Challenges of Translating Islamic Religious Items from Arabic into English

By

Dr. Montasser Mohmaed AbdelWahab Mahmoud

An Assistant Professor at Al Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University,
College of Languages and Translation,

Saudi Arabia, Riyadh

Abstract

This paper tries to pinpoint the problems that a translator could face when translating Islamic religious items from Arabic into English. It is known among translators that such items pose serious problems and challenges because of their unique cultural patterns that may not be available in the target language. Due to lack of resources, capacities, as well as time, the paper was confined to study problems of translating Islamic religious items from Arabic to English. It starts with giving an accurate definition of Islamic religious items. Next, it transmits an idea about the interrelationship between culture, language and translation. Then, it offers the requirements that a translator of Islamic religious items needs so that he can produce an accurate and appropriate piece of translation, and the problems faced when doing so. Last, theoretical implications of the process of translation are discussed together with a variety of strategies that could be useful in translating Islamic religious items from Arabic into English. In sum, this study aims to help establish through practical application of translation approaches a framework for the translation of Islamic religious items from Arabic into English.

Key Words: Islamic religious items, Translation strategies, translation approaches

Introduction

In the Concise Oxford English Dictionary, translation is defined as “A written or spoken rendering of the meaning of a word or text in another language.” Catford (1965:20) defines translation as the "replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language". Brislin (1976: 1) defines translation as:

"the general term referring to the transfer of thoughts and ideas from one language (source) to another (target), whether the languages are in written or oral form; whether the languages have established orthographies or do not have such standardization or whether one or both languages is based on signs, as with sign languages of the deaf."

Newmark (1988) looks at translation as a process of replacing one written statement in a Source Language (SL) by the same message in the Target Language (TL).
It is defined by Reiss, (2000:160) as "a bilingual mediated process of communication, which ordinarily aims at the production of a Target Language text that is functionally equivalent to a Source Language text". Ghazala (1995:1-2) used the term to refer to all the processes and methods used to convey the meaning of the source language into the target language. Hatem and Mason (1990) defined it as “the transfer of meaning from one language to another.

All the previous definitions of translation have something in common since they focus on defining translation as a process of seeking appropriate equivalents and transforming expressions, meanings and messages from one language into another. However, they do not refer to the role played by culture in the process of translation. The main concern of theories of translation was about language with no focus of any kind on the interaction between translation and culture. It can be said that the cultural turn with regard to translation was started by Zohar (1978) and Toury (1980). More attention was paid to the analysis of translation in its cultural, political, and ideological context.

It is quite clear that the notion of culture is vital to considering the implications for translation. Although there are different opinions with regard to the interrelationship between language and culture and the debate concerning whether language is part of culture or not, it seems that they are inseparable. In 1964, Nida gave equal importance to both linguistic and cultural differences between the source language and target language. He concluded that cultural differences may cause more serious problems and challenges than do linguistic differences. According to him both cultural implications and lexical concerns are of equal importance.

Traditionally, translation is used to make religious texts available to a wider audience. It goes without saying that culture is one of the most difficult topics to deal with in translation since it causes various problems in the process of translation such as problems arising from mixing between the denotative and connotative meanings of words, forms of address, and the problems associated with idioms and metaphors. The concept of culture is fundamental to any approach to translation. Culture represents a central element in translation and any translation into a foreign language will always be an instance of intercultural communication. The translator who ignores this interconnection between language and culture will commit a serious mistake.

Culture, religion and translation

Due to the importance of understanding the concept of culture to uncover the inferences and connotative meaning implied in culture-specific items, a large number of translation theorists tried to give exact definition of culture. Some of them concerned about the behavior feature of culture. Sapir (1949: 79) maintained that "culture is technically used by the ethnologist and culture historians to embody any socially inherited element in the life of man, material and spiritual." Lado (1957: 111) defined culture as "structural systems of patterned behavior” and Bennett (1968: 10) stated that
"culture is the reflection of the total behavior of a society". Larson (1984: 431) described culture as "a complex of beliefs, attitudes, values, and rules which a group of people share". Rohner (1984:111) tried to define culture in a non-behaviorist way, as “a system of symbolic meanings that shape one's way of thinking”. Newmark (1998:94) clearly and simply defined culture as "the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression". Furthermore Bloch (1991) defined culture as “what needs to be known to operate effectively in a specific environment.”

