The Translatability of Schemata in the Holy Quran: Seeing the Invisible

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Abstract
This paper investigates the correctness and accuracy of some translations of the meanings of the Holy Quran in echoing the schemata of some Quranic terms. It also examines the amount of translation loss resulting from this process. Moreover, the paper highlights some reasons which made translators of the meanings of the Holy Quran lose sight of part of the culture-bound, culture sensitive and language-bound schemata. Euphemism and synonymy, however, were addressed in so far as schemata are concerned. The paper also endeavors to suggest solutions, when possible, to make up for the amount of translation loss resulting from the formal or functional equivalence opted for by many translators of the meanings of the Holy Quran which led to the activation of slightly, and sometimes utterly, different schemata. However, the translation loss is inevitable in many cases. The findings of the present paper are expected to be useful information in the translation of the meanings of the Holy Quran studies and other related areas. Three prominent translations of the meanings of Holy Quran (Abdullah Ali, Pickthall, and Al-Hilali and Khan) were consulted and resorted to tackle the main premise of the study along with one commendable Qur’anic exegesis (Ibn Katheer).

Keywords: culture-bound, functional equivalence, schemata, The Holy Quran, translation loss

Introduction
The translation loss, which refers to any distortion or misrepresentation of meaning in the translation process, is one of the most harmful phenomena in translation. It refers to the amount of meaning sacrificed in the process of conveying the meaning from one language to another. Each time we translate a text we lose part of its meaning due to the mere fact that languages are structurally different and they differ in the way they conceptualize ideas in the form of lexis. However, the problem exacerbates when it comes to authoritative texts like the Holy Quran or the Bible, among others.

Transferring the meaning of words across languages has not always been an easy mission for translators; it can be strenuous in some cases and insurmountable in other ones. Juxtaposing the meaning of words in languages at the mental level of representation poses another challenge for translators. However, this is going to be the domain of this paper with the “inevitability” of translation loss in mind.

Literature Review
Many studies have defined the concept of schemata. The following paragraphs provide a brief overview of studies conducted on the concept of schemata in general and the translatability of schemata in the Holy Quran in particular.

Barlett (1932) is the first to use the term “schema” as "an active organization of past reactions or experiences” (p. 201). He believes that our memory of discourse is not based on straight reproductions, but is constructive. This constructive process uses information from the encountered discourse, together with knowledge from past experience related to the discourse at hand to build a mental representation. Another definition is given by Rumelhart (1980) who defines schema as "a data structure for representing the genetic concepts stored in memory" (p. 34). Moreover, Cook (1989) states that the mind, stimulated by key words or phrases in the text or by the context, activates a knowledge schema. Similarly, Shakir (1995) suggests that rendering into the target language a message conveyed via text equivalent in content and function to that conveyed in the source language seems to derive not only from linguistic knowledge, but also from schematic or encyclopedic knowledge, especially when the text is culturally based.

In more recent studies, the concept of schemata is also the interest of many researchers. For example, Ajideh (2003) puts forward that schemata can be defined as the organized background knowledge which helps us predict aspects in our interpretation of discourse. The author extends that a schema (plural schemata) is a hypothetical mental structure for representing generic concepts stored in memory. It’s a sort of framework, or plan, or script. Schemata are created through experience with people, objects, and events in the world. He also argues that when we encounter something repeatedly, such as a restaurant, we begin to generalize across our restaurant experiences to develop an abstracted, generic set of expectations about what we will encounter in a restaurant. This is useful, because if someone asks you to help him/her to open the door because his/her hand is broken, you don’t have to provide all of the details about using the key, turning the key to the left, and pulling the door handle down, etc., because your schema for opening the door experience can fill in these missing details (Ajideh, 2003).
Farghal (2010) argues that correct text comprehension is based on a successful matching and integration between the text’s schematic structure and the schemata available in the translator’s encyclopedic repertoire and therefore essential for the production of an adequate translation. However, the assumption that the Holy Quran cannot be translated across languages without losing the glamorous harmony inherent to verses and sacrificing the emotiveness of cultural and language-specific terms, among others, has been all-pervasive in the Islamic heritage, history and literature (Abu-Mahfouz, 2011).

