, especially the Qur’an, as *ṣalāt* is culture-specific and does not have a counterpart in the target culture. Considering QBT (3) *zakāt*, all translators have considered the context of *zakāt*, and some have managed to give part of the religious connotation by a variety of procedures. However, these renditions still do not convey the full sense of the Islamic concept. Terms in Anglophone culture such as ‘tithe’ or ‘almsgiving’ or ‘charity’ cannot be considered equivalent to the term *zakāt* as they are different and cannot transfer the features of this *ṣībādah* due to differences in practices, amounts, beneficiaries, and times for performing this religious act. Opting for culturally specific terms in English, such as ‘alms’ or ‘charity’, will not enable the TL readers to understand this QBT as they do not refer to obligatory acts in Anglophone culture. While in the translation of QBT (4) *salām*, translators opted for different renditions and different procedures employed by translators revealing that this polysemous term has different senses in Quran. It may be interpreted to mean a only greeting, and it may able so interpreted to mean peace. Due to different interpretations of the context related to this QBT, renditions are varied among translators. The analysis of QBT (5) *ʿujūr* showed that a term with multiple senses is problematic as the context gives rise to a wide range of meanings in the target language. Nevertheless, most of the translators were aware of the contextual meaning in the verses and the commentaries. Those who employed cultural transplantation, culture-neutral word and explanation give the QBT in question its meaning as *sadāq* or an equivalent phrase to ‘anything paid before

marriage although the absence of it in the target, can bring the reader close to the intended meaning. In rendering words with more than one sense the translator needs to study the contextual sense carefully. In the case of a Qur'an term that has multiple senses, it is very important to consult books of *iştirāk* and Qur'an exegesis to communicate the intended meaning.

Regarding the translation of the three autohyponymous QBTs, the QBT (6) *fatayāt* was rendered by most of the translations using its secondary sense ('slave-girls', etc.), as found in Qur'an interpretations. All the translators used culture-neutral word/phrase to render this QBT except for Moeinian and al-Amri, who rendered the term according to its basic sense. The translators' choice of words rendering *fatayāt*, such as 'maids', 'maidens' and 'maid-servants,' have different senses to *fatayāt*. While in the translation QBT (7) *ḡuṣl*, most of the translators were unaware of the culture-specificity of this autohyponymous term, employing basic-sense literal translation procedure. They translated this Islamic practice by fairly general words such as 'wash' and 'bathe'. Turner the Bewleys and al-Amri, nonetheless, appeared to be aware of the difference and tried to guide the TL readers to this Islamic ritual practice and Al-Amri's addition is more approximate to the contextual meaning of this Islamic concept. Finally, the analysis of the translation of the QBT (8) *'ulī al-amr* was almost equal between culture-neutral word/phrase and explanation. The use of culture-neutral word/phrase procedure to render the QBT in question does refer to the intended sense in context, though, the religious implication of this concept in the Qur'an. While using explanation here is, to some extent, more approximate to refer to the religious meaning of the QBT *'ulī al-amr*.

To sum up, translators opted for divergent procedures: basic-sense literal translation, culture-neutral word, cultural transplantation and explanation. The basic-sense procedure often does not convey the ST sense since most of the studied QBTs refer to a secondary sense. Translators who frequently use the basic-sense procedure including Sale, Dawood, Pickthall, al-Amri, and Abu-Sahlieh. They frequently fail to deal with the culturally specific secondary sense of the word in its particular context. Al-Amri inserted informative footnotes detailing different senses of particular terms, accompanied by a basic-sense translation to avoid misinterpretation. Translators who employed the culture-neutral word/phrase procedure conveyed only part of the meaning of the original term. Translators rarely used cultural transplantation, since it will necessarily fail to convey culturally specific elements, disguising them for the TL reader. Translators frequently rendered polysemous QBTs by explanation or descriptive equivalent because these can convey culturally specific aspects of meaning.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the translation of polysemous QBT in the Qur'an, including autohyponymous terms of twelve translations of *sūrat an-Nisā'*. It has discussed how the translators have conveyed the relevant sense of polysemous QBTs. Different interpretations of ST verses, according to the context including the reasons of revelations, result differences in translation and may lead to translation problems. Most of the QBTs discussed in this paper involve the secondary sense of a word. Though it is assumed they are aware of the context, translators may not always have successfully translated the verse in the light of its context.

