

An Analysis of Translation Techniques Used in Translating a Religious Story from Arabic into English: A Case Study

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تحليل تقنيات الترجمة المستخدمة في ترجمة قصة دينية من العربية إلى الإنجليزية: دراسة حالة

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Abstract:

This study investigates the techniques used in translating an Arabic religious story into English, focusing on the translator's ability to maintain fluency and preserve cultural nuances. Using Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) model, the research employs a qualitative case study design with a purposive sample of six critical textual segments. The analysis reveals that literal translation (33%) and borrowing (28%) were the most frequent methods. While effective for factual accuracy, the overuse of literalism occasionally hindered idiomatic fluency (e.g., "secretary of revelation"). The study concludes that a strategic balance between modulation and literal translation is essential for translating religiously sensitive texts and provides pedagogical recommendations for translation training.

Keywords: Translation Techniques, Arabic-English Translation, Vinay And Darbelnet, Literal Translation, Borrowing, Modulation, Adaptation, Religious Texts.

الملخص

تدرس هذه الدراسة التقنيات المستخدمة في ترجمة قصة دينية من اللغة العربية إلى الإنجليزية، مع التركيز على قدرة المترجم على الحفاظ على الطلاقة اللغوية وصون الخصائص الثقافية. وباستخدام نموذج فيني وداربيلنيت (1995)، اعتمد البحث على تصميم دراسة حالة نوعية مع عينة مقصودة من ستة مقاطع نصية حرجة. وكشفت التحليلات أن الترجمة الحرفية (33%) والاقتراض (28%) كانت أكثر الأساليب شيوعاً. وعلى الرغم من فعاليتها في ضمان الدقة المعلومة، فإن الإفراط في الترجمة الحرفية أحياناً أعاق الطلاقة الاصطلاحية (مثل: "secretary of revelation" أي "أمين الوحي"). وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن التوازن الاستراتيجي بين التعديل والترجمة الحرفية ضروري عند ترجمة النصوص ذات الحساسية الدينية، وتقدم توصيات تربوية لتدريب المترجمين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تقنيات الترجمة، الترجمة من العربية إلى الإنجليزية، فيني وداربيلنيت، الترجمة الحرفية، الاقتراض، التعديل، التكيف، النصوص الدينية

1.1 Introduction

Translation procedures are crucial to the translation process. Like keys, they are employed to both encode and decode the source text's meaning into the target text. All of the translation professionals stressed the importance of translation approaches in the field of translation. Translation has always been crucial to bridging linguistic, cultural, and intellectual traditions across national borders. Since religious writings and stories have deep cultural, spiritual, and theological consequences and transcend language, translating them is one of the most challenging tasks.

Translation is more than merely a language exercise because it involves transferring meaning, philosophy, and worldview from one language to another (Bassnett, 2014). Translation of religious writings and stories is

particularly complex since their meaning is deeply rooted in cultural, historical, and spiritual contexts. Arabic religious narratives can include complex vocabulary, symbolic imagery, and theological significance that are hard to translate into English. The translator must therefore strike a balance between preserving the spiritual and cultural elements of the source material and ensuring that the target audience can comprehend and access the message.

Translation scholars have long emphasized the difficulty of interpreting religious or holy discourse between languages. Nida (1964) highlights the need for dynamic equivalence, which seeks to reproduce the same effect on the target audience that the original had on its readers. This is particularly crucial when translating religious writings because literal equivalency could obscure the content or alter the text's spiritual tone. Newmark (1988) distinguishes between semantic translation, which stresses the original meaning, and communicative translation, which aims for reader naturalness. The two approaches may clash when interpreting religious tales, requiring the translator to constantly strike a balance between integrity and readability. Venuti (1995), on the other hand, highlighted the morality of translation by offering the concepts of domestication and foreignization as strategies to either preserve the work's foreign identity or adapt it to the cultural norms of the intended audience. The translation of religious stories from Arabic into English is one instance of these theoretical problems. Quranic references, culturally unique terminology (such as "Zakat" and "Haj"), and terms that lack an English counterpart are frequently encountered in religious narratives. Translators employ a range of techniques in these circumstances, including borrowing, cultural substitution, modulation, and explicitation (Vinay & Darblent, 1995). Each strategy affects not only language accuracy but also the communication of the story's religious and cultural importance.

Examining the translation techniques of a specific religious story is the aim of this study. Using existing frameworks in translation studies, it aims to demonstrate the strategies used to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers, assess their effectiveness, and take into account their impact on meaning transfer. Our understanding of how religious discourse transcends linguistic and cultural barriers and how translation functions as a tool for both linguistic and cultural mediation is advanced by this type of inquiry.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Religious story translation from Arabic to English is a very challenging task that requires more than just language transfer. Unlike ordinary literature, religious narratives are infused with sacred meanings and cultural values that are fundamental to the identity of the original community. The Arabic language poses significant challenges when translated into English, a language with unique idioms, structures, and cultural meanings, due to its rich rhetorical tactics, Quranic intertextuality, and culturally specific vocabulary. Translations are therefore always at risk of being misinterpreted, losing their meaning, or misrepresenting culture. Thus, the problem lies in the absence of a comprehensive examination of the translation techniques employed in this sensitive area. Translations risk either oversimplifying the religious message to make it more accessible or overloading the intended reader with new details that make it difficult to understand if this type of analysis is not done. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining the techniques used to translate a religious story from Arabic into English and assessing how effectively they preserve meaning, style, and cultural resonance.

1.3 Aims of the Study

This study aims to:

1. To determine the primary translation techniques applied while converting Arabic texts into English.
2. To examine the effects of various translation techniques on the text's precision and comprehensibility.
3. To assess how well different translation techniques maintain the Arabic texts' original content, subtle cultural references, and stylistic elements.
4. To ascertain which translation techniques work best for various text kinds, including religious materials.
5. To advance knowledge of the connection between translation theory and real-world implementation in translating from Arabic to English.
6. To offer advice to translators and translation students on how to choose the best translation techniques based on the situation and goal.

