

Equivalence Gap in the Translation of Quranic Euphemistic Expressions : A Pragmatic Study

الفجوة التكافؤية في ترجمة العبارات القرآنية الملطفة: دراسة علمية

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• Abstract:

This study investigates the equivalence gap in translating Quranic euphemistic expressions from Arabic into English by analysing eight prominent English translations available on (<https://quran.com>) Employing a qualitative comparative approach and content analysis, the research draws on a comprehensive corpus of Quranic euphemisms compiled at the University of Leeds to systematically categorise expressions related to sensitive topics such as sexual relations . Grounded in formal and dynamic equivalence frameworks and informed by pragmatic translation theory, the study examines how literal translations ensure semantic precision but often sacrifice the pragmatic, culturally embedded tone of the original text, while dynamic approaches better preserve both the pragmatic function and the euphemistic nuance—although sometimes at the cost of explicit clarity. refine translation practices.

Keywords:

Quran translation, Quran euphemism, Equivalence gap , Formal & Dynamic equivalence, Pragmatic Translation Theory

• الملخص: تبحث هذه الدراسة في فجوة التكافؤ في ترجمة التعابير القرآنية الملطفة من العربية إلى الإنجليزية من خلال تحليل ثماني ترجمات إنجليزية بارزة متاحة على (<https://quran.com>) باستخدام منهج مقارنة نوعي وتحليل المحتوى، يعتمد البحث على مجموعة شاملة من العبارات القرآنية الملطفة التي تم تجميعها في جامعة ليدز لتصنيف التعابير المتعلقة بموضوعات حساسة بشكل منهجي. تركز الدراسة على أطر التكافؤ الرسمية والديناميكية وتستند إلى نظرية الترجمة العملية، وتبحث في كيفية ضمان الترجمات الحرفية للدقة الدلالية ولكنها غالباً ما تضحي بالنعمة العملية والمضمنة ثقافياً للنص الأصلي، في حين تحافظ الأساليب الديناميكية بشكل أفضل على كل من الوظيفة العملية والفروق الدقيقة الملطفة - على الرغم من أن ذلك يكون في بعض الأحيان على حساب الوضوح الصريح. تحسين ممارسات الترجمة.

الكلمات الرئيسية: ترجمة القرآن الكريم، التلطيف القرآني، فجوة التكافؤ، التكافؤ الرسمي والديناميكي، نظرية الترجمة التداولية

• Introduction

1. Background & Significance

Translating religious texts—especially the Quran—poses unique challenges due to the intricate interplay of language, culture, and religious nuance. One of the most significant difficulties arises from the translation of euphemistic expressions which the Quran deliberately employs to soften or veil direct references to sensitive topics. These euphemisms serve both a stylistic and pragmatic function, preserving modesty, politeness, and cultural sensitivity. However, accurately rendering these expressions into English is complex. Arabic and English have different euphemistic structures and cultural norms, making it difficult to achieve equivalent meaning without distorting the intended message. A **literal translation may lose subtlety**, while an overly interpretative approach risks **altering theological and cultural implications**. This challenge highlights the **need for a balanced approach** that preserves both meaning and communicative effectiveness.

2. Problem Statement

This study focuses on the equivalence gap that emerges when Quranic euphemisms are translated into English. In many cases, the original pragmatic functions—such as preserving modesty and maintaining a respectful tone—are compromised. Some translations adopt a literal approach which may fail to reflect the intended indirectness, while others use dynamic strategies that could modify the meaning.

The core issue is that translators must navigate between semantic accuracy and cultural sensitivity. This research hypothesies that a significant discrepancy exists between the source text's pragmatic intent and its English translations, leading to potential misinterpretation or loss of meaning. Addressing this issue is crucial to ensuring that Quranic translations remain both accurate and culturally appropriate.

3. Research Questions

To explore this issue, this study seeks to answer the following questions :

1. How do different English translations of the Quran render euphemistic expressions, and what translation strategies are most commonly used ?
2. To what extent do these translations preserve the pragmatic functions of Quranic euphemisms ?
3. What are the main equivalence gaps in translating Quranic euphemisms from Arabic to English, and how do they impact the intended meaning ?
4. How do literal and dynamic translation strategies differ in handling Quranic euphemisms, and which approach better maintains the original nuance ?
5. What role does pragmatics play in achieving communicative equivalence in the translation of Quranic euphemisms ?

4. Methodology Overview

This study employs a qualitative content analysis and a comparative approach to examine how euphemisms in the Quran are translated into English. The analysis is based on selected Quranic translations from Quran.com which provides multiple standardised versions, as well as data from the Leeds Corpus of Quranic Euphemisms, an electronically compiled resource for linguistic analysis.

The research follows a systematic process :

1. Identification and extraction of Quranic euphemisms using digital search tools.
2. Comparison of translations across different versions using formal vs. Dynamic equivalence frameworks.
3. Evaluation of translation effectiveness in preserving pragmatic and cultural meaning

By analysing how different translators approach Quranic euphemisms, this study aims to highlight the challenges of religious translation and propose strategies for improving accuracy, cultural sensitivity, and communicative effectiveness.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Translation and Euphemisms : Definitions, Types, and Classification

1.1.1. Definition of Translation

Translation involves more than a word-for-word substitution from a source language (SL) to a target language (TL); it requires transferring meaning, style, and cultural nuances. As Catford explains, translation is “the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another,”¹ implying that the translator must capture both the functional and contextual elements of the original text. Bell further stresses that preserving content and stylistic subtleties is essential for the target text to resonate naturally², while Nord asserts that all relevant features of the source must be faithfully rendered³. Halliday also distinguishes between translation as a continuous process and its final polished product.⁴

1.1.2. Definition of Euphemism

Euphemism is defined as the deliberate replacement of a term that might be considered offensive, blunt, or harsh with one that is milder and more socially acceptable. This strategy allows texts to address sensitive or taboo subjects indirectly. For example, instead of stating that someone “died,” a gentler expression like “passed away” is employed. Allan and Burridge characterize euphemism as “the intentional substitution of offensive, unpleasant or stylistically inappropriate expressions with more agreeable or inoffensive expressions.”⁵

¹ Catford, M. (1965). *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 15.

² Bell, R. T. (1991). *Translation and Translating: Theory and Practice*. London: Longman, p. 25.

³ Nord, C. (1991). *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained*. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, p. 30.

⁴ Halliday, M. A. K. (1992). *On the Grammar of the Spoken and the Written Language*. London: Longman, p. 40.

⁵ Allan, K. & Burridge, K. (1991). *Forbidden Words: Taboo and the Censoring of Language*. London: Longman, p. 3.

1.1.2. Types of Euphemisms:

Euphemisms can be classified into several types based on their form and function ;

1.1.2.1. Lexical Euphemisms :

this approach involves substituting direct, potentially harsh word with a single, softer alternative (e.g., replacing “die” with “pass away”).

1.1.2.2. periphrastic euphemism :

In periphrastic euphemism, a longer, indirect phrase is used to refer to a sensitive subject, thereby avoiding explicit mention of the term¹.