In the mid 1980s Vermeer introduced skopos theory which focuses on the purpose of translation. It concerned about the method and strategies that should be used to reach an adequate translated target text. And this can be done through identifying the purpose behind the translation of the source text and the function of the target text. There has been an intense and vehement argument about the interrelationship of language and culture with regard to the influence of each one on the other or which one has the dominant aspect of communication, it has become theoretically acceptable to conclude that both of them operate as two parts of a whole rather than independently. Hence, any study of language involves a study of culture too. (Valdes:1986).

Still, there are certain items in any language that are unique to that language or to the culture associated with that language. These items are called culture-bound or culture-specific items (Schwars, 2003). According to Newmark (1988b, p.94), culture-bound terms are particularly “tied to the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression.” As Wylie (2004) points out, culture-bound concepts give rise to some of the most difficult translation problems; even where the two cultures involved are not too distant, they can be more problematic for the translator than the semantic or syntactic difficulties of the text. Schwarz (2003, p.14) defines culture-bound terms as “concepts in any language that are unique to that language or to the culture associated with that language and create a cultural gap between speakers of different languages.” They create a cultural gap between speakers of different languages. Since translation involves two languages and two cultures, a proper translation has to bridge this gap as far as possible

A lot of translators all over the world look at culture as one of the most difficult part in translation. This stance may be due to their own perception about the relationship between language, culture and translation. They tend to be culture-bound or culture biased with regard to their attitude towards translation. Those who see the process of translation as just a means of transporting a culture with all its components to another and not just transferring words from one language to another, seem to culture-bound since they consider the translated text a true carrier of ideological meaning as Alvarez and others (1996) actually stated. In this sense, language has become only one of the cultural activities and the whole of process of translation is viewed as an act of cultural information or to say, a transformation of culture (Ghazala:2012). Faiq (2004) also states that translation is culture-bound so the translator needs to take care of the cultural elements when translating from one language to another rather than seeking appropriate equivalents. On the other hand, there are other scholars as well as translators who
advocate the culture-biased approach when dealing with cultural texts (Ghazala:2012, and Fawcett, in Baker,1998).

Statement of Problem

Religious translation is different from other kinds of translation. It is one of the most difficult kinds of translation as it needs much more precision, carefulness, and cautiousness. The main challenges lie in overcoming ideational hurdles in translation as well as in dealing with terminology.

The necessity of translating Islamic texts from Arabic into English has been a must and at the same time, a challenge for Muslim translators in general and Muslim Arab translators in particular since a large number of people of different nationalities, languages and ethnicities have entered into Islam recently. So, there is a great need to spread the right teachings of Islam. In Saudi Arabia, for example, Fahd complex has been established to offer many translations of the Qur’an. The complex adopted the policy of calling for Islam among non-Muslims through offering a complete translation of the Holy Book in different languages. Recently, another great project has been made by the General Presidency of the Two Holy Mosques’ Affairs. It aimed at highlighting the true and right teachings of Islam through translating the weekly sermons delivered at the two Holy Mosques.

Since fewer than 20 percent of Muslims speak Arabic, this means that most Muslims get their knowledge about the religion of Islam only in translation. So, there is an urgent need to spread the teachings of Islam among non-Muslims through the tool of translation. When translating, you are faced by the problem of Islamic religious items that are called culture-bound or culture-specific items (Schwars, 2003). These items require special attention in translation so as to convey their right meaning and to avoid any misunderstanding or wrong interpretation by the reader of the translated text. The role of the translator of Islamic religious texts goes beyond the process of translation to the role of calling to Islam. He has become a preacher and a true caller to Islam so he has to exert his utmost effort to be as honest as possible through renewing his intention and being faithful in his translation.

Hence, the main concern of this paper is to bring into perspective the cultural challenges at the level of lexical considerations, and to affirm that the practical application of translation theories could help the translator improve the quality of his product.

Skills required for Islamic Translation

In popular belief, to translate, a person only needs reasonable knowledge of a foreign language; long and varied experience; and a few good dictionaries. Traditionally, any good translation requires that 1) It must make sense;2) It must convey the spirit and
manner of the original;3) It must have a natural and easy form of expression;4) It must produce a similar response. (Nida:64)

Translation is an art as well as a science so the translator does not only need to master two languages at least but to make full use of his competence and abilities to produce adequate as well as accurate translation. Kholosi (1986) as well as Nida(1964) conclude that the spirit of the text is as equally important as the words and structures included in the text. Both of them think that meaning of words are not fixed and could be changed as they are not dead words. It can be said that extreme precision owing to the sensitivity of the subject as an integral part to the linguistic structures should be considered about when translating Islamic religious texts.