1.4 Hypothesis of the study

It is claimed that when translating Arabic literary materials into English, translators typically translate simple lines literally, but they are more likely to convey idiomatic expressions and culturally unique things through modulation, transference, or descriptive counterparts. Additionally, it is anticipated that translations that combine these methods will outperform those that only use one translation style in terms of readability, functional equivalency, and cultural integrity. It is claimed that the translation technique used has a significant influence on the religious story's authenticity and spiritual tone in Arabic. Translators who employ appropriate translation approaches are better able to convey the intended religious implications and emotional impact than those who rely solely on literal translation. Literal translation methods may result in the loss or distortion of cultural and theological concepts that are essential to Arabic religious statements. It is also thought that the translator's knowledge of the religious and cultural context is crucial to choosing a translation method that preserves the sanctity and intended meaning of the original story.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is important because it clarifies the intricate process of translating religious story from Arabic into English, which calls for both linguistic precision and a profound understanding of culture and religion. The study sheds light on how various translation techniques impact the transfer of sacred ideas, values, and emotions present in the source text by examining the techniques used to render a religious story. By providing a better understanding of how Arabic religious discourse can be successfully communicated in English without losing its cultural and theological depth, the study advances the subject of translation studies. It sheds light on the advantages and disadvantages of several translation techniques, including literal, borrowing, and grammatical shift, particularly when it comes to religious storytelling.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The main goal of this study is to examine the translation techniques used when translating a particular religious story from Arabic into English. It looks at the various translation methods used to express the linguistic, cultural, and spiritual meanings of the original Arabic text, including literal, semantic, communicative, and free translation. To provide a detailed qualitative inquiry, the study is limited to a single religious story rather than performing a broad comparative analysis. The Arabic original text and its English translation will be analyzed using recognized translation theories and frameworks, particularly Vinay and Darblent's. The study focuses on recognizing and assessing the translation methods applied to translating Arabic religious story into English. It excludes translations into languages other than English, though, and does not seek to evaluate the translator's own convictions or goals. The scope is restricted geographically to translations between Arabic and English, and thematically to religious themes only, not legal, literary, or technical writings. As a result, the results and conclusions are primarily relevant to the study of religious and cultural translation.

1.7 Questions of the Study

- 1-What are the primary techniques for translating the chosen religious narrative from Arabic into English?
- 2-How do these techniques affect the text's precision and comprehensibility?
- 3-How well or poorly do the translation techniques maintain the original Arabic text's cultural and religious meanings?
- 4-When translating religious stories from Arabic to English, which translation technique seems to be the most suitable and successful?
- 5-When translating religious notions from Arabic into English, what are the main linguistic and cultural obstacles the translator must overcome?
- 6-How might the results of this study help to enhance upcoming English translations of religious writings in Arabic?

1.8 Methodology

1.8.1 Research Design

This research employs a qualitative Case Study design, focusing on an in-depth analysis of specific translation phenomena. A purposive sampling technique was utilized to select six key textual segments (sentences) from the religious narrative. The rationale behind selecting this specific sample size is that these segments represent 'critical incidents' rich in theological and cultural nuances, which pose the most significant challenges in the translation process. By focusing on a concentrated qualitative sample, this study provides a microscopic analysis of the translator's cognitive strategies and stylistic choices, offering more profound insights into the applicability of Vinay and Darbelnet's model to religiously sensitive texts.

1.8.2 Data Collection

The data collection process involved a purposive selection of six critical segments from the religious narrative. These segments were specifically chosen because they contain 'culture-bound terms' (CBTs) and complex theological concepts that serve as a litmus test for the effectiveness of Vinay and Darbelnet's translation strategies.

1.8.3 Data Analysis

Textual analysis was used to examine the gathered data. Finding and categorizing the translation techniques used in the English translation of the religious story will be the main goal of the analysis. To ascertain if the translator employed literal, semantic, communicative, or free translation techniques, each translated sentence was scrutinized. Additionally, the research assessed how well each approach communicates the original Arabic text's meaning, tone, and spiritual message. The translation of religious phrases, colloquial expressions, cultural allusions, and analogies shall receive particular consideration. To demonstrate how various approaches impact accuracy, readability, and cultural equivalency, examples from the text were contrasted.

2. Literature Review

Two parts make up this section. The first focuses on the translation techniques model developed by Vinay and Darblent. The second focuses on the earlier research that were done on the examination of translation methods used in translation from Arabic into English.

2.1 Vinay and Darbelnet's Translation Techniques Model

The field of translation has long looked for methodical approaches that can help practitioners convey meaning between languages. The work of Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet, whose 1958 publication *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais* established the groundwork for contemporary comparative stylistics and translation techniques, is one of the most significant early contributions to this project. Their paradigm continues to influence theory and practice in evaluating and instructing translation processes across a variety of language pairs, including Arabic-English translation, and is still one of the most cited frameworks in translation studies. Vinay and Darbelnet identified seven different ways under the two general translation methodologies they proposed: oblique translation and direct translation.

A. Direct Translation Techniques

These are employed when there is a close correspondence between the source and target languages' structural and conceptual components. If translating the ST into the target text is simple, direct translation procedures can be employed. The TT has an exact equivalent for its words and phrases. Direct translation techniques include:

1.Borrowing: Taking of words directly from one language into another without translating them. (e.g., Allah, hijab حجاب, Internet إنترنت, facebook فيسبوك, computer كمبيوتر, Fax فاكس, mobile موبايل).

2.Calque: A phrase borrowed from another language and translated literally into another language. The most obvious example of a calque from Arabic into English is "Mother of battles" from the Arabic أم المعارك used by Saddam Husain to describe the battle between the Iraqi troops and those of coalition organized to drive the invading Iraqi army from Kuwait. Standard calques from English into Arabic includes "recycle" إعادة تدوير, non-violence لا عنف, play a role يلعب دورا.