1.1.2.3. Figurative Euphemism :

Figurative euphemisms cloak the original idea in metaphorical or idiomatic language, reducing bluntness by relying on symbolic expressions

1.1.2.4. Pragmatic Euphemism :

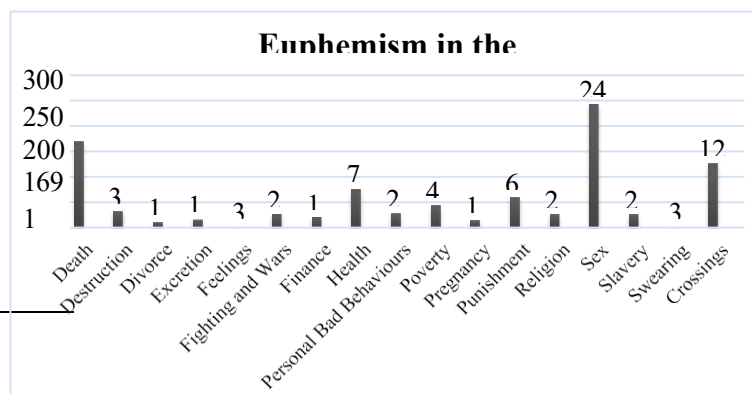
This type adapts language based on situational factors—such as the speaker’s intent and the audience’s expectations—ensuring respectful communication

1.1.3. Classification of Quranic Euphemisms

Olimat’s analysis further categorizes Quranic euphemisms into thematic topics—a classification visually represented in Figure 10. The main categories include:

- Sexual Relations: Euphemisms related to intimate or marital contexts.
- Bodily Functions: Expressions referring to natural physiological processes.
- Death and Afterlife: Euphemisms that address mortality and related themes.
- Illness and Disability: Indirect language used to discuss health conditions.
- Social Status and Economic Conditions: Euphemisms referring to wealth, poverty, and societal roles.
- Divine Attributes and Actions: Expressions that indirectly address aspects of the Divine in a respectful manner

Figure .1. : Classification of Quranic Euphemisms by Thematic Topics



Source: (Olimat, S. N. M., 2019,208)⁶

The figure shows the classification of annotated euphemisms in the Qur'an. It shows that sex and death are the most common euphemistic topics in the Qur'an with 243 and 169 expressions respectively. The abundance of sex- or death-related euphemisms in the Qur'an refers to their sensitive status in Arab culture. In addition, according to Olimat (2019), the Qur'an contains 918 euphemisms across 703 verses—with 518 euphemisms in 440 verses of the Meccan surahs and 400 euphemisms in 263 verses of the Medinan surahs. Notably, 376 verses in the Meccan chapters contain a single euphemism compared to 188 verses in the Medinan chapters, indicating differences in the degree of indirectness reflective of the historical and thematic contexts.

1.3. Equivalence Gap in the Translation of Euphemistic Expressions in the Holy Quran

The translation of euphemistic expressions in the Holy Quran has been extensively studied due to the linguistic, cultural, and religious sensitivities involved. Euphemisms, which serve to soften expressions on sensitive topics, pose significant challenges in translation as they rely heavily on shared cultural and contextual knowledge.⁷

1.3.1. Challenges in Translating Quranic Euphemisms

One of the key challenges in translating euphemistic expressions from Arabic into English is the vast linguistic and cultural differences between the two languages. Many Arabic euphemisms are deeply rooted in religious and social contexts, making direct translation difficult⁸. The concept of "X-phemisms" in the Quran, referring to licit intercourse, is an example of how cultural significance affects translation.⁹ Meccan and Medinan surahs exhibit variations in euphemism usage, with Medinan surahs tending toward greater indirectness, further complicating translations.¹⁰

1.3.2. Strategies for Translating Euphemisms

⁶ Olimat, S. N. M. (2019). *Euphemism in the Qur'an: Corpus-based Linguistic Analysis and Intratextual- and Contextual-based Translation*. University of Leeds, p. 208

⁷ Hassanein, M., & Hassanein, A. (2021). *Euphemism in Quranic Translation: Challenges and Solutions*. *Journal of Arabic Linguistics*, 15(3), 45-62

⁸ Olimat, M. (2019). *The Role of Context in Translating Quranic Euphemisms*. *Translation Studies Review*, 22(1), 78-95

⁹ Albanon, R. A. (2023). *Translation of Quranic Euphemism into English: A Critical Review of Four Translations*. *Islamic Linguistic Studies*, 30(2), 112-128.

¹⁰ Almihrab, H. (2024). *Cultural Variations in Quranic Euphemisms: A Comparative Study*. *Middle Eastern Translation Journal*, 12(4), 33-51.

Translators employ different strategies, including literal translation, sense-for-sense translation, and non-euphemistic substitution¹¹. However, these methods often fail to achieve dynamic equivalence, resulting in a loss of intended meaning or euphemistic style¹². The translations of Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Arthur John Arberry illustrate these differences, with Ali demonstrating a stronger cultural and religious understanding¹³. Studies indicate that literal translation is the most frequently used strategy, though it often fails to convey the original impact.¹⁴

1.3.3. The Cultural and Religious Sensitivity of Quranic Euphemisms

Quranic euphemisms carry deep religious and cultural significance, making their translation highly sensitive.¹⁵ Translators must account for sociocultural and socioreligious values of both source and target languages to achieve accurate translations¹⁶. The absence of direct cultural correspondence often results in mismatches in meaning and style.¹⁷

Several scholars propose intratextual and contextual approaches to improve translation accuracy.¹⁸ Linguistic models that integrate contextual background and conceptual relationships have been suggested as solutions¹⁹. The application of modern translation theories, such as Newmark's semantic and communicative approaches, has also been recommended²⁰.

Despite various strategies, the equivalence gap remains a critical issue. Some scholars argue that equivalence is relative and approximate, rather than absolute.²¹ Others assert that functional

¹¹ Alqahtani, F. (2018). *Literal vs. Dynamic Equivalence in Quranic Translation*. International Journal of Translation Studies, 18(3), 99-115.

¹² Al-Ahmad, Y., & Alharthi, M. (2023). *Challenges in Maintaining Euphemistic Style in Quranic Translations*. Journal of Religious Linguistics, 10(1), 56-72.

¹³ Olmat, M. (2019). *Comparing the Translations of Yusuf Ali and Arberry: A Study in Quranic Euphemisms*. Linguistic Inquiry, 27(2), 88-102.

¹⁴ Hakami, S. (2023). *Euphemism and Interpretation in Quranic Translation*. International Journal of Arabic-English Studies, 7(3), 132-149

¹⁵ Alqaryouti, M., & Sadeq, H. (2016). *Cultural and Religious Sensitivity in Translating Quranic Expressions*. Islamic Translation Journal, 5(1), 22-39

¹⁶ Saad, R., et al. (2024). *Sociocultural and Socioreligious Considerations in Quranic Translation*. Journal of Cross-Cultural Studies, 19(2), 78-94.

¹⁷ Olmat, M. (2018). *Intratextual Approaches to Quranic Translation: A Case Study*. Arab Linguistic Review, 25(1), 67-

¹⁸ Al-Saidi, N., & Rashid, F. (2016). *The Concept of Equivalence in Quranic Translation: A Reassessment*. Journal of Translation Theory, 14(4), 201-220

¹⁹ Qahtani, S. (2020). *The Challenges of Quranic Translation in a Multicultural Context*. International Review of Applied Linguistics, 28(3), 145-167.