In the present paper, the researchers highlight the translation loss resulting from losing sight of the culture-bound, culture sensitive and language-bound schemata. On the one hand, culture-free schemata can easily and precisely depict the message of the source language text and they can be literally translated with no distortion of the meaning. On the other hand, culture-bound schemata call for a more functionally-oriented approach where poly-systems play a central role. (Farghal, 2004). Moreover, language-bound schemata behave in almost the same way too. As we try to make up for the amount of translation loss resulting from the functional equivalence, which is the effect the message has on the target language and the source language readers, opted for by many translators of the meanings of the Holy Quran while dealing with those linguistic phenomena, it is important to underscore the fact that there is no one factor that the choice of one a particular equivalent rests on.

With this respect, Baker (1992) claims that the choice of a suitable equivalent will always depend on the way both the writer of the source text and the producer of the target text rather than the linguistic system (s) being handled by the translator. In doing so, the translator chooses to manipulate the linguistic systems in question. Misunderstanding schemata, the domain of psycholinguistics, is mostly the source of the problem of conveying the meaning of a particular linguistic entity. It remains to say that the translation loss can’t be avoided in all cases.

**Discussion**

This paper aims at investigating the correctness and accuracy of some translations of the meanings of the Holy Quran in echoing the schemata of some Quranic terms. The researchers of the present paper discuss the amount of translation loss among translators in lights of several cultural and linguistic bounds including the culture-bound, culture sensitive, and language-bound schemata. The following paragraphs are further discussions of these different bounds.

**Free schemata**

Generally speaking, free schemata are the hypothetical mental structures for representing generic concepts stored in memory which are, by and large, universal and therefore can be grasped directly in so far as the translation of particular schemata is concerned. Farghal (2004) states that those cognitive structures whose thematic elements can be worked out on the basis of universal principles stemming from general human experience. This kind of schemata is based on the universal representation that exists in almost every culture and which is, in turn, part of the human experience and does not make a translation problem or even a gap for translators in general and translators of the Holy Quran in particular. Consider the following example to illustrate the idea:
And they say: "What sort of an apostle is this, who eats food, and walks through the streets? Why has not an angel been sent down to him to give admonition with him?

{Surah, 25: 7} [Translation by Abdullah Ali]

And they say: "Why does this Messenger (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم) eat food, and walk about in the markets (as we)? Why is not an angel sent down unto him, to be a warner with him?

{Surah, 25: 7} [Translation by al-Hilali and Khan]

And they say: What aileth this messenger (of Allah) that he eateth food and walketh in the markets? Why is not an angel sent down unto him, to be a warner with him?

{Surah, 25: 7} [Translation by Pickthall]

Obviously, the schema of “eating food” is transferred smoothly from the Source Language (SL) to the Target Language (TL) by all the translators because the schema itself is culture-free and universal in nature. In other words, a culture-free schema usually lends itself easily to direct translation. Examples of culture-free schemata are ubiquitous in the Holy Quran and all texts and they do not pose a translation problem to translators at all. In fact, there is no need to provide all of the details about eating because our schema for the eating experience can fill in these missing details.

**Bound-schemata**

Within bound-schemata, the researchers of the present paper discuss the amount of translation loss among translators in lights of culture-bound, culture-sensitive schemata, and euphemism and schemata. The following paragraphs are further discussions of these different bounds.

**Culture-bound schemata**

Palmer (1976) argues that Whorf came to a “new principle of relativity which holds that all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar or in some way can be calibrated” (p. 56). This can be attributed to the fact that when people have different linguistic backgrounds, they see the world differently. This, in turn, makes us have terms which have limitation and restriction in character to a certain culture.

Baker (1992) argues that the source-language word may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture. Strictly speaking, the hypothetical mental structures for representing the generic concepts stored in memory are available in the SL culture and completely or partially missing in the TL culture. These mental structures are dubbed culture-bound schemata. These kinds of schemata pose a serious problem for translators who usually opt...
for functional or formal equivalence, or other translation strategies to deal with it. However, transliteration reduces the amount of damage on the side of the authoritative text when it is associated with a footnote; sometimes the translation loss seems inevitable notwithstanding. The following example illustrates the idea:

1. "الذين يؤمنون بالغيب ويعبدون الصلاة ومما رزقناهم ينفقون." (الآية 3 من سورة البقرة)