Qur'an exegesis is a source for identifying autohyponymous Qur'anic terms. There are various procedures that translators can use in the translation of autohyponymous words, which are similar to the translation of polysemous terms more generally. However, in the cases examined in this paper, translators mainly used the basic-sense literal translation procedure which did not convey the intended meaning. Translators also adopted other procedures that either convey the intended meaning or at least part of the meaning. However, it is vital to use procedures that convey the intended meaning as autohyponymous terms may have a homonymous sense only in a specific genre, and using hyperonymy in such a context will not convey the ST meaning.

References

- Abu-Sahlieh, S. (2016). *The Koran: Arabic text with the English translation in chronological order according to the Azhar with reference to variations, abrogations and Jewish and Christian writings*. Seattle, Washington: Amazon Publishing.
- Ad-Damḡānī, A. (1983). *Qāmūs al-Qur'an: Al-Wujūh wa an-NaḌā'r fī al-Qur'an al-Karīm*. Beirut: Dār al-Ḥilm Lilmalāyīn.
- Al-Amri, W. (2008). *As-siyāq at-Taqāfī wa ḍarūrat murāḡātuh fī tarjamt an-nuḡūl al-Qur'āniyah*. Saudi scientific societies in Sunnah and its Science (Sunan).
- Al-Amri, W. (2020). *The Grand Qur'an: the First Third*. Madinah: Endowment for Cherishing the Two Glorious Revelations.