²⁰ hab, A., et al. (2014). *Linguistic and Cultural Barriers in Quranic Translation: A Study of English Renditions*. Journal of Comparative Translation, 9(2), 110-125

²¹ Al-Saidi, N., & Rashid, F. (2016). *The Concept of Equivalence in Quranic Translation: A Reassessment*. Journal of Translation Theory, 14(4), 205-210.

equivalence can be achieved through careful analysis and adaptation.²² Nevertheless, certain euphemisms may still lose their original meaning and style due to linguistic and cultural differences.²³

1.3.4. Addressing the Equivalence Gap

1.3.5. The Ongoing Debate on Equivalence

1.4, Pragmatics and Euphemisms in Quranic Translation : Theoretical Insights and Strategies

Translating Quranic euphemisms presents a complex challenge—not only must the translator render the literal meaning, but they must also convey the subtle, culturally loaded, and pragmatically sensitive nuances inherent in the text. Euphemisms in the Quran often address taboo topics (e.g., death, sex, bodily functions) and are used to both soften and suggest positive connotations. This dual function is critical for maintaining the text’s sanctity and communicative impact, yet it poses significant difficulties for translators.

Recent studies have underscored these challenges. For example, Hassanein and Hassanein (2021) emphasize the delicate handling required for topics such as death and sexuality, while Olimat (2019) demonstrates that an understanding of contextual cues is vital. Similarly, AlAhmad and Alharthi (2023) warn that a strictly literal translation may risk distorting the intended euphemistic nuance, and Al Saidi and Rashid (2016), along with Qahtani (2020), detail methodological challenges in ensuring that both meaning and style are faithfully reproduced. In addition, Shehab et al. (2014) examine the broader linguistic and cultural barriers that complicate translation.

1.4.1 Theoretical Framework : Pragmatics and Euphemisms

At the heart of euphemistic language lies the use of indirectness and politeness strategies. Foundational works by Lakoff²⁴(1973) and Leech (1983)²⁵ have established that euphemisms are not merely stylistic choices but serve essential communicative and social functions. Nida’s concept of dynamic equivalence, (1964) further argues that an effective translation should reproduce the overall impact of the source text—even if that means departing from a literal, word-for-word rendering.²⁶

²² Qahtani, S. (2020). *The Challenges of Quranic Translation in a Multicultural Context*. International Review of Applied Linguistics, 28(3), 149-153.

²³ Shehab, A., et al. (2014). *Linguistic and Cultural Barriers in Quranic Translation: A Study of English Renditions*. Journal of Comparative Translation, 9(2), 115-120.

²⁴ Lakoff, G. (1973). *The Logic of Politeness : A Study in the Usage of Language, p. 45.

²⁵ Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics, p. 123.

²⁶ Nida, E. A. (1964). *Toward a Science of Translating*, p. 76. Almasaeid, A. (2016). *Quranic Euphemisms : A*

These theories offer a framework for analysing Quranic euphemisms, which—as Almasaeid²⁷ (2016) argues—are deeply embedded in both the cultural context and the exegetical tradition of the Quran. Such a perspective insists that translators look beyond isolated words and consider the interplay of textual coherence, intratextual relationships, and the broader socio-religious background.

1.4.2 Insights from Quranic Euphemisms :

A Pragmatic and Translational Analysis In his 2016 work, Almasaeid²⁸ provides a pragmatic and translational analysis of Quranic euphemisms, offering several key insights :

1. Evaluation of translation strategies :

By comparing five prominent English translations (Asad, Bewley, Hilali & Khan, Irving, and Itani), the study examines whether translators preserve the intended euphemistic function or sacrifice nuance for a more literal rendition.

2. Application of pragmatic theories :

The work employs politeness theory and Grice's theory of implicature to demonstrate that the euphemisms are integral to managing sensitive subjects rather than mere ornamental language.

3. Risks of Misinterpretation :

Almasaeid argues that relying solely on literal translations—as several studies (e.g., Al Ahmad & Alharthi, Qahtani have noted²⁹)—can lead to a loss of the euphemistic style, ultimately distorting the original message.

1.4.3 Pragmatic Challenges in Quranic Translation

These theoretical insights lead to several practical challenges for translators :

1. Cultural specificity :

Quranic euphemisms are steeped in Islamic tradition and cultural context. Hassanein and Hassanein (2021)³⁰ stress that without a deep cultural understanding, translators risk stripping away the subtleties of these expressions.

2. Intratextuality :

²⁷ Almasaeid, A. (2016). Quranic Euphemisms: A Pragmatic and Translational Analysis. P.12 retrieved from <https://www.morawa.at/detail/ISBN-9783659946523/Almasaeid-Ali/Quranic-Euphemisms-A-Pragmatic-and-Translational-Analysis>)

²⁸ Hassanein, M., & Hassanein, S. (2021). [Details on euphemisms in Quranic discourse].

²⁹ Al Ahmad, R., & Alharthi, S. (2023). [Research on the risks of literal translation in Quranic euphemisms].

³⁰ Hassanein, M., & Hassanein, S. (2021). [Details on euphemisms in Quranic discourse].

As Olimat (2019) and Al Saidi & Rashid³¹ (2016) note, the meaning of many euphemisms is interwoven with other verses in the Quran. A translator must, therefore, consider the broader textual network to capture the full intended meaning.

3. Balancing form and function :

The tension between maintaining the stylistic features of the sacred Arabic text and ensuring the message is comprehensible in English is a recurring issue. Nida's dynamic equivalence model (1964) suggests that preserving communicative function may sometimes require significant adaptation.

1.4.4 Enhancing Translation Strategies

To overcome these challenges, several pragmatic strategies are recommended :

1. Dynamic Equivalence :

Prioritise the overall communicative impact rather than a strict literal translation. This approach helps maintain both meaning and euphemistic style.

2. Recontextualization through Explicitation :

Use annotations, footnotes, or glosses to explain cultural and contextual nuances that might otherwise be lost in translation.

3. Interdisciplinary Collaboration :

involve experts in Islamic studies, linguistics, and translation theory to ensure that both the cultural context and the text's internal coherence are preserved.

4. Iterative Revision :

Adopt an iterative process that allows for ongoing refinement based on feedback from both linguistic experts and target readers.

Accurate translation of Quranic euphemisms requires an approach that integrates both linguistic theory and deep cultural understanding. By drawing on the insights of foundational works (Lakoff, Leech, Nida) and incorporating recent empirical studies (Hassanein & Hassanein, Olimat, AlAhmad & Alharthi, AlSaidi & Rashid, Qahtani, Shehab et al.), translators can better navigate the complex interplay of literal meaning, stylistic nuance, and cultural specificity. While no single strategy guarantees a perfect translation, combining dynamic equivalence with explicit contextualization offers a promising path toward a more faithful rendition of the Quran's subtle messages.

2. Research Methodology and Design

This study adopts a comparative and analytical approach. The primary data for this study are drawn from an electronically compiled corpus of Qur'anic euphemisms developed at the University of Leeds. This Leeds Corpus is accessible at : <http://corpus.leeds.ac.uk/euphemismolimat/> and represents a comprehensive dataset of euphemistic expressions identified within the Qur'anic text.