Who believe in the Unseen, Are steadfast in prayer. And spend out of what We Have provided for them;
{Surah, 2: 3} (Translated by Abdullah Ali)

Who believe in the Ghaib and perform as-Salat (Iqamat-as-Salat), and spend out of what We have provided for them
{Surah, 2: 3} (Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)

Who believe in the Unseen, and establish worship, and spend of that We have bestowed upon them;
{Surah, 2: 3} (Translated by Pickthall)

The term "الصلاة" (as-salaat), which literally means "prayer", is pervasive in the Holy Quran. The hypothetical mental structures representing "الصلاة" (as-salaat) in the Arabic language and Islamic culture differ from those existing in other cultures and languages. Unlike Christians, among others who "say" their prayers, Muslims not only say their prayers but also do (or establish) them. In other words, "الصلاة" (as-salaat) in Arabic is more "ritualistic" in nature, whereas in English it is mostly "verbal" and sometimes accompanied by a certain body movements and postures. The term "الصلاة" (as-salaat), however, is "the ritualistic prayer" and better to be transliterated as "As-salaat" as many translators do, some of them fail though. This, however, tells the reader that it is performed differently. The source of schematic uniqueness resides in the performance although the idea is roughly universal.

Abdullah Ali, al-Hilali and Khan, and Pickthall rendered the term "الصلاة" (as-salaat) as "prayer", "as-Salat" and "worship" respectively. The term "prayer" is not precise for the reason discussed in the previous paragraph. Al-Hilali and Khan transliterated it as "As-Salat" which means that they were aware of the fact that there is more to the term "الصلاة" (as-salaat) than just saying it. Pickthall uses the more general word or superordinate which is "worship" as an equivalent which is very far from communicating the same meaning and cognitive image inherent to the source language term. The difference between the translators is ascribed to the schema of the term "الصلاة" which is different from the schema of "prayer" in the TL and, in turn, blurs the meaning. Consider the following example to illustrate the idea further:

2. "خذ من أموالهم صدقة تطهيرهم وتركيزهم بها وصلن علىهم إن صلاتك سكن لهم ولله سمع عليم." (الآية 103 من سورة التوبة)
Of their wealth take alms, that so thou mightiest purify and sanctify them; and pray on their behalf.

Verily thy prayers are a source of security for them: And God is One Who heareth and knoweth.

{Surah, 9: 103} (Translated by Abdullah Ali)

Take Sadaqah (alms) from their wealth in order to purify them and sanctify them with it; and invoke Allah for them. Verily, your invocations are a source of security for them; and Allah is All-Hearer, All-Knower.

{Surah, 9: 103} (Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)

Take alms of their wealth, wherewith thou mayst purify them and mayst make them grow, and pray for them. Lo! Thy prayer is an assuagement for them. Allah is Hearer, Knower.

{Surah, 9: 103} (Translated by Pickthall)

Originally, the term (صلاة) /salaat/ "prayer" means "invocation", and invocations are said rather than performed; the expression (صلاة) /salaat/ is polysemous in Arabic. Polysemy according to Palmer (1976) is the case that the same word may have a set of different meanings. In example (2) above, the three translators render the term (صلاة) /salaat/ into "prayers", "invocations", and "prayer" respectively. The term (صلاة) /salaat/ in example (1) above is different in meaning and schema from the one in example (2) but it is translated in almost the same way. In fact, “دعاء” /duaa/ (invocation). So, does the ritualistic prayer have the same meaning as invocation? No. The source of the mistranslation resides in the misunderstanding of the schemata.