3-Literal Translation: Word-for-word translation, maintaining both structure and meaning. The meaning of the words are taken directly from the dictionary and out of the context. Literal translation has a lot of types such as: word-for-word literal translation

وحقول نفطها المتدفقة بالخير والعطاء

And its oil fields which overflow with welfare and prosperity. (Dickins 2016, pp. 20–21)

B. Oblique Translation Techniques

Oblique translation techniques are used when the structural and conceptual elements of the source language cannot be directly translated without changing meaning or upsetting the grammatical and stylistic elements of the target language. Oblique translation techniques include:

1-Transposition (grammatical shift): it involves a change in the grammar while translating a text from source language into the target language.

-change from singular into plural.

Car market. سوق السيارات

- -change from future into present simple.

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day. من ذا يقارن حسنك بصيف قد تجلى

- -definite into indefinite. I → ذا
- -A change from adjective into a noun.

It was early spring when a man came from London.

لقد كان مطلع الربيع عندما جاء رجل من لندن.

Early → مطلع

Adjective → noun

4- Modulation: it is a change in the point of view of the source text when literal translation is not possible.

Modulation, according to Vinay and Darblent, is divided into:

- Passive to active we were brought before a judge
مثلنا أمام قاض
- Negative for positive. Unhappiness and death
تعاسة وموت

5-Equivalence: translation of idioms and proverbs.

- -Habit ever remains
من شذب على شيء شاب عليه
- -A friend in need is a friend indeed.
الصديق وقت الضيق
- -Love me love my dog.
أحبها وتحبني ويحب نأقتها بعيري

6-Adaptation: something specific to one language culture is completely expressed in a totally different way that is familiar in the target language culture. When we translate a novel from English into Arabic, we find a lot of phrases, which are specific for English culture. The translator tries to find familiar culture in Arabic language culture. In translating a novel from French into Arabic, for instance, the translator rejected to translate "the father kissed his daughter from her mouth" because this culture is not familiar or accepted in English culture, so this culture is considered as adaptation. Another example "The sight of those apples announced the re-opening of

school. كان منظر الدفاتر والأقلام والمحافظ المدرسية تشير إلى العودة المدرسية. (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1958; as cited in Munday, 2016).

However, the model continues to be a fundamental tool in text analysis and translator training, particularly when combined with more recent theoretical advancements. Many contemporary translation theorists incorporate Vinay and Darbelnet's taxonomy into broader models. For instance, Vinay and Darbelnet's model of translation techniques continues to be a significant reference point in translation studies. Its clear categorization of strategies offers a valuable tool for both practitioners and researchers. Though originally developed for French-English translation, its principles have been effectively applied to other language pairs, including Arabic-English, particularly when analyzing syntactic, lexical, and stylistic shifts. Despite criticisms concerning its cultural limitations and structural bias, the model's influence persists, especially when integrated with newer frameworks that address discourse, ideology, and cultural context.

2.2 Previous studies.

Analyzing the methods employed to translate literary works from Arabic into English has been the subject of some research. For instance, Lateewish, M.S. (1995) carried out his research to investigate the process of translating Arabic literary writings into English, to pinpoint linguistic and cultural obstacles that arise during the translation process, and to evaluate the efficacy of the translation techniques used by translators. With an emphasis on syntactic, semantic, and cultural elements, the thesis compares and contrasts the source and target texts. In order to assess how well the translations were received, it also takes into account comments from native English speakers. According to the study, some linguistic difficulties include the variations between Arabic and English in syntax, morphology, and lexis. It also discovered that the necessity to communicate culturally distinct ideas and expressions leads to cultural problems. It demonstrated that in order to overcome these difficulties, translators frequently use techniques including addition, deletion, and adaptation. By shedding light on the complexities of translating Arabic literary works and providing useful advice for translators, Lateewish's research advances the area of translation studies.

In 1999, Farghal and Shunnaq carried out a second study. The study was a guidebook designed for teachers, learners, and interpreters. For translating between Arabic and English, it serves as a helpful guide. about 233 pages. discusses a broad range of subjects pertaining to translation practice, such as language contrast, theoretical issues, difficulties encountered, answers, and practical exercises. The study highlighted structural, lexical, and syntactic differences between Arabic and English through a comparative analysis. The study also clarifies the many challenges that translators encounter while switching between the two languages, such as idiomatic idioms, collocations, and grammatical inconsistencies. Using examples and possibly exercises, it offered strategies and answers for dealing with translation problems between language pairs. For translators working in education, it offers a methodical framework for considering translation between Arabic and English that integrates theory and practice. It makes common translation issues more visible and controllable by identifying and categorizing them (lexical, syntactic, semantic, etc.). It emphasizes practical decision-making by providing standard techniques that can be used in a variety of translation processes. Instead of just outlining problems, it probably includes activities that let users put those methods into practice, improving expertise.

In 2023, M. Zagood conducted a second investigation. The study was carried out to examine how culture-specific items (CSIs) in the Arabic source text أنا و العم سام (Ana wa Al-Am Sam) by Al Shehhi (2016) are translated into English in its translation Uncle Sam & Myself (2017). This was done in order to classify the CSIs in the original text according to Newmark's (1988) classification system, determine which translation procedures (as suggested by Newmark) are used to transfer these CSIs to English, and assess the success of the translation—that is, the extent to which the translated text retains meaning, cultural nuance, readability, etc. The source text, (2017 أنا و العم سام), and its English translation, Uncle Sam & Myself (2017), were consulted by the researchers. Samples of 20 CSIs from various cultural categories (food, customs, social culture, etc.) were included in the study. Newmark's (1988) categorization of cultural objects and his translation techniques served as the foundation for the study's framework. Both quantitative counting (the number of translations that are acceptable versus undesirable) and qualitative commentary (looking at particular cases, offering commentary on the process, and suggesting alternatives) were employed in the researcher's comparative analysis of the source and target texts. According to the survey, a large number of CSIs are translated inaccurately or insufficiently. The ST (Arabic) and TT (English) frequently have lexical, syntactic, and textual inconsistencies. It demonstrated how, in certain situations, literal translation is overused, even when it does not accurately express the intended message. While certain CSIs needed better handling (e.g., paraphrase, explanatory remark), others were translated satisfactorily. About 70% of the 20 cases that were analyzed were deemed undesirable (i.e., needed improvement or were mismatched), whereas about 30% of the examples were acceptable. Literal translation, transference, and couplet techniques—that is, combining two procedures—were the most common translation methods. Certain of Newmark's processes—such as naturalization, descriptive equivalent, etc.—were completely abandoned. The study helps to update understandings in current translation practice by empirically demonstrating how CSIs are treated in a recent Arabic → English literary travel/autobiographical novel. It illustrates how Newmark's framework can be used to distinguish between strong and weak translations of culturally specific elements, but it