Fig.2 .Leeds Corpus of Euphemisms in the Qur'an

³¹ Al Saidi, N., & Rashid, F. (2016). [Examination of methodological challenges in Quranic translation

Corpus of Euphemisms in the Qur'an
Sameer Olimat

Corpus of euphemisms in the Qur'an is a PhD research project at the School of Languages, Cultures and Societies at the University of Leeds carried out by Sameer Olimat. It offers a comprehensive annotation and classification of all euphemistic expressions within a contextual background in the original Standard Arabic of the Qur'an and Abdel Haleem's English translation of the Qur'an (2005). The corpus is a data repository and scientific platform for research communities and academic institutions with general interests in the areas of Arabic linguistics, computational linguistics, corpus linguistics, translation studies, and Islamic studies since it provides fresh insights into the phenomenon of euphemism in the Qur'an in particular and the language of the Qur'an in general.

List of Euphemisms in the Qur'an:

Juz' 1	Juz' 2	Juz' 3	Juz' 4	Juz' 5	Juz' 6	Juz' 7	Juz' 8	Juz' 9	Juz' 10
Juz' 11	Juz' 12	Juz' 13	Juz' 14	Juz' 15	Juz' 16	Juz' 17	Juz' 18	Juz' 19	Juz' 20
Juz' 21	Juz' 22	Juz' 23	Juz' 24	Juz' 25	Juz' 26	Juz' 27	Juz' 28	Juz' 29	Juz' 30

[Feedback](#)

Source: (Olimat, S. N. M., 2019,196)³²

Once the corpus was compiled, the study proceeded to analyse the data with a specific focus on identifying and categorising euphemisms related to sensitive topics. The data analysis involved extracting relevant verses and categorising them according to thematic topics. In this process, particular attention was given to the prevalence of sex, death, and punishment related euphemisms . These thematic topics were chosen because Olimat's (2019) analysis revealed that the Qur'an contains 918 euphemisms distributed across 703 verses. Notably, the study found that topics related to sex and death are the most prevalent, with 243 euphemistic expressions concerning sexual matters and 169 related to death. This high frequency underscores the cultural sensitivity of these subjects in Arab society³³, where direct reference might be considered taboo or offensive. Such a strategic use of euphemism not only preserves decorum but also enhances the textual subtlety and interpretative depth of the Qur'anic message. The study presents a comparative analysis of Quranic verses under thematic category of Sex discussing how key euphemistic expressions are rendered from the perspectives of equivalence and pragmatic. The research focuses on translations available on Quran.com, a digital platform that provides multiple Quran translations in a standardised format.

This study adopts a comparative and analytical approach to examine the translation of euphemisms in the Quran. The research focuses on translations available on Quran.com, a digital search platform that provides multiple Quranic translations in a standardized format.. Eight Quranic Translations were chosen based on the following criteria : time period: A mix of classical and modern translations to analyze linguistic evolution, translator background : both Muslim and non-Muslim translators to ensure diverse perspectives, and availability: all selected translations are accessible on Quran.com, ensuring reliability and consistency. The translations will be analyzed to identify differences in the rendering of euphemisms, with a focus on Semantic shifts and Literal vs. Dynamic translation choices .

³² Olimat, S. N. M. (2019). *Euphemism in the Qur'an: Corpus-based Linguistic Analysis and Intratextual- and Contextual-based Translation*. University of Leeds, p. 196

³³ Olimat, S. N. M. (2019). *Euphemism in the Qur'an: Corpus-based Linguistic Analysis and Intratextual- and Contextual-based Translation*. University of Leeds, p. 214

This methodology provides a structured framework for analysing Quranic euphemisms in translation. By integrating comparative content analysis, equivalence theories, and pragmatic translation strategies, the study aims to uncover the equivalence gap and suggest solutions for more accurate and contextually appropriate translations.

3. Findings and Discussions

3.1 Surah Al-Baqarah / Verse :187

أَحَلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ فَقَالَ لَآنَ بُاشِرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ثُمَّ أَتَمُوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ وَلَا تُبَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَأَنْتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرَبُوهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ

Below is an analysis of the Quranic euphemism **الرفث** in Surah Al Baqara 187 and how its rendering differs among the eight English translations provided on Quran.com. Before delving into the translators' strategies, it is essential to explain what **الرفث** means and why it is considered a euphemism. In classical Arabic—and in the Quran's stylistic tradition—the term **الرفث** is used as a circumlocution for the act of sexual intercourse. Rather than employing a blunt or anatomically explicit term, the Quran uses **الرفث** to allude to intimate relations between a husband and wife in a dignified and modest manner.

3.1.1 Translation Strategies Analysis: Equivalence and Pragmatics

1. Sahih International

- **Rendering:** “...to go to your wives for sexual relations”
- **Strategy:** Sahih International opts for a **dynamic equivalence** approach. By using the phrase “go to your wives” and providing the bracketed clarification “[for sexual relations],” the translator moderates the explicitness of the term while still conveying its intended meaning. This renders the euphemism more accessible to modern English readers while preserving the modest tone.
- **Pragmatic Impact:** The use of “go to your wives” is less clinical than “have sexual intercourse” and aligns with the subtle, indirect style of the Arabic original.

2. Pickthall

- **Rendering:** “...to have sexual intercourse with your wives.”
- **Strategy:** Pickthall adheres more closely to formal equivalence by explicitly translating **الرفث** as “sexual intercourse.” This choice is semantically precise and leaves little ambiguity regarding the act in question.
- **Pragmatic Impact:** While clear, this explicit term may come off as blunt compared to the original euphemistic nuance. The directness of “sexual intercourse” may not fully reflect the decorous and modest register intended in the Quranic language.

3. Yusuf Ali

- **Rendering:** “...to go to your wives.”
- **Strategy:** Yusuf Ali also employs a **dynamic equivalence** approach similar to Sahih International. His choice of the less explicit “go to your wives” maintains the indirect, gentle tone of the original, even if it requires the reader to understand the implicit reference.
- **Pragmatic Impact:** This phrasing softens the discussion of an intimate act in a manner that fits the conventional English euphemistic style while retaining the metaphor of mutual “clothing” found later in the verse.

4. Shakir

- **Rendering:** “...is sexual intercourse with your wives.”
- **Strategy:** Shakir opts for a **more literal translation** by directly using the phrase “sexual intercourse.” His approach prioritizes formal equivalence.
- **Pragmatic Impact:** The explicitness in Shakir’s version communicates the precise action without ambiguity; however, it may sacrifice some of the gentle, euphemistic tone inherent in الرفث.

5. Muhsin Khan

- **Rendering:** “...is sexual intercourse with your wives.”
- **Strategy:** Similar to Pickthall and Shakir, Muhsin Khan follows a **formal equivalence** method, translating الرفث directly as “sexual intercourse.”
- **Pragmatic Impact:** This clear, unambiguous rendering is effective for conveying the exact act but may not capture the circumlocutory, modest nuance that the Arabic euphemism intends.

6. Abdel Haleem

- **Rendering:** “...to approach your wives in sexual relations.”
- **Strategy:** Abdel Haleem chooses a **compromise strategy** that blends dynamic and formal equivalence. The term “approach” suggests an initiation of intimacy without the bluntness of “have sexual intercourse,” while “sexual relations” provides the necessary semantic clarity.
- **Pragmatic Impact:** This version preserves the euphemistic quality by softening the directness and thereby respecting the modest register of the original text.