Other scholars in the field of translation look at reading as one of the main tools that help the translator fulfill his duties towards the text. (Abu Reesha:2012). On the other hand, Enani (1996) states that mastering writing skills of the source language as well as the target language is a must when translating any text.

Success or failure in translating religious items is due to more than one reason. Therefore, a translator of Islamic religious items needs to be competent in his mother tongue so that he can be aware of the connotative as well as the denotative meaning of the item in each Islamic context he translates from. He also needs to be well knowledgeable of his religion (beliefs, attitudes, values, and the rules of the SL audience) in order to adequately understand the ST and adequately translate it for people who have a different set of beliefs, attitudes, values, and rules (Naguib:2002). He is required to use the appropriate equivalent if it is available or use the appropriate strategy if it is not.

A Translator of Islamic religious texts is required not only to be bilingual or multilingual but also to be bicultural, or multicultural, armed with good knowledge of as many cultures as possible (Vemeer 1986). In the words of Gerding-Salas (2000:2),

The translator plays an important role as a bilingual or multi-lingual cross-cultural transmitter of culture and truths by attempting to interpret concepts and speech in a variety of texts as faithfully and accurately as possible. He also needs to make culture familiar to readers, by means of changing the Source Language culture into the Target Language culture in translation (Fawcett, in Baker, 1998)

A translator is considered to be the “first reader” of the other culture so he is responsible for introducing the other in a primary source. To do so he needs to be an avid reader so that he could produce meanings which are acceptable for the cultural community the reader belongs to (cf. Wolf, 1997:128).

The translator should put into his mind that he has certain limits that he must not go beyond. He should know that he must avoid incorrect interpretation or stay away from
any involvement in any forbidden area. He is not totally free to change, modify or alter the original text or do whatever he likes as Nida did when he translated the Bible. He must stick to certain strict norms and rules while dealing with religious items translation.

A translator of religious texts from Arabic into English must take into account several factors when translating 'sensitive' texts from Arabic into English. Translating Arabic religious texts involves not only problems at a linguistic level, including lexical and syntactic manipulation and the reformulation of concepts, but also ideational hurdles that need to be mediated between the source text producer and reader. (Chebbo: 2006)

As Carbonell (2004) suggests, how much 'alien elements and their references are reduced to familiar references' is something that needs to be weighed against the translator’s loyalty to the source text and the Arabic language itself. Translators now have to pay more attention to the relationship between cultures, because the meaning of words and texts depends so largely on the corresponding cultures. (Nida: 1994)

As for translating Islamic religious items, there are some items that the translator still have some doubts about or unsatisfied with their translation. Such feelings stem from the lack or absence of adequate equivalence in the target language. Hence, the translator finds himself in front of a serious challenge that he must overcome and find solution to it. (Mahmoud: 2014) While doing so, he has to put himself in the place of the target reader so that he could be able to select the best solution that the target reader could understand. The message of the text is highly important but the form is also vital to convey the message in the best way.

**Definition of Islamic Religious item**

Linguistically, an item is a word or a group of words that belong to a specific language and expresses it accurately (Hejazi: 1996). Al Jabry (2007) also states that an item is a group of certain utterances that refer to a specific meaning or meanings.

If we consider Islamic religious items as culture-specific items or culture-bound items, then there is a need to offer the definitions of these items based on the viewpoints suggested by prominent scholars in the field of translation as well as linguistics. To Newmark (1988, p.94), culture-bound terms are particularly “tied to the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression.” whereas Schwarz (2003, p.14) defines culture-bound terms as “concepts in any language that are unique to that language or to the culture associated with that language and create a cultural gap between speakers of different languages.”

As for religious lexical items, Elwa (2014) classifies them into three categories in the Islamic context; 1) unfamiliar Islamic terms that are only used in Islamic contexts such as *altaqiyyah* ‘dissimulation’, and *alkhul* ‘divorce for payment by the wife’; familiar Islamic terms that are only used in non-Islamic contexts such as *alwala* ‘allegiance to Muslims’, and *alfat-h* ‘liberation’; and 3) familiar Islamic terms that are
also used in non-religious contexts, but which do not obviously look as if they are being used in some Islamically specialized way in the ST such as: *almukatabah* ‘liberation by virtue of an agreement with a slave’, *alhajb* ‘exclusion of some relatives from inheritance’. Ghazala (1995) classifies the Islamic religious items into three categories; 1) new items that were not existed in the Arabic language before the advent of Islam such as Qur’an and martyrdom; 2) familiar Arabic item that Islam gave it new implications such as Salah, and Hajj; and 3) items that are already known and used in the Arabic language such as K’aba.