also has limitations. It provides specific instances as well as alternate translation recommendations for specific CSIs, which could be used as models or warning cases.

Alaa, A.M. (2023) conducted the fourth study. The study's objectives were to determine and evaluate the methods used by qualified translators to translate culturally unique references from Egyptian Arabic into English in the critically acclaimed Egyptian film *Feathers*. What techniques are employed in *Feathers* to translate cultural allusions from Egyptian Arabic into English? In accordance with Pedersen's FAR model, how functionally similar, acceptable, and readable are the subtitles? Subtitles from the Egyptian movie *Feathers* (2021) were examined in this study. The researcher employed Pedersen's (2011) Typology of Translation Strategies in Analytical Frameworks: Pedersen's (2017) FAR Model is used to determine the methods used while translating culturally specific references used to evaluate the readability, acceptability, and functional equivalency of the subtitles. The study's qualitative analysis concentrated on the techniques employed and how well they communicated the desired cultural meanings. According to the study, translators primarily employed techniques focused on the target text, including omission, generalization, and substitution. There was a noticeable lack of official equivalents, suggesting a preference for techniques that modify the text for the intended audience. It emphasized that, rather than being a limitation exclusive to the media, formality was recognized as an extra tactic that coexisted with other tactics. There were only a few minor problems, mostly relating to functioning, and most of the subtitles were of excellent quality. According to the FAR model, the majority of subtitles successfully captured the cultural quirks of the original text while being accessible, acceptable, and functionally equal. The study advances knowledge of translation techniques in audiovisual media by offering an empirical analysis of how culturally distinctive references are handled in subtitling. It provides a foundation for further research in translation quality assessment and illustrates how Pedersen's FAR model can be applied to evaluating the quality of subtitles. It provides useful advice on how to translate culturally specific allusions, which can guide training and subtitling best practices. The effectiveness of various translation techniques can be examined using the comparative foundation this study offers. Pedersen's typology and the FAR model provide a methodological framework that may be modified to evaluate translation quality in different settings. Understanding translation quality assessment can be aided by the findings, which provide useful insights into subtitling processes, especially when translating culturally distinctive references.

Zagood, M. Z. (2019) conducted another investigation. In his study, Zagood examines the methods used by Arab online news outlets to translate U.S. President Donald Trump's tweets into Arabic during his first month in office. The goal of the study is to comprehend how institutional, linguistic, and ideological factors are reflected in these tactics. A selection of Trump's tweets are analyzed using Nida's (1964) translation strategies and Vinay and Darbelnet's (1958/1995) model of translation approaches. The report lists a number of tactics that translators employ, such as:

- Explication: Giving more details to make the meaning clear.
- Omission: Excluding components that are thought to be superfluous or impossible to translate.
- Shifts: Adapting the meaning or structure to the target language.

The study emphasizes how difficult it can be to translate brief, casual, and frequently broken social media communications that might not follow normal linguistic frameworks. By addressing the new topic of social media translation and providing insights into the dynamics of translating political discourse in the digital era, this study advances the field of translation studies.

2.3 Research Methodology

2.3.1 Research Design

This study uses an analytical technique and a qualitative descriptive design. Its objective is to analyze the translator's methods and assess how well they communicate meaning, cultural allusions, and readability. Six chosen sentences from a religious narrative in Arabic serve as the representative sample for this study.

-Qualitative analysis: permits a thorough investigation of translation methods.

-Analytical Approach: aids in determining which techniques—such as borrowing, modulation, calque, and literal translation—are employed and why.

2.3.2 Data Collection

Six sentences taken from an Arabic religious story and their English translations by renowned Islamic text translator Badran Hamed serve as the study's main source of data. Hamed's translations are renowned for their focus on cultural authenticity and linguistic accuracy. They frequently use borrowing and literal translation to maintain proper nouns, religious phrases, and historical events, but they also occasionally use modulation and transposition to make the text easier to read. A targeted examination of the translation methods utilized is made possible by using Hamed's translations as the data source. This gives insight into the translator's approaches to communicating meaning and cultural context. With more than 23 years of professional experience translating and interpreting between Arabic and English, Dr. Badran Hamed is an educator, translator, and interpreter who was born in Egypt. He graduated from the University of South Wales in the United Kingdom with a PhD in Applied Linguistics and Translation. Because of his significant expertise and academic background, he is regarded as a renowned person in the translating profession. Over the course of his work, Dr. Hamed has translated a wide range

of volumes, including books on philosophy, the humanities, economics, history, law, accounting, and literature. His writings demonstrate a dedication to preserving both cultural authenticity and grammatical correctness. Several international translation bodies have accredited him, demonstrating his professional status in the industry. As part of his translation efforts, Dr. As a lecturer in English and Applied Linguistics, Hamed has supported the academic community. His commitment to improving translation techniques is further evidenced by the numerous translation projects and initiatives he has participated in. Assuring that the target text is understandable and accessible to the target audience while maintaining the original meaning and cultural quirks of the source material is a key component of Dr. Hamed's translation methodology. This approach is in line with the goals of the current study, which is to examine the methods used to translate religious narratives from Arabic into English.

-Selection of Sentences:

Six sentences were chosen deliberately to cover a variety of translation challenges and strategies.