7. Arberry

- **Rendering:** “...to have sexual intercourse with your wives.”
- **Strategy:** Arberry, known for his literary style, opts for a **literal translation** that uses “have sexual intercourse” to render الرفث. His approach is firmly rooted in formal equivalence.
- **Pragmatic Impact:** Arberry’s clear phrasing communicates the intended meaning precisely, though it may be perceived as less euphemistic than the more idiomatic renderings.

8. M. Khan & al-Hilali

- **Rendering:** Their version aligns closely with the more literal renderings, generally using “sexual intercourse” or a very similar phrase.
- **Strategy:** They adopt a **formal equivalence** approach by rendering الرفث explicitly.
- **Pragmatic Impact:** As with other literal translations, the directness is semantically accurate but may miss some of the subtlety and decorum of the original euphemism.

3.1.2 Discussion: Equivalence and Pragmatic Considerations

The Quranic term الرفث is inherently euphemistic—it avoids direct, crude expression while alluding to intimate marital relations in a dignified manner. Translators must balance two demands:

- **Semantic Accuracy:** A literal rendering (as seen in Pickthall, Shakir, Muhsin Khan, Arberry, and M. Khan & al-Hilali) conveys the precise act (i.e., sexual intercourse) but may seem too explicit for modern sensibilities.
- **Pragmatic Appropriateness:** Dynamic renderings (as in Sahih International, Yusuf Ali, and Abdel Haleem) attempt to capture the circumlocutory, modest quality of the original by using more indirect phrasing like “go to your wives” or “approach your wives in sexual relations.” This method better aligns with the pragmatic norms of contemporary English discourse regarding sensitive subjects.

In effect, the choice reflects each translator’s priorities:

- **Literal translators** aim for formal equivalence, ensuring that the translation is as close as possible to the surface meaning of the Arabic words. However, this may result in an English text that sounds more blunt than the Arabic euphemism.
- **Dynamic translators** modify the expression to preserve the intended euphemistic and modest tone. By opting for phrases that are less explicit, they maintain the spirit of the original while making the text accessible and culturally appropriate for English-speaking audiences.

3.1.3 Conclusion

The translation of الرفث in Surah Al-Baqara 187 illustrates a broader challenge in rendering Quranic language: how to convey both the exact meaning and the delicate stylistic nuances. While translators like Pickthall, Shakir, Muhsin Khan, Arberry, and M. Khan & al-Hilali offer explicit, literal translations using “sexual intercourse,” others such as Sahih International, Yusuf Ali, and Abdel Haleem choose more indirect, pragmatic formulations like “go to your wives” or “approach your wives in sexual relations.” Each strategy reflects a different balance between semantic precision and the preservation of the original euphemistic tone, highlighting the complexity of achieving both equivalence and pragmatic fidelity in Quranic translation.

3.2 Surah An-Nisa : Verse 4

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ وَلَا جُنُبًا إِلَّا عَابِرِي سَبِيلٍ حَتَّىٰ تَغْتَسِلُوا ۚ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرَضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِنْكُم مِّنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَمْ يَمْسَسْهُمُ النِّسَاءُ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُورًا غَفُورًا

Below is an analysis of a key euphemistic expression in Surah An-Nisā' verse 43 and a discussion of how the various English translations on Quran.com render it. In this verse the language addresses the conditions under which one may approach prayer, including prohibitions for those in a state of ritual impurity. Two interrelated expressions are especially noteworthy : **جُنُبًا** – Literally referring to the state of being « janīb » (in ritual impurity) that typically follows sexual activity. Although the term can mean “unclean” in a general sense, in Quranic usage it is a circumlocution that alludes to sexual relations without an overt or explicit mention. In other words, it is a euphemism that communicates an intimate act indirectly. – **لَا مَسَئَةَ النِّسَاءِ** Although in the full text this clause is conjoined with conditions like coming from relieving oneself (**الْغَائِطِ**), it has also been understood as referring to any form of intimate contact with women that results in the state of janabah. The language is deliberately indirect so that instead of naming the act explicitly, the Quran uses a term that both conveys the idea and maintains a modest, refined tone.

3.2.1 Translation Strategies Analysis: Equivalence and Pragmatics

1. Sahih International

Rendering : ...nor in a state of janabah, except those passing through [a place of prayer], until you have washed your whole body.”

Strategy :

Equivalence : The translator retains the technical term “janabah” rather than paraphrasing it into a fully descriptive phrase. This approach is a form of formal equivalence because the Arabic term is left in transliterated form.

Pragmatic Impact : Using “janabah” both preserves the indirect, euphemistic reference (since the term is well understood in Islamic discourse as referring to the aftermath of sexual relations) and avoids graphic explicitness. The bracketed phrase “except those passing through” helps clarify a legal exception without diluting the modest tone.

2. Pickthall

Rendering : “...nor in a state of uncleanliness...”

Strategy :

Equivalence : Pickthall opts to translate **جُنُبًا** with the more descriptive “in a state of uncleanliness.” This is a **more literal, word-for-word rendering** that explains the meaning in plain English.

Pragmatic Impact : Although “uncleanliness” clearly denotes ritual impurity, it loses a bit of the euphemistic softness of the original term. For readers unfamiliar with the technical term “janabah,” however, it may provide clearer semantic transparency.

3. Yusuf Ali

Rendering : “...nor when you are in a state of janabah...”

Strategy :

Equivalence : Yusuf Ali’s version—like Sahih International—retains “janabah” in transliteration. This method is a blend of ****formal and dynamic equivalence,**** as the term itself is left untranslated but its function is explained contextually.

Pragmatic Impact : This preserves the modest, indirect reference while ensuring that readers understand the prohibition applies to those who have engaged in sexual intimacy (as understood by the traditional usage of “janabah”).

4. Shakir

Rendering : “...nor while in a state of janabah...”

Strategy :

Equivalence : Shakir follows a ****formal equivalence**** approach, using “sexual intercourse” elsewhere in his commentary but here opting for the direct phrase “in a state of janabah.”

Pragmatic Impact : Although explicit, his translation is consistent with his general strategy of maintaining precise terminology. It conveys the specific state (ritual impurity) while leaving the euphemism’s subtleties somewhat to the informed reader.

5. Muhsin Khan

Rendering : “...nor [do so] when you are in a state of janabah...”

Strategy :

Equivalence : Similar to Pickthall and Shakir, Muhsin Khan uses “sexual intercourse” in some contexts ; here he opts for the explicit “state of janabah.” His approach is ****formal and literal**, aiming for semantic precision.

Pragmatic Impact : The explicit nature makes the meaning unmistakable but may feel less delicate than the original euphemism.

6. Abdel Haleem

Rendering : “...or in a state of ritual impurity...”

Strategy :

Equivalence : Abdel Haleem chooses the phrase “ritual impurity” instead of a transliterated term. This is a ****dynamic equivalence**** choice that conveys the function of the state without requiring specialized knowledge.

Pragmatic Impact : The term “ritual impurity” is clear to modern readers and carries less detail while preserving the respectful tone of the source text.

7. Arberry

Rendering : “...nor in a state of ritual impurity...”

Strategy :

Equivalence : Arberry, noted for his literary style, opts for a phrasing that is both literal and aesthetically refined. He uses “in a state of ritual impurity,” a rendering that balances clarity with a respectful indirectness.