### Table 1: Common religion-specific terms with their English equivalent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic term</th>
<th>English equivalent</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allah</td>
<td>God</td>
<td>English equivalents fall short of delivering the full meaning. Often, a strategy of Borrowing the SL term (loan word) + a short explanation is deployed. English equivalents are taken only as approximation to the general meaning of the terms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Salat</td>
<td>Prayers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Zakat</td>
<td>Charity</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Al Shahadah</td>
<td>Martyrdom</td>
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<td>Al Sawm</td>
<td>Fasting</td>
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<td>Al Haj</td>
<td>Pilgrimage</td>
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<td>Al Adhan</td>
<td>Call for Prayers</td>
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<td>Al Haraam</td>
<td>Forbidden</td>
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<td>Al Halal</td>
<td>Permissible</td>
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<td>Al Ethm</td>
<td>Sin</td>
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<td>Al Jihad</td>
<td>Holy war</td>
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<td>Al Qiblah</td>
<td>Prayer direction</td>
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<td>Fatwa</td>
<td>Verdict</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Al Du’aa</td>
<td>Invocation, supplication</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Al Fiqh</td>
<td>Jurisprudence</td>
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</table>
As shown in Table 1, Kashgary (2010) provides a list of common religion-specific terms with their English equivalent. Although most of these expressions make culture-specific ones, many other expressions are not mentioned notwithstanding. However, he argues that they represent a category of translation non-equivalence because they cannot be appropriately translated by providing their dictionary equivalents. Kashgary claims that the dictionary equivalents of these terms may be considered within the framework of Nida’s approximation in translation where equivalents are given only to approximate the meaning in general terms and not the details because the content of these terms is highly different from the content of their equivalents.

Kashgary (2010) puts forward that part of the difficulty in translating such terms lies in the fact that these words require an awareness of the Arabic culture with all its social values and traditions. In addition, these words represent concepts which do not exist in English. In other words, such terms are untranslatable because the schemata of the terms in the source language are culture-bound and therefore cognitively different from the ones in the target language. With this in mind, using a loan word or a loan word plus a short explanation was judged to be more precise and more accurate in rendering the full meaning of these terms. For example, the word [zakat], can be translated by using its one-word English equivalent “charity” or “alms”, as many translators did in translating Quran. However, these equivalents do not give the complete meaning of the Arabic word as it is used by Muslims. [zakat] can be more adequately translated by explaining and describing its conditions to approximate its full meaning through adding a qualifier “obligatory” or “ordained” to the English equivalent. So, the more accurate translation would be “obligatory or ordained charity” (Kashgary, 2010).

Culture-sensitive schemata

Farghal (2004) believes that culture-sensitive schemata differ from their culture-bound counterparts by the fact that they reflect susceptibility rather than uniqueness to the SL culture. Dates which are sweet fruits of various types of the palm tree are well-known fruits in many cultures and countries. However, in the Arabic and Islamic culture the image of dates is peculiarly sacred and therefore culturally sensitive. It is the first thing that almost every Muslim usually eats in Ramadan to break his/her strenuous fast. The prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) and his companions depended on dates as their main diet, and many stories and authentic Hadeeths (what the prophet Muhammad said) narrated to us from the time of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) are about dates which makes this fruit peculiar to the Arab as a person and to Arabic and Islamic culture on a broader scale of thought. Consider the following examples from the Holy Quran:

1. "ذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَالَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِهِ مَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِن قِطْمِيرٍ." (الآية 13 من سورة فاطر)

Such is God your Lord: To him belongs all Dominion. And those whom ye invoke Besides Him have not the least of power.

{Surah, 35: 13} (Translated by Abdullah Ali)

Such is Allah your Lord; His is the kingdom.
And those, Whom you invoke or call upon instead of Him own not even a Qitmir (the thin membrane over the date-stone).

{Surah, 35: 13} (Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)

Such is Allah, your Lord; His is the Sovereignty; and those unto whom ye pray instead of Him own not so much as the white spot on a date-stone.

{Surah, 35: 13} (Translated by Pickthall)

It seems that transliteration can be the best translation strategy resorted to to bridge the gap when formal or functional translation does not answer this purpose. The schema of (قطمير) “qitmir” which is a thin membrane over the date-stone is intended here because dates schemata are culturally sensitive for the Muslims in general and the Arabs in particular for the reasons discussed in the previous paragraph. In the previous example, unlike Ali who uses the term “the least of power” to convey the “meagerness” inherent to the term “قطمير” at the expense of the source language schema, al-Hilali and Khan were aware of the importance of the schema of the SL text. They transliterated it and introduced a definition of what “قطمير” is all about. However, Pickthall lost sight of the whole schema and changed it all together. He sacrificed the original cognitive structures of the SL text.

Have they a share in dominion or power? Behold, they give not a farthing To their fellow-men?

{Surah, 4: 53} (Translated by Abdullah Ali)

Or have they a share in dominion? Then in that case they would not give mankind even a speck on the back of a date-stone.