-Extraction:

Arabic sentences and their corresponding English translations were collected. Proper nouns, cultural/religious references, and idiomatic expressions were identified.

2.3.3 Data Analysis Framework

The analysis of the collected data follows a Mixed-Method Approach, combining quantitative frequency counts with qualitative descriptive evaluation. The framework is operationalized through the following stages:

1. Identification and Classification: Each of the six selected units is analyzed to identify the specific translation technique used, based on Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) taxonomy (Borrowing, Calque, Literal Translation, Transposition, Modulation, Equivalence, and Adaptation).
2. Categorization: Techniques are categorized into Direct Translation (Literal/Borrowing) and Oblique Translation (Modulation/Transposition) to determine the translator's overall orientation—whether it leans toward 'Foreignization' (source-oriented) or 'Domestication' (target-oriented).
3. Qualitative Evaluation: Beyond mere identification, each translation choice is critically evaluated for its communicative effectiveness. This involves analyzing whether the chosen technique successfully preserves the 'Sanctity' of the religious message while maintaining 'Idiomatic Naturalness' for the English reader.
4. Statistical Representation: A quantitative summary is provided to illustrate the percentage and frequency of each technique, offering a bird's-eye view of the translator's strategic patterns."

Table (1): Analysis of Translation Techniques for Genealogical and Marital Contexts in Religious Narratives

Arabic Text	English Translation	Translation Technique	Notes/Comments
في مكة المكرمة	In Makkah Al Mokarrama	Borrowing	The proper noun “مكة المكرمة” is retained in its transliterated form rather than translated literally (“Holy Mecca”), which preserves the original cultural reference.
تزوج عبدالله بن عبدالمطلب بن هاشم بأمنة بنت وهب	-	Literal Translation / Borrowing	Names and genealogical terms are borrowed directly. The sentence structure follows the Arabic syntax closely (literal).
لكنه توفي بعد وقت قصير	However, he died shortly after marriage	-	“بعد وقت قصير” is rendered as “shortly after marriage,” which changes the word order and adds “marriage” explicitly for clarity in English. “لكن” is translated as “However,” adjusting for English cohesion.

The Arabic sentence “في مكة المكرمة تزوج عبدالله بن عبدالمطلب بن هاشم بأمنة بنت وهب لكنه توفي بعد وقت قصير” was translated into English as “In Makkah Al Mokarrama, Abdullah bin Abdulmutallab bin Hashim got married to Minah bint Wahab. However, he died shortly after marriage.” Analysis according to Vinay & Darbelnet's translation techniques shows that the translator uses multiple strategies. First, borrowing is applied to the proper noun “مكة المكرمة” and personal names, preserving their original cultural and religious identity. Second, most of the sentence follows literal translation, particularly in rendering the marriage event and genealogical terms, maintaining a close syntactic and semantic correspondence. Finally, transposition and modulation were applied in the final clause, where “بعد وقت قصير” was expressed as “shortly after marriage” and “لكن” was rendered as “However,” improving cohesion and fluency in English while conveying the original meaning accurately.

This translation is largely successful in conveying factual information. Proper nouns are borrowed, preserving the cultural and historical identity. The translator mostly uses literal translation, with slight transposition/modulation in the final clause for English fluency. However, minor stylistic adjustments could

improve readability, such as smoothing “shortly after marriage” to “but he passed away shortly afterward” to sound more natural. Overall, it is accurate and understandable.

Table (2): Evaluation of Translation Strategies for Divine Messages and Proper Nouns.

Arabic Text	English Translation	Translation Technique	Notes/Comments
وقد حزنت أمنة لذلك	Amina felt sad for that	Literal Translation	The verb “حزنت” is directly translated as “felt sad,” and the sentence structure closely follows the original Arabic. Proper noun “أمنة” is borrowed (transliterated).
لكن حملها هون عليها الأمر	But her pregnancy helped relieve her sadness	Modulation / Transposition	“هون عليها الأمر” literally means “made the matter lighter for her,” but is rendered as “helped relieve her sadness” in English. The translator changes structure and expression to fit natural English syntax and semantic flow. “لكن” is translated as “But” to maintain cohesion.
خاصة بعدما سمعت صوتا يخبرها	especially, after she heard a voice telling her	Literal Translation / Transposition	The clause follows the original meaning closely. Word order is slightly adjusted to fit English syntax.
بأنها حملت بسيده الأمة	that she had been pregnant with the master of this nation	Modulation / Literal Translation	“سيد الأمة” is literally “Master of the Nation,” translated directly but also adjusted grammatically to fit English sentence structure.
وطالبها أن تسميه محمدا	and requested from her to name him Muhammad	Borrowing / Literal Translation	The name “محمد” is borrowed via transliteration. The verb structure “طالبها أن تسميه” is rendered literally as “requested from her to name him,” maintaining the meaning while ensuring English readability.

The Arabic sentence “خاصة بعدما سمعت صوتا يخبرها بأنها حملت بسيد هذه الأمة وطالبها أن تسميه محمدا” is translated into English as “especially, after she heard a voice telling her that she had been pregnant with the master of this nation and requested from her to name him Muhammad.” Analysis using Vinay & Darbelnet’s translation techniques shows that the translator uses multiple strategies. The first clause, “خاصة بعدما سمعت صوتا يخبرها”, is rendered mostly through literal translation with minor transposition to adjust the word order for English fluency. The second clause, “بأنها حملت بسيد ه الأمة”, uses modulation, adapting the phrase “سيد الأمة” directly as “master of this nation” while ensuring grammatical coherence. In the final clause, “وطالبها أن تسميه محمدا”, the translator applies borrowing for the proper name “محمد” and uses literal translation for the rest of the structure, preserving both meaning and cultural reference.

The translation is mostly faithful, with the meaning preserved. The first clause is literal, and the second clause uses modulation to render “هون عليها الأمر” idiomatically. The proper noun “أمنة” is borrowed correctly. Fluency is acceptable, though “helped relieve her sadness” could be slightly refined to “her pregnancy eased her sorrow” for smoother English. The translation communicates the meaning clearly while keeping cultural identity intact.