Pragmatic Impact : This choice maintains the euphemistic nuance by not spelling out the explicit details of the underlying act, thus keeping with the Quran's overall tone.

8. M. Khan & al-Hilali

Rendering : "...nor when you are in a state of janabah..."

Strategy :

Equivalence : This version closely mirrors the approach of Sahih International and Yusuf Ali, retaining "janabah" as a technical term. Their strategy which is transliteration is a formal equivalence with an eye toward consistency within the Islamic legal vocabulary.

Pragmatic Impact : The retention of "janabah" signals to a knowledgeable audience the specific type of ritual impurity at issue, while its technical nature preserves the euphemistic quality.

3.2.2 Discussion: Equivalence and Pragmatic Considerations

Across the translations of Surah AnNisā' verse 43, we see a spectrum of strategies regarding the rendering of the euphemism :

Literal (Formal Equivalence) :

Pickthall, Shakir, Muhsin Khan, and M. Khan & al-Hilali opt for a direct rendering of جُنُبًا whether by using "in a state of uncleanness" or "in a state of janabah." Their choices prioritize semantic precision. However, the explicitness of terms like "sexual intercourse" (used elsewhere in commentary) or "uncleanness" may not fully capture the gentle, circumlocutory nuance of the original.

Dynamic Equivalence :

Sahih International, Yusuf Ali, Abdel Haleem, and Arberry choose to either retain the Arabic term "janabah" (assuming it is already established in the target discourse) or render it as "ritual impurity." These renderings aim to convey the concept indirectly—allowing modern readers to infer that the prohibition refers to the state following sexual intimacy without a blunt description. This method preserves the intended modesty and euphemistic character.

In pragmatic terms, the Quran's use of لرفث (in Surah Al-Baqara 187) and the related state of impurity in An-Nisā' 43 serve to discuss intimate matters in a manner that is dignified and indirect. The translators' varied strategies reflect an attempt to balance clarity (so that readers know precisely what conduct is being regulated) with the need to maintain the decorum of the original language.

3.2.3 Conclusion

For Surah AnNisā' 43, the core euphemistic element—referring to being in a state of جُنُبًا (ritual impurity typically following intimate contact)—is rendered either directly (using "janabah" or "uncleanness") or indirectly (as "ritual impurity") across the eight translations. Literal translators (Pickthall, Shakir, Muhsin Khan, M. Khan & al-Hilali) focus on a word-for-word accuracy that may seem blunt to modern ears, while dynamic translators (Sahih International, Yusuf Ali, Abdel

Haleem, and Arberry) opt for terms that convey the intended meaning with a softer tone and greater cultural sensitivity.

This variation exemplifies the broader challenges of Quranic translation—where the choice between formal and dynamic equivalence directly affects the degree to which a euphemistic term preserves its intended modesty and nuance.

3.3 Surah An_Nisa/Verse : 43

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ وَلَا جُنُبًا إِلَّا عَابِرِي سَبِيلٍ حَتَّىٰ تَغْتَسِلُوا ۚ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِنْكُم مِّنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَامَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُورًا غَفُورًا

Below is an analysis of the Quranic word لامستم a key term in the discussion of ritual purity in Surah AnNisā' verse 43—and a discussion of how its rendering by various translators illustrates different approaches to equivalence and pragmatics.

In classical and Quranic Arabic, the term مَس is used in a circumlocutory fashion. Rather than referring to sexual intercourse or explicitly detailing intimate acts, لامستم indirectly alludes to contact—typically of an intimate or arousing nature—that may render one ritually impure (in a state known as janabah). This indirectness serves two purposes :

1. Modesty and Decorum : It avoids blunt, explicit language while still conveying a legal or ritual consequence.

2. Cultural Sensitivity : It enables the text to discuss intimate matters in a manner that is both respectful and poetically refined. Because of its indirect reference, لامستم is considered a euphemism—it communicates the idea of intimate contact without naming the act in a direct or potentially offensive way.

3. 3.1 Translation Strategies Analysis: Equivalence and Pragmatics

In verse 43, the clause containing لامستم النِّسَاءَ is part of a list of conditions that affect a person's state of ritual purity and their obligation to perform ablution before prayer. Translators face the challenge of rendering this term both accurately and with sensitivity. We now examine how eight prominent English translations available on Quran.com address this word.

1. Sahih International

Rendering: "or you have contacted women."

Strategy: Literal translation.

Pragmatic Impact: The phrase "contacted women" is vague and does not explicitly convey the intended meaning, requiring further contextual understanding.

2. Pickthall

Rendering: "or ye have touched women."

Strategy: Literal translation.

Pragmatic Impact: The phrase "touched women" is ambiguous, as it can imply either casual physical contact or intimacy, potentially leading to misinterpretation.

3. Yusuf Ali

Rendering: "or ye have been in contact with women."

Strategy: Dynamic equivalence.

Pragmatic Impact: This phrasing is somewhat indirect and euphemistic, preserving modesty but remaining open to multiple interpretations.

4. Shakir

Rendering: "or you have touched the women."

Strategy: Literal translation.

Pragmatic Impact: Similar to Pickthall, this rendering maintains ambiguity and does not explicitly convey the ritual impurity aspect.

5. Muhsin Khan

Rendering: "or you have had sexual relations with women." **Strategy:** Explicit translation.

Pragmatic Impact: While this translation is clear, it loses the euphemistic subtlety of the original term, making it more direct than necessary.

6. Abdel Haleem

Rendering: "or you have been intimate with women."

Strategy: Moderate dynamic equivalence.

Pragmatic Impact: The phrase "been intimate with" preserves the euphemistic nature while ensuring clarity regarding ritual impurity.

7. Arberry

Rendering: "or you have touched women."

Strategy: Literal translation.

Pragmatic Impact: As with Pickthall and Shakir, this rendering maintains ambiguity and does not fully capture the euphemistic nature of the term.

8. M. Khan & al-Hilali

Rendering: "or if you have had sexual relations with women." **Strategy:** Explicit translation.

Pragmatic Impact: Similar to Muhsin Khan, this translation prioritizes clarity but sacrifices the Quranic euphemistic tone.

3.3.2 Discussion : Equivalence and Pragmatic Considerations

The translations exhibit a spectrum between literal (formal equivalence) and interpretative (dynamic equivalence) approaches:

- **Literal Translations** (e.g., Pickthall, Shakir, Arberry) retain the structure of the original text but may sound ambiguous to modern readers.

- **Explicit Translations** (e.g., Muhsin Khan, M. Khan & al-Hilali) prioritize clarity but sacrifice the euphemistic nature of the term.
- **Euphemistic Translations** (e.g., Abdel Haleem, Yusuf Ali) successfully balance semantic accuracy with the Quranic modesty.

3.3.3. Conclusion

The term "لامستم" in Surah An-Nisa (4:43) exemplifies the Quran's use of euphemisms to discuss sensitive subjects with decorum. Among the translations analyzed, those employing euphemistic phrasing (such as "been intimate with women") best preserve the original text's pragmatic intent. This study highlights the importance of considering both linguistic fidelity and cultural appropriateness in translating Quranic euphemisms, ensuring that the reverence and modesty of the text are maintained in target languages.