{Surah, 4: 53} (Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)

Or have they even a share in the Sovereignty? Then in that case, they would not give mankind even a speck on a date-stone.

{Surah, 4: 53} (Translated by Pickthall)

It can be seen that Ali opted for functional equivalent sacrificing the original cognitive structures in the SL text. He translated the term “نقير” (naqeer), which literally means the speck on the back of a date-stone, as a “farthing” which is a coin worth a quarter of a penny in old British money. This, however, might sound awkward or unfamiliar even to a native speaker of English and it needs further explanation as it does not make sense at all.

Like al-Hilali and Khan, Pickthall gave a description of the term in question. “نقير” (naqeer) is “a speck on a date-stone”, which is, to a large extent, a successful translation. However, the cognitive structures inherent to the term “نقير” (naqeer) is that of “a bird’s beak” or beakful, i.e., “as much food as a bird’s beak will hold or carry.” “نقير” (naqeer) refers to the spot that remains when a bird hits something relatively soft. However, since there is not a well-
established word in English with this meaning and schema, a translation strategy as translation by description makes a good way to tackle this and such issues.

Another term related to dates mentioned in the Holy Quran is “فتيل” (fateel) (literally: cord or wick). The meaning of such an expression is “nothing”. If someone does not own even a cord on the date-stone, then he/she technically owns nothing. The Holy Quran uses a peculiar cognitive image to communicate this message; therefore, it should, if possible, be kept as it is. The following paragraphs show different translations of “فتيل” (fateel):

2. "أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يُزَكُّونَ أَنفُسَهُمْ بَلِ اللُّّ يُزَكِّي مَن يَشَاءُ وَلاَ يُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلاً" (الآية 49 من سورة النساء)

Hast thou not turned Thy thought to those Who claim sanctity? For themselves? Nay – but God Doth sanctify whom He pleaseth. But never will they Fail to receive justice In the least little thing.

{Surah, 4: 49} (Translated by Abdullah Ali)

Have you not seen those (Jews and Christians) who claim sanctity for themselves? Nay, but Allah sanctifies whom He wills, and they will not be dealt with injustice even equal to the extent of a scalish thread in the long slit of a date-stone.

{Surah, 4: 49} (Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)

Hast thou not seen those who praise themselves for purity? Nay, Allah purifieth whom He wills, and they will not be wronged even the hair upon a date-stone.

{Surah, 4: 49} (Translated by Pickthall)

Ali rendered “فتيل” (fateel) as “the least little thing” which conveys the overall meaning but sacrifices the schemata. al-Hilali and Khan always opt for a description of the term that has no direct equivalent in the TL which is a successful translation strategy to bridge many cases of translation non-equivalence at the word level. Pickthall used the expression “the hair upon a date-stone” which does not convey the meaning as “a scalish thread in the long slit of a date-stone”, used by al-Hilali and Khan, because “فتيل” (fateel) is in fact as thick as a tread not as thin as a hair. The cognitive structures of the SL expression are not conveyed perfectly.

In other cases the cultural sensitivity arises from the fact that the term is geographically restricted. This, in turn, makes it better to render the term in a way that reflects the connotative meaning related to the word in question. Most translators of the meanings of the Holy Quran used a more general word or the superordinate because the target language lacks a well-established word to communicate the same meaning in the source language at the expense of the SL schemata. Consider the following example:

4. "وَلْيَتَرَى أَنَّ النَّّاسَ يَضْلِعُونَ بِأَهْلِهِمْ نِسَاءً أَوْهُمْ فَأَقْلِبُونَ" (الآية 4 من سورة الأعراف)
How many towns have We Destroyed (for their sins)? Our punishment took them on a sudden by night
Or while they slept For their afternoon rest.
{Surah, 7: 4} (Translated by Abdullah Ali)
And a great number of towns (their population)
We destroyed (for their crimes).
Our torment came upon them (suddenly) by night or while they were taking their midday nap.
{Surah, 7: 4} (Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)
How many a township have We destroyed! As a raid by night, or while they slept at noon.
{Surah, 7: 4} (Translated by Pickthall)

The word “قَآئِلُونَ”, which means being in a state of rest or sleep taken after lunch, especially in hot countries, is rendered as "afternoon rest", "midday nap", and "slept at noon" respectively. The three expressions might describe a rest or short sleep taken in the afternoon but none of them tells the reader that this sleep is related to “hot countries” and is usually taken after lunch. In many hot countries as is the case in some Arab and African ones, it is difficult to work during the midday time, so people in those regions are used to be, and most of them still, in the habit of having a rest or nap in the midday time especially after lunch because the climate is very harsh and it is very strenuous to work during that period.