**Problems of translating Islamic religious items**

Translating Islamic religious items, in the main, is problematic. It seems to be one of the most recurrent challenges and difficulties encountered by translators.

The main problem lies in finding the right lexical as well as cultural equivalent for such items. One of the main problem for the translator of Islamic religious items is to decide on which cultural issues should take priority: the cultural aspects of the source language, the cultural aspects of the target language, or perhaps a combination of the two. In his translation of the Bible, Nida (1964) gave priority to the cultural aspects of the target text when he focused on the semantic as well as the pragmatic nature of the meaning. He argued against fixed or unchanged meaning of words. For him, the functional nature implied in the meaning of words are rather important so he stated that the meaning of words can be obtained through the context and it could be changed through the culture in which they are actually used. According to Nida and Taber (1969/1982), cultural translation is "a translation in which the content of the message is changed to conform to the receptor culture in some way, and/or in which information is introduced which is not linguistically implicit in the original". Therefore, your choice of a certain cultural strategy may result in source-culture bound translation either foreignisation or domestication.

Another problem is reflected in the inability of the targeted equivalent to convey the same meaning implied in the source equivalence. For example, when we are faced with words such as wudu, or itikaf, we instantly think of the lexical English equivalents, ablution and seclusion. By checking their definitions in dictionaries, we will find out that these words are used to refer to rituals or acts that contradict with their original meaning in Arabic. The word, “ablution” for example is defined in Merriam Webster Dictionary as;
1. the washing of one's body or part of it
2. the act or action of bathing
Both previous meanings fail to convey the implied meaning in the Word Wudu which is used to refer to the Islamic procedure for washing parts of the body using water, typically in preparation for obligatory prayers (Salat), but also before handling and reading the Qur'an.

The same issue applies to the word seclusion which is defined in the same dictionary as:
1. :the act of placing or keeping someone away from other people : the act of secluding someone
2. :the state of being away from other people : a secluded state or condition

Whereas in Islam the word Iʿtikāf is used to refer to an Islamic practice consisting of a period of retreat in a mosque for a certain number of days in accordance with the believer's own wish. It is most common during the month of Ramadan, especially the last ten days.

Among the challenges that face the translator of Islamic religious items is the absence of the equivalence in the target language. Words such as *iddah* or *iddat has no equivalent in the English as there is no such cases in their religion or beliefs. The word refers to the period a woman must observe after the death of her spouse or after a divorce, during which she may not marry another man. Its purpose is to ensure that the male parent of any offspring produced after the cessation of a nikah (marriage) would be known. The length of *iddah* varies according to a number of circumstances. The iddah of a woman divorced by her husband is three monthly periods, unless she is pregnant in which case the 'iddah lasts until she gives birth, or unless the marriage was not consummated in which case there is no 'iddah, or unless she does not menstruate, in which case "the scholars say that she should observe an 'iddah of a full year, nine months for pregnancy and three months for 'iddah." For a woman whose husband has died, the 'iddah is four lunar months and ten days after the death of their husbands, whether or not the marriage was consummated. The period, four months and ten days after the death of a spouse, is calculated on the number of that a woman has. It is a very rich item that implies a lot of meanings in Islam. However, it triggers the outbreak of unexpected problems. Another example is represented in the word Tayyammum which literally means an 'aim or 'purpose.' In Islamic Law, it refers to 'Aiming for or seeking soil to wipe one's face and hands with the intention of purification and preparing oneself to pray, and so on." This act of ritual cleansing is proven by the Quran, Sunnah (prophetic tradition) and Ijmaa' (consensus of Muslim scholars).