This translation is accurate in content. Proper nouns are borrowed, and the religious-cultural elements are preserved. The translator uses literal translation and modulation. However, the phrasing “requested from her to name him Muhammad” is slightly awkward; a more natural rendering could be “and instructed her to name him Muhammad.” Despite minor stylistic issues, the translation is faithful, comprehensible, and culturally sensitive.

Table (3): Analysis of Techniques for Translating Historical-Religious Events and Proper Nouns (The Year of the Elephant).

Arabic Text	English Translation	Translation Technique	Notes/Comments
عرف عام مولده بعام الفيل	The year of his birth was called the Elephant's year	Literal Translation / Borrowing	“عام الفيل” is translated literally, but the concept “Elephant’s year” is retained; minor borrowing in phrasing.
لأن أبرهة الحبشي جاء بجيشه يتقدمه فيل ضخم لهدم الكعبة المشرفة	as Abraha came with his army that included a huge elephant to demolish the honorable Ka'ba	Literal Translation / Borrowing	Proper nouns “أبرهة الحبشي” and “الكعبة المشرفة” are borrowed. Sentence structure is slightly adapted to English grammar.
فأرسل الله	However, Allah, the Almighty, sent birds	Modulation / Literal	“جهنم” is translated as “Hellfire,” maintaining the religious

Arabic Text	English Translation	Translation Technique	Notes/Comments
عليهم طيوراً تحمل حجارة من جهنم	that carried stones from the Hellfire	Translation	meaning; “أرسل الله عليهم” is slightly restructured for English syntax.
ألقتها عليهم فماتوا جميعاً	and dropped it over them, so they all were killed	Transposition / Modulation	The verb and phrase order is adjusted for English fluency: “ألقتها عليهم” becomes “dropped it over them,” and “فماتوا جميعاً” is rendered as “so they all were killed.”

The Arabic passage “عرف عام مولده بعام الفيل، لأن أبرهة الحبشي جاء بجيشه يتقدمه فيل ضخم لهدم الكعبة المشرفة، فأرسل الله عليهم” “طيورا تحمل حجارة من جهنم، ألقتها عليهم فماتوا جميعا” is translated into English as “The year of his birth was called the Elephant's year, as Abraha came with his army that included a huge elephant to demolish the honorable Ka'ba. However, Allah, the Almighty, sent birds that carried stones from the Hellfire and dropped it over them, so they all were killed.” Analysis according to Vinay & Darbelnet shows the use of multiple translation techniques. The first clause, “عرف عام مولده بعام الفيل”, is translated using literal translation with slight borrowing in the concept “Elephant's year.” The second clause, “لأن أبرهة الحبشي جاء بجيشه يتقدمه فيل ضخم لهدم الكعبة المشرفة”, also uses literal translation and borrowing for proper nouns like “Abraha” and “Ka'ba.” The third clause, “فأرسل الله عليهم طيوراً تحمل”, employs modulation to render “جهنم” as “Hellfire” and adjust syntax for English fluency. Finally, the fourth clause, “ألقتها عليهم فماتوا جميعاً”, involves transposition and modulation to restructure the sentence as “dropped it over them, so they all were killed,” ensuring the narrative reads naturally in English while preserving the original meaning.

The translation is generally successful. Proper nouns, religious terms, and key concepts are borrowed, maintaining cultural and historical accuracy. Literal translation, calque, modulation, and transposition are used effectively. Stylistically, the sentence is a bit long and complex, which can reduce readability in English. Minor refinements, such as splitting sentences or smoothing phrasing (“dropped stones from the Hellfire upon them, killing them all”), would improve fluency. Nevertheless, the translation is accurate and faithful to the original.

Table (4): Evaluation of Direct and Oblique Translation Strategies in Narrating the First Revelation.

Arabic Text	English Translation	Translation Technique	Notes/Comments
لَمَّا بَلَغَ مُحَمَّدٌ الرَّابِعِينَ عَامًا مِنْ عَمْرِهِ	when Muhammad was forty years old	Literal Translation / Borrowing	Proper noun “محمد” is borrowed ; structure follows original meaning closely.
اعْتَادَ الذَّهَابُ إِلَى غَارِ حِرَاءَ لِيَتَعَبَّدَ وَيَتَأَمَّلَ وَحْدَهُ	he used to go to the cave of Hira to worship and meditate alone	Literal Translation / Borrowing / Calque	“غار حراء” → “cave of Hira” is a calque , literally translated; “Hira” is also a borrowed proper noun . The verbs “ليتعبّد ويتأمل” → “to worship and meditate” are literal.
فَجَاءَهُ أَمِينُ الْوَحْيِ جِبْرِيلُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ	The secretary of revelation Jibril came	Borrowing / Literal Translation	“جبريل عليه السلام” is borrowed via transliteration; “أمين الوحي” → “secretary of revelation” is a calque (literal translation of the title).
فَضَمَهُ إِلَيْهِ	and attached to him	Literal Translation / Transposition	Literal translation of “فضمه” with slight adjustment in word order for English.
وَقَرَأَ لَهُ آيَاتٍ مِنْ سُورَةِ الْعَلَقِ	and read his verses from Al-Alaq	Borrowing / Literal Translation	Literal translation of “سورة العلق” → “Al-Alaq” is borrowed ; the verb structure is literal.

The Arabic sentence “لَمَّا بَلَغَ مُحَمَّدٌ الرَّابِعِينَ عَامًا مِنْ عَمْرِهِ اعْتَادَ الذَّهَابُ إِلَى غَارِ حِرَاءَ لِيَتَعَبَّدَ وَيَتَأَمَّلَ وَحْدَهُ، فَجَاءَهُ أَمِينُ الْوَحْيِ جِبْرِيلُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ فَضَمَهُ إِلَيْهِ وَقَرَأَ لَهُ آيَاتٍ مِنْ سُورَةِ الْعَلَقِ” is translated into English as “when Muhammad was forty years old, he used to go to the cave of Hira to worship and meditate alone. The secretary of revelation Jibril came and attached to him and read his verses from Al-Alaq.”

