



Islamic religious terms in English – translation vs. transliteration in Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies' translation of *An-Nawawī's Forty Ḥadīths*

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DOI: 10.12807/ti.108201.2016.a08

Abstract: This article examines the problem of translation versus transliteration of Islamic Religious Terms (IRTs) into English. The main objective of the article is to semantically investigate translation versus transliteration of IRTs in English as lexical items that include names of Allah, names of prophets and their companions, names of sacred places, and terms related to the pillars and rituals of Islam so as to determine situations where either of the two techniques should be applied. Hence, the article discusses the use of translation versus transliteration in Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies' translation of *An-Nawawī's Forty Ḥadīths* (2002) as an example of an Islamic religious discourse in English where the conflict between the two techniques is apparent. Based on the discussion and analysis of some examples of IRTs from the selected translation, I conclude the article by pointing out that translation of IRTs into English is only appropriate when words of the source language (SL) and words of the target language (TL) are cross-culturally equivalent, having the same referents and connotations in both languages, while transliteration is recommended for all other IRT situations in which SL and TL words are partially-equivalent or non-equivalent.

Keywords: translation, transliteration, Islamic religious terms, equivalence, non-equivalence, culture-specific terms

1. Introduction

Over a long period of time, academic researchers in the field of translation studies have posed questions on certain issues related to the translation of sacred and religious texts, which Douglas Robinson (2000, p. 103-107) summarizes as follows: Can or should religious texts be translated? How, when, for whom, and with what safeguards or controls should religious texts be translated? Is a translated religious text still sacred, or is it a mere 'copy' of the sacred text? The result is that two approaches toward the translation of religious texts can be distinguished: untranslatability and translatability. As Ali Yunis Aldahesh (2014) notes:

Scholars are of two different standpoints as to translatability/untranslatability of texts from a given source language into any target language. While some of them (e.g., Von Humboldt, Quine, Virginia Woolf, among others) insist that translation is ultimately impossible, others (e.g., Newmark) believe that everything is translatable and can be translated either directly or indirectly into a target language. (p. 25).

Aldaresh argues that the latter standpoint, i.e. translatability, seems to be more reasonable than the former one, i.e. untranslatability “due to the expansion in the concept of translation, and the many strategies that a translator can resort to when confronted with a linguistic and/or cultural gap between two languages” (2014, p. 26).

According to the first standpoint, i.e. untranslatability, a religious sacred text, or the source text (ST) in translation terms, represents what is divine, whereas the translated text, or the target text (TT), represents what is human. Since it is impossible for the word of the human to be equal to that of the Divine, it would be impossible to translate religious texts. A quite distinctive opinion related to untranslatability is provided by the German language philosopher Walter Benjamin, who argues that a “sacred text is untranslatable (...) precisely because the meaning and the letter cannot be dissociated” (Derrida, 1985, p. 103). Conversely, the second standpoint, i.e. translatability, makes it clear that it is necessary for all humans to understand religious texts, and this need is served by translating the form and content of the ST as faithfully as possible into the target language. The translatability approach involves a number of strategies which revolve around two main approaches to equivalence. The first approach seeks to achieve “formal equivalence” which “focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content. In such a translation one is concerned with such correspondences as poetry to poetry, sentence to sentence, and concept to concept” (Nida, 1964b, p. 156). The second approach is influenced by what Eugene Nida (1964a, p. 159) describes as “dynamic equivalence” which means that “[t]he relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message.” That is to say, the translator aims to translate the text into the level of linguistic aptitude common to the receptor’s language.

A judicious balancing of translation approaches and choice of strategies is not merely an academic question: as stated by Khaleel Mohammed (2005, p. 58), “[s]ince fewer than 20 percent of Muslims speak Arabic, this means that most Muslims study the text only in translation.” The continuous growth of Muslim communities in English-speaking countries has been accompanied by increased demand for authoritative English versions of religious texts such as the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth. In this context, the rendering of Islamic religious terms (IRTs) into English also acquires special significance. In this article, IRTs are lexical items that include names of Allah (*Al-Raḥmān*¹, *Al-Raḥīm*, etc.), names of the prophets (*Muḥammad*, *Nūḥ*, *Mūsā*, etc.) and their companions (*Abū Bakr*, *‘Alī*, *Abū Hurayrah*, etc.), names of sacred places (*Makkah*, *Madīnah*, etc.), and terms related to the pillars of Islam (*shahādah*, *ṣalāh*, *zakāh*, etc.), *fiqh* and sacred texts (*Qur’ān* and *Ḥadīths*).