The high-level conceptual structure or framework that organizes our prior knowledge about “القيلولة” (qailuula), “having a short nap after lunch especially in hot countries”, help us interpret the meaning of this culturally sensitive expression. In English, however, the loanword “siesta”, originally a Spanish word from Latin “sexta”, communicates almost the same meaning as “قَآئِلُونَ". But “siesta” is a midday or afternoon rest or nap, especially as taken in Spain and Latin America. In other words, the schemata are geographically restricted. A siesta is common in Spain because Spain is a warm country as compared to other European countries in the north of Europe. Thus, “siesta” would be too narrow and “nap” would be too general which means that the translation loss is sometimes inevitable in so far as schemata are concerned. This and many similar expressions are prevalent in the Holy Quran and they need careful handling from a translation point of view.

Euphemism and schemata
Euphemism is a substitution for a socially undesirable lexical item to avoid saying an unpleasant or socially offensive word. Euphemism is not only used to avoid prohibited words, but also annoying, unpleasant or religiously unacceptable ones. Obviously, the term "avoid" pops out each time we try to define the term "euphemism" and collocates with it. Generally speaking, euphemistic expressions, in some cases, were a source of losing sight of schemata in the Holy Quran. The following is an example of euphemistic expression:

"وَالْقُوَاعِدُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ..." (الآية 60 من سورة النور)
Such elderly women as are past the prospect of marriage, there is no blame on them

If they lay aside their (outer) garment, provided they make not a wanton display of their beauty" {Surah, 24: 60} (Translated by Abdullah Ali)

And as for women past child-bearing

who do not expect wed-lock, it is no sin on them if they discard their (outer) clothing in such a way as not to show their adornment.

{Surah, 24: 60} (Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)

As for women past child-bearing, who have no hope of marriage, it is no sin for them if they discard their (outer) clothing in such a way as not to show adornment.

{Surah, 24: 60} (Translated by Pickthall)

It can be noted that instead of keeping the schematically euphemistic dimension of the expression "القواعدد مدن النسداء", some translators use a term which is as offensive as the word "spinster" which is socially unacceptable in the Arabic and English languages and cultures. The Quranic expression has a highly euphemistic schema and some translators give as an equivalent expression with relatively dysphemistic schema. In other words, the schema of the source language text is sacrificed.

In the Holy Quran, the schemata of those unmarried women are depicted as “sitting women, and not wishing to marry (of their own choice)”. Those euphemistic cognitive structures are spoiled and not conveyed. The problem here is that rendering the expression in such a way as “sitting women, and not wishing to marry” does not, in any way, help the target language reader, English readers in this context, understand the original message which is a case of euphemism. The translator of the text is obliged to give explanation to make clear the message. In Arabic, “القواعدد مدن النساء” is understood for an average speaker to mean “spinster” in the form of euphemism. The following example illustrates the idea further:

"وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ (5) إِلاَّ عَلَى أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَلَكَتِ أَيْمَانِهِمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرِ مُلْمِينَ.
(6) (الآية-5 6 من سورة المؤمنون)

Who guard their modesty, Except with those joined To them in the marriage bond, Or (the captives) whom

Their right hands possess. For (in their case) they are Free from blame,

{Surah, 23: 5-6} (Translated by Abdullah Ali)

5. And those who guard their chastity (i.e. private parts, from illegal sexual acts)
6. Except from their wives or (slaves)

that their right hands possess, for then,
they are free from blame;
{Surah, 23: 5-6} (Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)
And those who guard their modesty
Save form their wives or (slaves) that their right
hands possess, for then they are not blameworthy,
{Surah, 23: 5-6} (Translated by Pickthall)

The expression "مَدا مَلَكَدتْ أَيْمَدانُهُمْ which literally means (what their right hands own) is used in the original text as a way of avoiding the ugly idea of (slavery). Ironically, all the translators above insist on using the terms that the original text tries to avoid because they are either obsessed with the functional equivalence or because they are unaware of the euphemistic dimension of this usage. They, maybe, are trying to be faithful to the source language the thing that makes them lose sight of the schemata of the word in question. This, however, causes irreversible damage to the coherence of the TLT. The following is Arberry’s (1980) translation of the same verses “And guard their private parts save from their wives and what their right hands own”.