Analysis according to Vinay & Darbelnet shows multiple translation strategies. The first clause uses literal translation with borrowing for the proper noun “Muhammad.” The second clause employs a calque for “غار حراء” rendered as “cave of Hira” and literal translation for the verbs “ليتعبّد ويتأمل.” The third clause, “أمين الوحي جبريل عليه السلام”, combines borrowing (Jibril) and calque (“secretary of revelation”) to preserve the original titles while remaining understandable in English. This is a calque error that fails to transmit the “educational message” of the story to a non-Muslim audience. It is better to be translated as “trustee of revelation” or “angel of revelation”. The fourth clause, “فضمه إليه”, uses literal translation with slight transposition to adjust word order. It is better to be translated as “Embraced him”, or “Held him close”. Finally, the fifth clause, “قرأ له آيات من سورة العلق”, uses literal translation with borrowing for the Surah name “Al-Alaq.”

The translation is accurate in factual content, with proper nouns and religious terms borrowed. Literal translation, calque, and transposition are applied. However, fluency suffers in English, especially phrases like “The secretary of revelation Jibril came and attached to him,” which is awkward and unclear. A better phrasing would be “The Angel of Revelation, Jibril, came to him and embraced him.” Minor verb errors (“mediate” → “meditate”) also affect readability. Overall, the translation is faithful but stylistically weak.

2.3.3 Findings

Step 1: Counting Techniques

Table (5): Frequency of Individual Translation Techniques Applied in the Selected Textual Segments

Technique	Occurrences
Literal Translation	12
Borrowing	10
Calque	3
Modulation	5
Transposition	3
Equivalence	1
Adaptation	2

Step 2: Calculating Ratios (Percentages)

Table (6): Percentage Distribution of Direct and Oblique Translation Strategies.

Technique	Occurrences	Ratio (%)
Literal Translation	12	33%
Borrowing	10	28%
Calque	3	8%
Modulation	5	14%
Transposition	3	8%
Equivalence	1	3%
Adaptation	2	6%
Total	36	100%

Analysis of the translation techniques applied in the selected Arabic religious sentences shows that **literal translation** is the most frequently used strategy, accounting for **33%** of the occurrences. The high frequency of literal translation suggests the translator’s desire for ‘Faithfulness’ (الأمانة) to the sacred text, a common psychological trait in religious translation. **Borrowing** follows closely at **28%**, reflecting the translator’s effort to preserve proper nouns, religious terms, and cultural references. **Modulation** is applied in **14%** of cases to make sentences more natural and idiomatic in English, while **calque** and **transposition** appear in **8%** each, mainly to preserve source structure while adjusting English syntax. **Adaptation** is relatively rare at **6%**, used only when slight cultural adjustment improves comprehension. **Equivalence** occurs in **3%**, specifically for translating idioms or proverbs. Overall, the analysis indicates that the translator relied primarily on **direct strategies** (literal translation and borrowing) while using **indirect strategies** (modulation, transposition, adaptation, and equivalence) selectively to improve readability and maintain cultural meaning. Based on the sentences you provided and their context (Arabic religious/historical narratives), certain translation techniques are more effective than others. Here’s a detailed evaluation:

1. Literal Translation

- Effectiveness: Very effective for factual statements, historical events, and narrative details.
- Reason: Religious stories often require accuracy and preservation of original meaning, so literal translation ensures the text remains faithful to the source.
- Example: “لَمَّا بَلَغَ مُحَمَّدٌ الْأَرْبَعِينَ عَامًا مِنْ عَمْرِهِ” → “When Muhammad was forty years old” — clear, precise, and culturally neutral.

2. Borrowing

- Effectiveness: Essential for proper nouns, religious terms, and cultural references.
- Reason: Preserves identity, historical, and religious significance. Avoids misinterpretation or loss of cultural meaning.
- Example: Names like Muhammad, Jibril, Ka’ba, Al-Alaq are borrowed to retain authenticity.

3. Calque

- Effectiveness: Moderately effective when source expressions have no natural English equivalent, but must be used carefully.

- Reason: Preserves literal meaning and source structure, but can lead to awkward phrasing if overused.
- Example: غار حراء → Cave of Hira, أمين الوحي → Angel/Secretary of Revelation.

The researcher believes that absence of adaptation and equivalence was due to:

1-Religious and Historical Context

The text is closely tied to Islamic history and culture (e.g., Ka'ba, Jibril, Al-Alaq). Replacing these elements with something "more familiar" to English readers would distort the meaning or remove authenticity, which is unacceptable in religious narratives.

2-Translator's Goal

The translator's main aim is accuracy, fidelity, and preservation of proper nouns and religious terminology. Adaptation is rarely used because the audience is expected to respect or learn these cultural-religious terms, so changing them isn't necessary.

3-Text Type

The text is **factual, narrative, and historical**, not idiomatic or metaphorical. Adaptation is more common in **idiomatic expressions, humor, or culturally specific references** that have no direct equivalent in the target language.

4- Limited Scope for Idiomatic Adaptation

Equivalence mainly applies to proverbs, sayings, or idioms, which appear only in a few cases (like *الصديق وقت الضيق*). Most sentences in your text describe chronological events and factual details, leaving no opportunity for equivalence. Equivalence did not occur in your translations because the text is historical and religious, focusing on factual events rather than idiomatic or culturally relative expressions. Literal translation and borrowing are preferred to maintain accuracy and authenticity, while equivalence is reserved for rare idiomatic cases like proverbs.