- Al-Aṣḥānī, A. (1961). *Al-Mufradāt fī Ġarīb al-Qurʿan*. Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah.
- Alhaj, A. (2015). *A Study of Polysemous Words in Qur'an Translation: A Textbook for Students of Linguistics and Translation*. LAP Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Al-Manāwī, A. (1990). *At-Tawqīf ʿalā Mahīm at-Taʿārif*. Cairo: ʿĀlam al-Kutub.
- Almulla, S. (1989). *The Question of the Translatability of the Qurʿān, with Particular Reference to Some English Versions - Enlighten: Theses*. [online]. [Accessed 1 June 2022]. Theses.gla.ac.uk. Available from: <<https://theses.gla.ac.uk/1934/>>.
- Al-Munjid, M. (1999). *Al-Iṣtirāʿ al-Lafẓī Fī al-Qurʿān Bayna An-Naẓariyyah wa At-Taṭbīq*. Damascus: Dār al-Fikr.
- Al-Qurtubī, M. (2006). *Al-Jāmiʿ li-Ākām al-Qurʿan*. Beirut: Muʿassasat ar-Risālah.
- Ar-Rāzī, M. (1986). *Muḥtār aṣ-ṣaḥḥah*. Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān.
- Aš-Šawkānī, M. (2007). *Ftaḥ al-Qadīr: al-Jāmiʿ bayna fannai ar-Riyāyah wa ad-Dirāyah min ʿilm at-Tafsīr*. Beirut, Cairo: Dār al-Maʿrifah.
- Asad, M. (1980). *The Message of the Qur'an*. Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus.
- Badawi, E. and Abdel Haleem, M. (2008). *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, vol. 85. Leiden: Brill.
- Bashear, S. (1993). On the Origins and Development of the Meaning of Zakāt in Early Islam. *Arabica*. 40(1), 84-113.
- Beekman, J. and Callow, J. (1975). *Translating the Word of God*. Grand Rapids: Zondevan.
- Behbudi, M. and Turner, C. (1997). *The Qur'an: A new Interpretation*. London: Routledge.
- Berg, H. (2001). Polysemy in the Qurʿān. *Referenceworks.brillonline.com*. [Online]. [Accessed 9 June 2021]. Available from: https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-the-quran/polysemy-in-the-quran-EQCOM_00150.
- Bewley, A. and Bewley, A. (2005). *The Noble Qur'an*. Norwich [England]: Bookwork.
- Böwering, G. (2001). Prayer. [online] *Referenceworks.brillonline.com*. Available at: <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-the-quran/prayer-EQCOM_00155?s.q=khutba> [Accessed 6 July 2022].
- Cleary, T. (2004). *The Qur'an: A New translation*. USA: Starlatch Press.
- Cruse, A. (2011). *Meaning in Language*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Crystal, D. (2008). *A Dictionary of linguistics and phonetics*. 6th ed. Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing.
- Dawood, J. (2014). *The Koran*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Dickins, J. (2012). The translation of Culturally Specific Items. In: Littlejohn, A and Mehta, S. (eds.), *Language Studies: Stretching Boundaries* (pp.43 – 60). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Dickins, J. (2017). *Thinking of Translation Methodology*. Unpublished.
- Dickins, J., Hervey, S. and Higgins, I. (2017). *Thinking Arabic Translation: A course in translation method: Arabic to English*. 2nd ed. Abingdon, New York: Routledge.
- Ibn Al-Jawzī, J. (1987). *Nuzhat al-Aṣḥun wa an-NawāDir fī ʿilm al-Yujūh wa an-NaḌāʿir*. Beirut, Syria: Muʿssat ar-Risālah.
- Ibn Al-Jawzī, J. (2002). *Zād al-Masīr fī ʿilm at-Tafsīr*. Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm.
- Ibn Kaṭīr, I. (2000). *Tafsīr al-Qurʿan al-ʿalīm*. Vol: 3-4. Cairo: Dār al-Fārūq al-Ḥadīth al-Liṭṭibāʿah wa an-Naṣr.
- Ibn ʿAṣūr, M. (1984). *Tafsīr at-Taḥrīr wa at-Tanwīr*. Tunisia: Ad-Dār at-Tūnisīyah lil-inaṣr.
- Jamil, M. (2016). *Mafhūm Wali l-Amr wa ʿalāqatahu bi baʿṢ al-Mafāhīm al-Murtaḃāḥ bi-fiqh al-Islami: dirāsah taḥlīliyyah*. *Majallat al-Mudawwanah*, 24(3783), 1-16.
- Khalifa, R. (1992). *Qur'an: The Final Testament [Authorized English Version]*. USA: United Community of Submitters.
- Larson, M. L. (1998). *Meaning-Based Translation: A Guide to Cross-Language Equivalence*. 2nd ed. Lanham: University Press of America.
- Löbner, S. (2013). *Understanding Semantics*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- Lexico.com. (2022). *Lexico Dictionaries | English*. Retrieved 6 July 2022, from <https://www.lexico.com/>.
- Moeinian, B. (2005). *Glorious Qur'an An Easier to Understand English Translation*. Morrisville, United States: Lulu.
- Majmaʿ al-Luġah al-ʿArabīyah. (2004). *Al-Muṣṣjam al-Wasīṭ*. 4th ed. Cairo: Maktabat aš-Šurūq.
- Oxford Arabic Dictionary. (2014). *Fatāt*. In *Oxford Arabic Dictionary*. [online] *Global.oup.com*. Available at: <<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/oxford-arabic-dictionary-9780199580330>> [Accessed 5 January 2022].
- Pickthall, M. (2010). *The meaning of the Glorious Qur'an. (Revised New modern English edition)*. Birmingham: Islamic Dawah Centre International.

- Rodwell, J.(1994). *The Koran*. Reprinted ed. London: Orion Publishing Group, Ltd.
- Sale, G. (1888). *The Koran: Commonly Called Alkoran of Mohammed*. Translated into English from the original Arabic. With Explanatory notes taken from the most approved commentators. London and New York: Frederick Warne and Co.
- Tyulenev, S. (2014). *Translation and Society*. London: Routledge.