Yet, it is true that a translation like "what their right hands own” might sound awkward to a native speaker of English, but using the expression "slaves" or "captives" sounds not only more awkward but also more dysphemistic and taxing on the side of the source language text which intends to euphemize a socially stigmatized cognitive image.

**Language-bound schemata**

Language-bound schemata represent formal linguistic features that coincide, per chance, with content schemata, thus interlocking form and content in aesthetic, subtle ways. Typical examples of language-bound schemata include wordplay and rhyme, which are features that rarely correspond between remote languages such as English and Arabic. Language-bound schemata, we believe, can derive from other semantic phenomena such as synonymy, polysemy (as suggested by Farghal himself), antonymy, etc.; all sense relations and semantically complex words (Farghal, 2004).

**Synonymy and schemata**

In the different translations of the meanings of the Holy Quran synonymy poses a source of mistranslation and translation loss in so far as schemata are concerned. Since there is no such thing as perfect or complete synonyms, synonyms have slightly different schemata. Therefore, the translation loss is inevitable in some cases. Sometimes the idea is totally or partially missing in the target language or mistakenly thought of to be the same as another concept. However, when the translator is aware of this difference in schemata, he/she usually bridges this gap by using a more general word a “superordinate”.

Al-Qinai (2011) suggests that the versatility of Quranic lexemes and styles are not captured in most of the English versions of the Quran. For example, the fine subtleties of Quranic synonymous nuances are best expressed in the words “سنة” /sana/ and “عام” /’aam/
which are both rendered as ‘year’ despite the fact that "سنة" /sana/ is often associated with suffering, perseverance and agony while "عام" /aam/ is occasionally used in the context of benevolence and good deeds. He also argues that this lexical void in English results in under-translating the implications of the Arabic verse. For example, "سنة" /sana/ is used with a negative sense to imply a long life of misery and affliction that will not benefit those who cling to life. Such examples are many in the Holy Quran and the following is one of them:

"وَما أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ مِنْهُمْ فَمَا أَوْفَجْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ خَيْلٍ وَلاَ رِكَابٍ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يُسَلِّطُ رُسُلَهُ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ." (الآية 6 من سورة الحشر)

What Allah has bestowed on his apostle (and taken away) from them – for this Ye made no expedition
With either cavalry or camelry: But Allah gives power To his apostles over Any He pleases. and God
Has power over all things.
{Surah, 59: 6} (Translated by Abdullah Ali)
And what Allah gave as booty (Fa`a`) to
His messenger (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم)
from them – for this you made no expedition with either cavalry or camelry.
But Allah gives power to His messengers over whomever He wills. And Allah is
Able to do all things.
{Surah, 59: 6} (Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)
And that which Allah gave as spoil unto His messenger
from them, ye urged not any horse or riding-camel for the sake thereof, but Allah giveth His messenger lordship over whom He will. Allah is Able to do all things.
{Surah, 59: 6} (Translated by Pickthall)

In the abovementioned example, the word (أفاء) /faa`a/ is rendered into "bestowed on", "gave as booty (fai`)", and "gave as spoil" by Abdullah Ali, al-Hilali and Khan and Pickthall respectively. In Arabic we distinguish between "الغنائم" /?anaa`m/ and "فيئ" /fai`/. The two terms are near synonyms, never perfect ones, if there are any. The first one "الغنائم" /?anaa`m/ refers to "spoils" taken in war, of course, after fight. The latter, however, is used to refer to things taken from the disbelievers without fighting. The fighting and force schemata are totally excluded. If one group of people goes to fight another and the other group flees leaving their precious and valuable things behind them, those things are called "فيئ" /fai`/ which is derived from the verb "أفاء" /faa`a/.