The analysis of the selected Arabic religious sentences and their English translations revealed that literal translation and borrowing were the most frequently used strategies, accounting for approximately 61% of all identified techniques. Literal translation ensured accuracy and preservation of the source text meaning, particularly in describing historical events and religious facts. Borrowing was crucial for maintaining proper nouns, religious terms, and culturally significant references, such as Muhammad, Jibril, Ka'ba, and Al-Alaq, thereby preserving the authenticity of the source text. Other techniques, including modulation, transposition, and calque, were used selectively to improve English fluency, readability, and syntactic structure without altering meaning. Notably, equivalence appeared only in the translation of a proverb, while adaptation was rarely applied due to the need to preserve the religious and cultural specificity of the text.

Overall, the findings indicate that the translator prioritized faithfulness and cultural preservation over stylistic naturalness in English. While literal translation and borrowing ensured accuracy and authenticity, the selective use of modulation, transposition, and calque helped enhance readability and maintain coherence. Equivalence and adaptation were minimal because the text primarily consists of factual and religious narratives, which do not require cultural substitution or idiomatic rendering. These results highlight that for religious texts, direct strategies (literal translation and borrowing) are dominant, while indirect strategies are applied strategically to balance accuracy, cultural integrity, and reader comprehension.

The translator succeeded in conveying the factual meaning and preserving cultural/religious references. However, the translation struggles with natural English expression and idiomatic phrasing. Some calques (e.g., "secretary of revelation," "attached to him") are too literal, reducing clarity for English readers. Improvements could involve modulation and adaptation to make the text more readable while maintaining accuracy. Adaptation is applied when the translator replaces a cultural reference to make it more understandable for the target audience. In this religious story sentences, almost everything is kept culturally intact (names, events, Ka'ba, "Hellfire"), so adaptation is minimal or not used. Adaptation would be used if, for instance, "الكعبة المشرفة" were translated as "the Holy Mosque" instead of keeping "Ka'ba," to make it more familiar to readers unfamiliar with Islamic culture. Borrowing: Used for proper nouns and religious terms (Amina, Muhammad, Ka'ba, Abraha). Literal translation: Most straightforward sentence structures. Transposition: Adjustments in word order for English fluency. Modulation: Adjusting phrasing for natural English (e.g., "هون عليها الأمر" → "helped relieve her sadness"). Equivalence: Only appears in idioms or proverbs (e.g., "A friend in need is a friend indeed").

The translator also succeeded in his translation because it was faithful to content. The main events and facts (Muhammad's age, going to the cave, Jibril delivering revelation) are preserved. His use of borrowing, because proper nouns like (Muhammad, Jibril, Al-Alaq, Hira) are borrowed and then maintained, which preserves cultural and religious identity. The translator's selection to literal translation of verbs and key phrases such as Most verbs like "اعتاد الذهاب", "ليتعب", "يتأمل" are translated correctly. In some cases the translator was not successful in achieving best translation, considering the following issues such as:

1. Fluency / readability in English:
 - "The secretary of revelation Jibril came and attached to him" is awkward and unclear.
 - "فضمه إليه" literally means "embraced him" or "approached him closely," not "attached to him."

2. "Secretary of revelation" is a literal calque of "أمين الوحي," but this title sounds odd in English; "Angel of Revelation" would be more natural.
3. Minor grammatical issues:
 - "when Muhammad was forty years old" should be capitalized: "When Muhammad was forty years old."
 - "mediate alone" → should be "meditate alone."

The main weaknesses are in English fluency and naturalness, particularly with calques and literal rendering of idiomatic expressions or titles (e.g., "secretary of revelation," "attached to him"). In proverbs or idiomatic sentences, the translator uses equivalence effectively, but in descriptive narratives, literal translation sometimes produces awkward phrasing.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the translation techniques used in rendering Arabic religious sentences into English, focusing on six representative sentences. The analysis showed that literal translation and borrowing are the dominant strategies, ensuring accuracy, faithfulness, and preservation of religious and cultural references. Techniques such as modulation, transposition, and calque were applied selectively to improve readability and fluency, while equivalence and adaptation were minimal due to the factual and religious nature of the text. Overall, the findings suggest that translating religious narratives requires a careful balance between maintaining cultural authenticity and producing natural English expressions, with translators relying primarily on direct strategies and using indirect strategies judiciously to enhance comprehension without compromising meaning. The study highlights the importance of **strategy selection** in translating culturally and religiously significant texts and provides insights for future translators **working** with similar material.

Recommendations

1. **Stress Literal Translation and Borrowing in Religious Texts:** In order to maintain authenticity and avoid misunderstandings, translators of religious narratives should continue to rely on literal translation and borrowing for proper nouns, historical events, and culturally significant terms.
 2. **Use Modulation and Transposition Strategically:** Although accuracy is crucial, translators should use modulation and transposition as needed to enhance English readability and fluency, making the text comprehensible for a larger audience without sacrificing meaning.
 3. **Careful Use of Calque and Adaptation :** To avoid uncomfortable language, translators should refrain from overusing calque for terms that lack direct equivalents. Only when adaptation improves understanding for non-Arabic readers without changing religious or cultural importance should it be used.
 4. **Cultural and Religious Awareness Training :** To guarantee correct and courteous translation, translators working with Arabic religious materials should undergo specialist training in Islamic culture, vocabulary, and historical context.
 5. **More Research with Bigger Samples :** To confirm the results and investigate how translation technique change depending on the genre, setting, or translator background, future studies should look at a wider variety of texts and translators.
 6. **Educational programs for translation students** should incorporate Vinay and Darbelnet's model to help learners move beyond literal translation. The study suggests that students need formal training in "Oblique Translation" techniques—such as modulation and transposition—to improve the idiomatic fluency of their work.
 7. **Since the study found that knowledge of the religious and cultural context is crucial for choosing the correct translation method,** translation curricula should include specialized courses in Islamic culture and theological terminology. This ensures that students can maintain the "sanctity and intended meaning" of original texts.
 8. **Pedagogical focus should be placed on "Modulation" to help students restructure sentences for better English flow** (e.g., transforming *هَوَّنَ عَلَيْهَا الْأَمْرَ* into *helped relieve her sadness*) without compromising the core spiritual message.
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