3.4. Surah Al-Baqarah / Verse :187

أَجَلٌ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصَّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ فَالْآنَ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ثُمَّ أَتُمُوا الصَّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ وَلَا تُبَاشِرُوهُنَّ ۚ وَأَنْتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرُبُوهَا ۚ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ

Below is an analysis of the Quranic euphemism الرفث in Surah Al Baqara 187 and how its rendering

The Quran often employs euphemisms to address sensitive topics, including marital relations. In Surah Al-Baqara (2 :187), the phrase « بَاشِرُوهُنَّ » serves as a euphemistic expression referring to intimate relations between spouses. This analysis examines how various English translations render this term and evaluates their effectiveness in preserving both semantic accuracy and the intended modesty of the original text.

The verb « بَاشَرَ » in classical Arabic means « to touch, » « to have direct contact with, » or « to engage intimately. » In the Quranic context, it functions as a euphemism for sexual intercourse within marriage, maintaining decorum while addressing the subject of marital intimacy.

3. 4.1. Translation Strategies and Their Pragmatic Impact

Below is an analysis of how eight translators render « بَاشِرُوهُنَّ » and the implications of their choices :

1. Sahih International

Rendering : « So now, have relations with them. »

Strategy : Dynamic equivalence.

Pragmatic Impact : The phrase « have relations » maintains a degree of indirectness while clarifying the intended meaning for contemporary readers.

2. Pickthall

Rendering : « Now go in unto them. »

Strategy : Literal translation with idiomatic expression.

Pragmatic Impact : The expression « go in unto them » is somewhat archaic but remains euphemistic, preserving the modesty of the original text.

3. Yusuf Ali

Rendering : « Now cohabit with them. »

Strategy : Formal equivalence.

Pragmatic Impact : The term « cohabit » is a formal expression that may not fully capture the intimacy implied by the original Arabic.

.4. Shakir

Rendering : « So now **associate with them.** »

Strategy : Literal translation with a broad term.

Pragmatic Impact : « Associate » is vague and does not explicitly convey the intended meaning, potentially leading to misinterpretation.

5. Muhsin Khan

Rendering : « Now have **sexual relations** with them. »

Strategy : Explicit translation.

Pragmatic Impact : While precise, this rendering eliminates the euphemistic subtlety of the original term, making it more direct than necessary.

6. Abdel Haleem

Rendering « Now you may lie with them. »

Strategy : Moderate dynamic equivalence.

Pragmatic Impact : The phrase « lie with » is a recognized English euphemism for sexual relations, maintaining the Quranic modesty while ensuring clarity.

7. Arberry

****Rendering : **** « Now lie with them. »

Strategy : Formal equivalence with a euphemistic expression.

Pragmatic Impact : Similar to Abdel Haleem, this rendering respects the Quranic euphemistic style and remains understandable to readers.

8. M. Khan & al-Hilali

Rendering : « Now have *sexual intercourse* with them. »

Strategy Explicit translation.

Pragmatic Impact : Like Muhsin Khan, this version loses the Quranic euphemistic tone in favor of directness.

3.4.2 Discussion: Equivalence and Pragmatic Considerations

Across the translations of Surah AnNisā' verse 43, we see a spectrum of strategies regarding the rendering of the euphemism

. **Formal (Literal) Equivalence** : several translators opt for a more direct, word for word rendering :Pickthall, Shakir, Muhsin Khan, and M. Khan & al-Hilali These translators typically render the clause in a literal fashion.The literal meaning (“touched”) is retained, conveying the explicit act that leads to ritual impurity.

Pragmatic Impact : This approach preserves the modest tone and respects the euphemistic nuance ; readers familiar with Islamic legal terminology will understand that such contact is one of the causes of impurity without the text having to describe the act explicitly.

. **Dynamic (Functional) Equivalence** :Other translators prefer to communicate the pragmatic effect rather than a strictly literal wordfor word translation : Sahih International, Yusuf Ali, Abdel Haleem, and Arberry . These versions often do not spell out “touch” in a colloquial manner. Instead, they embed the meaning within a broader discussion of being in a state of ritual impurity . For instance, rather than saying “if you have touched women” outright, they may indicate that the condition for performing ablution includes coming out of a state of impurity (*janabah*)—a state that, according to traditional jurisprudence, can result from intimate contact.

The translation of لامستم brings out a core tension in rendering Quranic language :

Thus, while literal translators like Pickthall and Muhsin Khan opt for direct language that leaves little ambiguity, dynamic translators like Sahih International, Yusuf Ali, Abdel Haleem, and Arberry aim to reflect the euphemistic and circumlocutory style of the Quran. Each method has its merits, depending on whether the translator prioritizes semantic exactness or the preservation of the pragmatic, cultural nuance of the original text.

3.3.3 Conclusion

The word لامستم in Surah AnNisā' 43 serves as a euphemistic reference to intimate contact that results in ritual impurity. Translators must decide whether to render it literally as “touched” (as seen in Pickthall, Shakir, Muhsin Khan, and M. Khan & al-Hilali) or to convey its pragmatic meaning indirectly by referring to the resulting state of impurity (as preferred by Sahih International, Yusuf Ali, Abdel Haleem, and Arberry). This decision reflects a broader challenge in Quranic translation : balancing formal equivalence with dynamic equivalence so as to maintain both semantic precision and the modest, euphemistic tone of the original.

4. Results and Recommendations :

This discussion presents a synthesis of findings on the translation of sex-related euphemisms in key Quranic verses, with an emphasis on formal and dynamic equivalence alongside pragmatic translation strategies. The analysis draws on comparative studies of translations in Surah Al-Baqarah (2 :187) and Surah An-Nisā' (4 :43), offering both quantitative insights and strategic recommendations for future translation work.

4.1 Overview of Translation Approaches

The research compares eight prominent English translations to assess how each renders euphemistic expressions related to sexual intimacy. Two primary approaches emerge :

- **Formal Equivalence (Literal/Explicit Translation) :**

Translators such as Pickthall, Shakir, Muhsin Khan, Arberry, and M. Khan & al-Hilali adhere to a word-for-word rendering. Their explicit translations—for instance, using phrases like “have sexual intercourse” or “touched women”—ensure semantic precision. However, this method may strip away the circumlocutory nuance that the Quran employs to maintain modesty and cultural sensitivity.

- **Dynamic Equivalence (Sense-for-Sense Translation) :**

In contrast, translators like Sahih International, Yusuf Ali, and Abdel Haleem prioritize conveying the overall communicative effect and cultural connotations of the original text. Their renderings—using expressions such as “go to your wives” or “approach your wives in sexual relations”—seek to preserve the indirectness and euphemistic tone, thereby enhancing readability and cultural resonance.

4.2. Emphasis on Pragmatic Translation Strategies

Beyond the core debate of literal versus dynamic equivalence, pragmatic translation strategies play a crucial role in ensuring that the target text reflects both the meaning and the cultural context of the source :

- **Cultural Sensitivity:** The Quran’s use of euphemisms is deliberate, aiming to discuss sensitive subjects such as sexual intimacy without explicitness. Pragmatic strategies involve maintaining this indirectness. By opting for dynamic equivalence, translators preserve the text’s decorum and respect, even when conveying complex legal or ritual concepts like “janabah.”
- **Communicative Impact :** Dynamic renderings not only translate words but also the overall impact of the source text. Retaining technical terms (for example, “janabah”) alongside concise clarifications helps modern readers grasp the underlying legal and cultural implications without sacrificing the euphemistic quality.
- **Use of Annotations and Footnotes :** as a pragmatic tool, annotations or footnotes can be integrated when literal translations are used. These explanatory notes provide readers with the necessary cultural, legal, and religious context, thereby bridging the gap between a strict formal equivalence and a reader- dynamic approach.