According to Ibn Katheer, (1998), "الفئي" /alfai`/ refers to what is taken from disbelievers without fighting or making expedition with either cavalry or camelry. However, "الغنائم" /?anaa`m/
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/؟اناء الم/، according to refers to what is taken from disbelievers with fighting or making expedition with either cavalry or camelry (Ibn Katheer, 1998). In other words, the cognitive structure of the first one is partially different from the second one. The mistranslation, in the case of Pickthall, and the translation loss, in the case of Abdullah Ali, is due to the fact that the translator is either unaware of the difference or because they think that they are complete synonyms. A footnote explaining this cognitive difference between /؟اناء الم/ and /؟فيئ/ helps though.

Abdullah Ali uses the term "bestowed on", not spoils, which gives the impression that the schema of the original term is different from /؟اناء الم/. Al-Hilali and Khan realize that there is more to the term than taking things in war as spoils, as suggested by Pickthall. Nevertheless, the term makes a culture-bound schema that defies formal equivalence. Using “gave as booty” accompanied by a transliteration, as suggested by al-Hilali and Khan, would be the best solution. Pickthall’s translation does not show any difference between /؟اناء الم/ and /؟فيئ/ which leads to good amount of translation loss.

*Complex schemata*

Baker (1992) suggests that a single word which consists of a single morpheme can sometimes express a more complex set of meanings than a whole sentence. She provides an example of such semantically complex word is “arruaÇão”, a Brazilian word which means “clearing the ground under coffee trees of rubbish and piling it in the middle of the row in order to aid in the recovery of beans dropped during harvesting” (p. 22). In other words, the schemata of the word conjure up many different images in the mind of the recipient. We can find many examples of semantically complex words which pose a serious challenge for the translators of the meanings of the Holy Quran. Look at the following example:

وَالَّذِينَ أَجَنَبَوْا الْطَّاغُوتََ وَٱلَّذِينَ ٱجْتَنَبُواْ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ ٱلْبُشْرَىٰ فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ“

Those who eschew Evil, And fall not into It’s worship and turn To God (in repentance) For them is good news So announce the good news To my servants.

{Surah, 39: 17} (Translated by Abdullah Ali)

Those who avoid At-Taghut (false deities) by not worshipping them and turn to Allah (in repentance), for them are glad tidings; so announce the good news to My slaves-

{Surah, 39: 17} (Translated by al-Hilali and Khan)

And those who put away false gods lest they should worship them and turn to Allah in repentance, for them there are glad tidings. Therefore give good tidings (O Muhammad) To my bondmen

{Surah, 39: 17} (Translated by Pickthall)
The Arabic word taghut or taaghoot (ar. طاغوت, ṭāġūt, pl. ṭawāğıt) means to "cross the limits, overstep boundaries," or "to rebel." In Islamic theology, the word refers to idolatry or to the worship of anything except Allah. The Arabic taghut is variously interpreted to refer to idols, a specific tyrant, an oracle, or an opponent of the Prophet.

A semantically complex set of meanings are implied in the word “الطاغوت” (attaaghuut) than can be contained in a whole sentence or even a long list of things. According to almost all exegeses (interpretations of the Holy Quran), “الطاغوت” (attaaghuut) means everything that is worshipped apart from Allah. It could be “a cow”, “the sun”, “an idol”, “a human being”, “Buddha”, “the devil”, “an ant”, or anything imaginable. Ali rendered “taghut” as “evil” but evil restricts and narrows the schemata inherent to the source language word and therefore does not best convey the meaning.

As usual, al-Hilali and Khan transliterate culture and language bound expressions which are, to a large extent, successful because no other translation strategy serves the meaning in a better way. Pickthall translates it as “false deities” which also does not provide us with the full schemata of the original term. Apparently, such semantically complex terms, which are also schematically complex, do not lend themselves to straightforward translation and pose an insurmountable challenge for translators.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is important to indicate that the translators of the Holy Quran and other authoritative texts cannot provide all the different senses possible of some words because they belong to: culture-bound, culture sensitive, language-bound, euphemism, synonym, and polysemy. However, the context itself allows for many possibilities. More to the point, the translation loss, in some cases, is due to the fact that translators mistranslate some expressions sacrificing the schemata inherent to them and in other cases the translation loss can not have been avoided as languages are different in the way they lexicalize things because, as suggested by Whorf in the introduction to this paper, all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe.

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