One of the problems that arises when translating Islamic religious items is the rich implications included in it that make the equivalent even if it is available in the target language unable to convey the same message. When translating a word like “Infaq” which is one of the main pillars of the Islamic economic system and of Islam itself as a religion/faith and a way of life. Literally, Infaq is the Arabic word for spending. However, it implies other meanings related to the purpose as well as the intention of spending which is not included in the word” spending”. In addition to Infaq, there are few other terms that are used along with their derivatives in the Qur’an and the Sunnah to indicate the same connotation of meaning with emphasis on different shades of giving. Sadaqa is giving out of a truthful heart and normally used for charitable giving, ‘Ata’ is handing out, Jihad bi al Mal is making concerted effort to give funds to support the cause
of God, It'am is giving food ‘Ita’ is reaching out with the giving, Nahl and Inhal  is giving without compensation, etc. The word Infaq, its synonyms and their derivatives are mentioned in the Qur’an 167 times. That is much more than the famous four practical Pillars of faith put together. In the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, pbuh, they appear innumerable times. (Kahf: Notes on Islamic Finance)

The cultural conflict between the Islamic Arabic item and its English equivalent seems to be among the problems that the translator faces in translating an Islamic religious item. In this case, the equivalent seems to be found but it actually may create a kind of misunderstanding for the target reader. Some translators tend to use the word, “conquest” or “occupation” to refer to Fath Mahhak. Both of the words misinterpret the actions made by the Prophet and his Companions when they entered Makkah. They did not actually conquer or occupy it since the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, emphasized on refraining from fighting unless Quresh attacked. The Muslim army entered Mecca on Monday, 11 December 629 (18th of Ramadan 8 hijrah). The entry was peaceful and bloodless entry on three sectors except for that of Khalid’s column. By checking the meaning of the word, “conquest”, we will find that it is used to refer to”the act of taking control of a country, city, etc., through the use of force”. As for the word, “occupation”, it is defined as “the act or process of taking possession of a place or area”. The previous definition seem to be more appropriate than the first one but it also implies the meaning of seizure which represents the act of taking control of something especially by force or violence.

Gender is no longer an inflectional category in Modern English (Huddleston and Pullum. 2002) The only traces of the Old English gender system are found in the system of pronoun–antecedent agreement, although this is now generally based on natural gender – the sex, or perceived sexual characteristics (or asexual nature), of the pronoun’s referent. Another manifestation of natural gender that continues to function in English is the use of certain nouns to refer specifically to persons or animals of a particular sex: widow/widower, actor/actress, cow/bull, etc. however, the absence of distinction between masculine and feminine is considered to be among the main problems that the translator faces when translating Islamic religious items. For example, when translating words such as Mushrik and Mushrekah, the translator has no solution except resorting to the strategy of addition so as to highlight the differences between the two words in gender. Another more serious problem arises when translating the daughters of your ‘Ammah (paternal aunts) and the daughters of your Khal (maternal uncles) and the daughters of your Khalah (maternal aunts) who migrated (from Makkah) in Aya 50 in Surat AlAhzab.

English nouns are inflected for grammatical number, meaning that if they are of the countable type, they generally have different forms for singular and plural. However, there is no specific form that can be used to refer to two people or two objects in English. You have either to use two, both or either. This causes a problem for the translator of
Islamic religious items as there are a lot Islamic Arabic items that refer to two people or two objects. For example, when translating the word, “Aidaihoma” in Surat Al-Nur, you will find out there is no specific structure that can be used to refer to two objects or two people.

It is commonly known among translators that it is extremely difficult to use the same strategy in translating all cultural items in a certain text. However, Ginter (2002) state that it would be worth observing how some translators resolve the problems that arise when the elements of one culture should be transposed to the environment of another. The current paper suggests some strategies that could be used to translate Islamic religious items citing the benefits and drawbacks of using each one of them.

**Some suggested solutions**

Words, phrases that are culturally bound to a certain culture have been the main concern of translators who deal with cultural, literary or religious texts since such items or expressions are heavily and exclusively grounded in one culture. The translator, then, is faced with the problem of translating such untranslatable items. He always found himself puzzled and hesitated to use a strategy rather than the other till he eventually decides on the right selection. Long debate have been held over the use of a certain strategy; paraphrasing, transliteration, literal translation, functional or dynamic equivalence, footnoting, glossary, effective borrowing, or any other strategy that the translator finds it more convenient.

Through reviewing literature for the translation of cultural items, it was clearly obvious that there are different procedures suggested by different theorists. For example, Vladimir Ivir (1987) has proposed the following seven procedures: definition, literal translation, substitution, lexical creation, omission, addition, borrowing. Hervey & Higgins (1992) have suggested using cultural transplantation, cultural borrowing, communicative translation, calque, and exoticism. Newmark (1988) proposed using transference, naturalization, cultural equivalent, functional equivalent, descriptive equivalent, synonymy, through translation, shift or transposition, modulation, recognized translation, translation label, compensation, componential analysis, reduction and expansion, and paraphrase.