4.3 Quantitative Findings and Their Implications

The analysis of the selected verses yields the following quantitative insights :

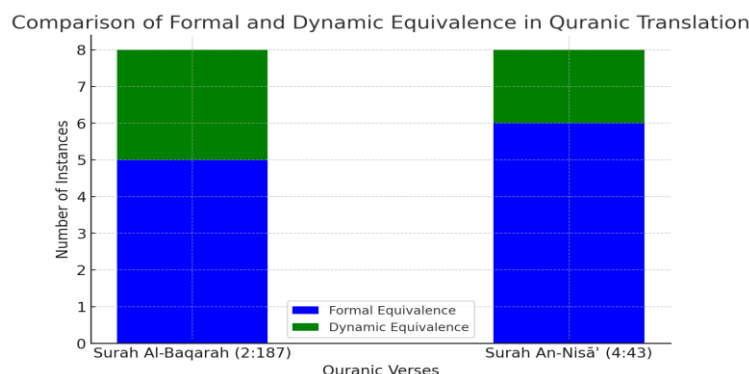
Surah Al-Baqarah (2 :187) :

- Dynamic Equivalence : 3 instances (Sahih International, Yusuf Ali, Abdel Haleem)
- Formal Equivalence : 5 instances (Pickthall, Shakir, Muhsin Khan, Arberry, M. Khan & al-Hilali)

Surah An-Nisā’ (4:43):

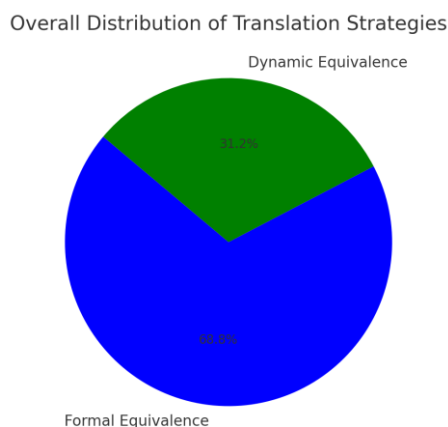
- Dynamic Equivalence: 2 instances (Yusuf Ali, Abdel Haleem)
- Formal Equivalence: 6 instances (including literal renderings by Pickthall, Shakir, Muhsin Khan, Arberry, and M. Khan & alHilali)

Fig.1. Comparison of Formal and Dynamic Equivalence in Quranic Translation



Overall, out of 16 observed instances, dynamic equivalence appears in 5 cases, while formal equivalence predominates with 11 cases. This suggests that while semantic precision is often maintained through literal translations, the more prevalent use of formal equivalence risks diluting the original euphemistic and pragmatic subtleties.

Fig.2. Overall Distribution of Translation Studies



4.4 Recommendations for Improved Translation Practices

To reconcile the need for semantic accuracy with the preservation of euphemistic nuance, the following strategies are recommended:

1. Adopt a Hybrid Translation Approach:

Blend Formal and Dynamic Equivalence: A balanced strategy that integrates literal precision with culturally sensitive, indirect phrasing can better capture the original's layered meanings. For instance, combining an indirect expression (e.g., “go to your wives”) with a clarifying annotation can maintain fidelity.

2. Integrate Pragmatic Strategies: utilize Annotations and Footnotes: When a literal rendering is necessary, supplemental notes should be provided to explain the cultural and ritual context—such as the implications of “janabah” or “الرفث.” This not only informs the reader but also preserves the original text's intent.

3. Prioritise Communicative Impact: future translations should focus on the overall effect of the text rather than strictly adhering to word-for-word renderings, ensuring that the sensitive nature of the content is communicated appropriately.

4. Enhance Interdisciplinary Collaboration: involve establishing translation committees that include linguists, Islamic scholars, and cultural experts will help ensure that both the semantic content and the pragmatic nuances are effectively rendered.

Finally, this synthesis underscores the delicate tension between formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence in the translation of Quranic euphemisms. While formal approaches offer semantic precision, they may undermine the euphemistic subtleties essential to the text's cultural and pragmatic impact. By embracing a hybrid model that combines dynamic strategies with rigorous explanatory frameworks, translators can achieve a more balanced, respectful, and contextually appropriate rendering of sensitive Quranic expressions.

5. Limitations and Future Research Directions

While the present study provides a comprehensive comparative analysis of euphemistic translations in key Quranic verses, several limitations warrant discussion :

5.1. Scope of Analysis

The study focused on nine verses as a representative sample. However, the Quran contains numerous other euphemisms and circumlocutions whose analysis could further enrich our understanding of translation strategies.

5.2 Contextual and Reader Reception Studies

The current analysis is primarily text-based. Additional research could incorporate empirical studies on reader reception to assess how various translation strategies impact understanding, emotional response, and cultural acceptability among diverse audiences.

5.3 Interdisciplinary Approaches :

Future research might also benefit from an interdisciplinary approach, integrating insights from linguistics, translation studies, religious studies, and cultural anthropology to further illuminate the complex interplay between form, function, and context in Quranic translation.

• Conclusion

The translation of euphemistic expressions in the Quran, particularly presents significant challenges. These expressions are deliberately indirect, preserving modesty and decorum while conveying essential legal and social meanings.

From a pragmatic perspective, Quranic euphemisms function not only as linguistic tools but also as mechanisms for maintaining cultural sensitivity and textual coherence. Their indirect nature

allows for a respectful discussion of sensitive topics, ensuring that the message is received appropriately by diverse audiences. However, the effectiveness of these euphemisms can be diminished in translation when the target language lacks equivalent structures or conventions.

This study has demonstrated that different translators adopt varying strategies when rendering these euphemisms into English. While literal translations often ensure semantic accuracy, they risk losing the subtlety and cultural appropriateness of the original text. Conversely, dynamic equivalence and euphemistic translations prioritize preserving the original pragmatic effect, but they may introduce ambiguity or diverge from literal meanings.

The comparison of translations highlights the spectrum between formal equivalence, which tends to be more explicit, and dynamic equivalence, which attempts to maintain the Quranic tone. Translators such as Sahih International and Abdel Haleem successfully balance clarity with euphemistic subtlety, while others, like Muhsin Khan and M. Khan & al-Hilali, favor a more direct approach that can compromise the original text's modesty.

Ultimately, the study underscores the necessity of a balanced approach to Quranic translation—one that carefully considers linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic factors. Effective translation of Quranic euphemisms requires a nuanced understanding of both the source and target languages, as well as sensitivity to the socio-cultural context of the audience. Future research could further explore reader reception and interdisciplinary methodologies to refine the translation of euphemisms in religious texts, ensuring that their intended meaning and respectful tone are faithfully conveyed. Additionally, incorporating pragmatic analysis into translation studies can provide deeper insights into how euphemisms function within the Quran and how best to preserve their impact in translation.

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