The classification offered by the previous scholars was investigated by the author of this paper and so he suggested that no certain classification should be used on its own. A combination of different strategies mentioned in different classifications and proposed by different scholar could be used to overcome the previously mentioned problems.

Following is a detailed display of the suggested strategies that the translator of Islamic religious items could apply and use when dealing with Islamic religious items.
1) Transcription/Transference/Transliteration

It is called transference because it is a representation of speech sounds in phonetic symbols, i.e. rendering Source Language sounds into Target Language form (letter). It is the transference of the Source Language word into the Target Language Alphabet exactly as pronounced. It is also called transliteration because the translator transcribes the Source Language characters or sounds in the Target Language (Bayar, 2007). “Transliteration,” - essentially means converting word(s) in one language to word(s) in another language by means of their close approximation in sound. This is usually done because it’s more intuitive or easier; and because meaningful corresponding word(s) simply do not exist in the Target Language (as is oftentimes the case with names and places). In other words, this strategy is also called transcription as it refers to the conversion of Source Language letters into the letters of the Target Language. Perhaps this strategy is the easiest, most common and most frequent to be used among all strategies of translating religious as well as cultural terms. For example, in Arabic, the word Allah is the standard word for "God". This Arabic word has been adopted into the English language, so it has become English. In the same sense there are some Latin phrases that have become part of the English language (de facto, de jure).

On the other hand, there are some researchers who believe that the use of transliteration rather than translation may participate in creating a negative impact on the non-Muslim western addressee, especially when that addressee is not well-acquainted with Arabic language and Islamic studies. (ElShiekh, Saleh. 2011.

2) Transcription with little illustration

From my point of view, this is one of the best strategies that the translator can use to overcome the problem of translating Islamic religious items. It seems to be among the best strategies ever used as it preserves the original item in the source language as it in addition to a short explanation that make the target reader able to get the meaning implied in such an item. It keeps the transcription of the item and helps spread it among the people of the target language. This can be touched in the translation of words such as the following;

hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah)
Ijlaal (glorification associated with love)
Al-Birr (virtuous deeds)
An-Nusub (Stone- altars)
Nutfah (mixed drops of male and female sexual discharge)

3) Transcription with paraphrasing
Some Islamic items are compressed in meaning such that a long target language paraphrase is sometimes required to give even a rough denotative equivalent of the source language term. The translator finds himself unable to convey the message included in a certain specific item by using the strategy of transcription or the strategy of transcription with a little explanation. Therefore, he finds no option except using this strategy which he finds helpful to him in conveying the message. For example, we as a team responsible for translating Friday Khutbah delivered at Al-Madinah Mosque were translating a Khutbah about Fear of Allah. The orator used more than one word to refer to this topic such as Khawf, Khashyah, Wajal, and Haybah. We decided to use this strategy as the best option so that the target reader could understand the difference between these various Islamic religious items. They were translated as follows:

Khashyah (a quality that is particular of the people knowledgeable of Allah and more specific than khawf)

Wajal (the shivering and breaking of the heart when remembering the One it fears, His authority, punishment or seeing Him)

Haybah (fear from Allah associated with glorification and reverence. Its peak is achieved when love and knowledge are strongly combined.

(4) General Sense

It is a kind of strategy that ignores the cultural charge of a source text item, may be because there is no cultural equivalent in the Target Language. The item is translated into its general sense with its cultural implications. The translator can resort to this strategy when he fails to find an equivalent. He gives a more general alternative that implies some of the cultural features of the item. This strategy avoids direct translation as it could be ambiguous, misleading and strange. For example, the word “Buraq” is not available in English language. It is associated with the prophet’s ascension to the heavens. It is translated as “animal” based on the description given by the prophet. However, the word, “animal” which is a general term refers to the whole class of animals. However, the researcher thinks it would be better if we add more sense to the translation. He thinks, it could be translated into “speedy horse-like creature” which matches the description given by the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, when he was asked about it. The same strategy can be used when translating a word like “Dabb” into English. It cannot be translated literally because this kind of animal is not known in the foreign culture. It can be translated using the general sense of the word into “spiny-tailed lizard” or “a fat-tailed lizard” to be more specific, it can be translated into “dabb lizard” which combines the general sense of the word in Arabic as well as the Arabic name given to this lizard.

4) Literal Translation of Meaning
Although a number of linguists confirm that it is rare or even impossible to find an absolute synonymy, there is hardly any doubt that partial synonymy does exist (Cruse, 1986). It cannot be denied that cognitive as well as pseudo synonyms are actually used in the field of translation. Even if these lexical religious items differ in respect of their connotative meaning but they are actually used in each language to refer to the same referent and they have been accepted by a large number of translators and classified as accepted standard translation. The most important point that should be highlighted here is the apparent gap between theory and practice.

This strategy refers to one-to-one structural and conceptual correspondence: word-for word translation. This strategy considers the word as a unit of translation under the assumption that there is a structural correspondence between a pair of languages. This strategy is easily applied, for it is the literal translation of the individual words of a term or an expression. For each word in the Source Language there is a corresponding word in the Target Language - a kind of interlingual synonymy. The problem with such strategy is the difficulty of being understood by Target Language readers. It is not quite favourable to be used in translation unless there is an urgent necessity to do that. It is rather an escape to translators than a reliable solid strategy for it is based in the Source Language, not in the Target Language culture. Much care is highly needed when giving literal translation of any religious item since the use of a certain particular religious item rather than another may cause a serious difference in the attitude towards the other, and may even mark a hostile stance as ElSheikh and Saleh (2011) stated in their research. This strategy can be used in translating a large number of Islamic religious items that cannot be considered culture-specific or cultural-bound items as they have actually counterpart equivalents in the target language. This issue applies to the translation of Asmaa Allah into Allah’s names, Al-Siyam into fasting, dhikr into rememberance, Rahma into mercy, Salam into peace, and so on.

5) Classifier

It is one of the most important and best translation strategies for its practicality and applicability. It cannot be used alone but it is always included in the couplet or the triplet strategy. It is used to explain the culture-specific item in simple general way through demonstrating its type, class or category. The use of a classifier replaces long boring footnotes or paraphrase. In translating Ramadan, we have to decide on its category, is it a name given to a man or to a month or an animal. It is better to be translated using this strategy into “the month of Ramadan”. The same strategy can be followed in our translation of the Arabic word Thamud into “the people of Thamud”, and the Arabic word Sayyarah” into “a caravan of travelers”, and ahl alkahf” into “the People of the cave”

6) Footnotes

It implies giving long details about a strange or a vague culture-specific item. They may occupy various places within the text. The footnote can be given down at the
bottom of the page. They must be typically sufficient and approach the precise denotative and connotative meaning implied in the translated item. There are some Islamic religious items that need to be fully explained so that the target reader could understand the meaning. Transcription, classifier, or paraphrasing are not effective in dealing with this type of items so it is recommended to use a footnote. Words such as “Ijtihad”, *Ahl al-Dimmah*, *Ahl al-Hadith*, “Bab Al-Raiyan”, and “Miqat” can be translated as follows:

Ijtihad is a technical term of Islamic Law that describes the process of making a legal decision by independent interpretation of the legal sources, the Quran and the Sunnah. The opposite of ijtihad is taqlid, Arabic for "imitation". And the Muslim jurist who is qualified to interpret the law and thus to generate Ijtihad is called Mujtahid.

*Ahl al-Dimmah* (or Dhimmis) are the non-Muslim subjects of an Islamic state who have been guaranteed protection of their rights- life, property and practice of their religion, etc.

*Ahl al-Hadith* refers to the group of scholars in Islam who pay relatively greater importance to 'traditions' than to other sources of Islamic doctrine such as qiyas, and tend to interpret the traditions more literally and rigorously. The term has also come to be used lately for a group of Muslims in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent who are close to the Hanbali school in theology, and claim to follow no single school on legal matters.

*Bab Al-Raiyan* The name of one of the gates of Heavens (Jannah) through which the people who often observe fasting will enter on the Day of Judgement.

*Miqat* (pl. mawaqeet) denotes the points which an outsider intending to perform Pilgrimage may cross only in the state of consecration (ihram). These points were fixed according to directions from God.

**Discussion of Results**

It is quite clear after the previously suggested strategies that a translator of Islamic religious items have more than one option when dealing with these items. It has been stated that certain items have been adopted by English to become loan words under the umbrella of effective borrowing which the some of the strategies explained above played a vital role in instilling these words in the target language as well as culture. By doing so, translation seems to have a pivotal role that affects the success of these items to penetrate through the everyday discourse of the target language. Words such as Allah, Jihad, Intifada, and others have become commonly used by the target language reader.

On the other hand, there are still other items that need some time to be absorbed in the target language so their translation should be accompanied either by its target language counterpart or a little explanation, or a paraphrase or to be put in a footnote. It seems only a matter of time before they are used on their own without any explanation or
paraphrasing. However the question is how to retain ST 'Arabicness' without compromising the target audience's understanding. (Chebbo:2007)

This paper disagrees with the ideology adopted by El Shiekh and Saleh (2011) which stresses that opting for using transliteration in translating religious items implies the notion of division among members of different religions as they both think that transliteration represents an obstacle in front of harmony and unity among people of different religions. They state that the use of a particular religious jargon underlining the culture/religion specific aspect versus the more general one could create such passive attitudes. However, the author of this paper tends to defend the argument that the transliterated term maintains the privacy of each religion and keeps its identity. When the translator of any religious item prefers the strategy of transliteration, he does not mean to antagonize the followers of other; he only carries a message that he wants to convey to the target language reader. He is actually devoting much of his energy to implanting an element of trust in the transliterated item he used.

This paper argues for the option of gloss translation that mostly typifies formal equivalence, where form and content are reproduced as faithfully as possible. By using this type of equivalence, the translator could provide a clear picture of the customs, manner of thought, and means of expression of the source language context. In translating Islamic religious items included in primary sources, the author of the paper argues against using the concept of closest natural equivalent which is rooted in Nida's concept of dynamic equivalent. He considers the dynamic equivalence translation, which is a "meaning-based" approach to translation and focuses on translating "thought-for-thought" rather than "word-for-word, to be the last option adopted when translating Islamic religious items. It is used it so as to help people be willing to say what the text means, not what the words are.

It is well known that Nida adopted such an approach to give importance to the cultural context of the language into which the Bible. One example was the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25, where the sheep represent those who have done the Lord's will, and the goats are those who haven't. In most of Africa, sheep are regarded as very bad animals so he changed all the sheep into goats and the goats into sheep. Another example is his translation of "Lamb of God" into the Eskimo language. Here "lamb" symbolizes innocence, especially in the context of sacrifice. As a matter of fact, Eskimo culture does not know "lamb". Thus, the word does not symbolize anything. Instead of "Lamb of God", he prefers "Seal of God" to transfer the message. Here he considers cultural aspects. His change of words counts on his belief that the message would not be conveyed appropriately if the translator insisted on translating the original word into a word that would not be understood by the audience of a certain culture. He, therefore, selected the dynamic equivalence as the most appropriate solution for overcoming this problem. In translating Islamic religious items, the translator is expected to be faced with two types of items; one of them included in the Primary sources of Islam, The Qurán and Sunnah; and the other included in the secondary sources of Islam. As for the primary sources of Islam, the translator is not allowed to adopt the dynamic equivalence as it is prohibited in Islam to alter, modify or change any word mentioned in the Qurán and the
Sunnah. For example, the word “Camel” in Aya number 40 in Surat Al-A’raf, cannot be replaced by any other word just because it is not known among the people of a certain culture. The same issue applies to the translation of the word Al-Buraq, the heavenly creature that carried the Prophet from Makkah to Quds and back during the Isra and Mi’raj or "Night Journey.

In the context of Bible translation, Nida and Taber highlighted the necessity of making additions that are not existed in the original text if this will help the translator to convey his message. Actually, this is a good strategy that the translator of religious texts can use but it cannot be applied to the translation of Islamic religious items. This is simply because these additions might take the form of ideas culturally foreign to ST. Nida resorted to doing so because his main concern was to spread the meaning of the Bible by emphasizing the need of people to take the message seriously and share it with other people, and focusing primarily on the meaning of the message.

This paper agrees with Hassan’s (2013) conclusion that translation of Islamic religious items from Arabic into English could be acceptable the source language and the target language words are cross-culturally equivalent, having same referents and same connotations in both cultures. On the other hand, it disagrees with Hassan (2013) in selecting transliteration as the sole appropriate alternative if cross-cultural equivalent is absent. This paper affirms that using transliterated word followed by a simple or detailed explanation is the best strategy that could be used by a translator when he is face with a culture specific item.

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