The Qur’ān and Ḥadīths are considered the two primary sources of *sharī‘ah* (i.e. moral and religious laws) in Islam. The Qur’ān, the main religious text of Islam, is the word of Allah, and Ḥadīths are the sayings and statements of Prophet Muḥammad that are regarded as important tools for understanding the Qur’ān. With regard to Islamic religious texts, and the Qur’ān and Ḥadīths in particular, translators ought to take into consideration certain textual qualities and constraints. In Muslim belief and tradition, the sacred or central religious texts are protected by Allah from any tampering or interpolation by any human, including

¹ The transliteration system used in this article is the ALA-LC (1997) Romanization for Arabic. In their translation, Ibrāhīm and Johnson-Davies followed the transliteration system of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd edition, 1960–2005).

translators. Allah has promised to protect the Holy Book, (الحجر 9) (إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ), which Al-Hilali and Khan (1999) translate as, “Verily, We, It is We Who have sent down the *Dhikr* (i.e. the Qur’ān) and surely, We will guard it (from corruption)” (Al-Hijr, 9), and to punish those who dare to change His words, (البقرة 79) (فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ) (البقرة 79), “Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands and then say, ‘This is from Allah’” (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1999, Al-Baqarah, 79). A similar warning is made by Prophet Muḥammad to those who might dare change the meaning of his statements or narrate a ḥadīth knowing it to be false. The Prophet said, (مَنْ كَذَبَ عَلَيَّ مُتَعَمِّدًا فَلْيَتَّبِعُوا مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ) (متعمداً فليتبوا مقعده من النار), which Muhsin Khan (1996) translates as “Do not tell a lie against me for whoever tells a lie against me (intentionally) then he will surely enter the Hell-fire” [1:106-O.B.] (*Summarized Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, Chapter 28, Ḥadīth 90).

Another unique quality of religious texts in Islam is that their Arabic nature is highly stressed. The Qur’ān, for example, uses a heightened form of Arabic that is unlike any other Arabic text in its manner and use of language (إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ) (يوسف 2) “Verily, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur’ān in order that you may understand” (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1999, Yūsūf, 2). This point is emphasized by Mahmoud Ayoub (1997, p. xi), who maintains that because the Qur’ān stresses its Arabic nature, Muslim scholars believe that any translation cannot be more than an approximate interpretation, intended only as a tool for the study and understanding of the original Arabic text. Similarly, Ahmed Abdel Fattah M. Ali (2006, p.19) states that “The Qur’ān exists in its original language, i.e. Arabic. Muslim scholars unanimously agree that the Qur’ān is only the Qur’ān when it is in Arabic, in its original wording as revealed to Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him)”. Indeed, this notion of the Arabic nature of the Qur’ān is confirmed throughout the Qur’ān. The Arabic nature of the Prophet’s Ḥadīths is also emphasised, (وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانٍ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ) (إبراهيم 4) “And We sent not a Messenger except with the language of his people, in order that he might make (the Message) clear for them” (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1999, Ibrāhīm, 4). Consequently, this view holds that proper understanding of Qur’ān and Ḥadīths is not possible without suitable knowledge of the Arabic language.

Therefore, the main objective of this article is to semantically investigate translation versus transliteration of these Islamic terms in English so as to determine situations where translation or transliteration becomes the appropriate strategy. To achieve its purpose, this article examines the use of translation versus transliteration in *An-Nawawī’s Forty Ḥadīths* (2002), translated by Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies.

2. Theoretical background

As a field of study, translation is the process of interpretation of the meaning of a source text written in a source language and subsequent production of an equivalent target text written in a target language. Translation is defined as “an inter-linguistic transfer procedure, comprising the interpretation of a source text and the production of a target text with the intent of establishing a relation of equivalence between the two texts” (Delisle, Lee-Jahnke & Cormier, 1999, p. 188). The concept of “equivalence” introduced in the above definition is explained by the cited authors as a “relation of identity established by a translator between two translation units whose discourse function is identical or almost

identical in their respective languages” (1999, p. 137). Juan C. Sager (1994, p. 142) defines the concept of equivalence in translation as, “It is generally recognized that the relationship of a source and a target text is one of cognitive, pragmatic and linguistic equivalences”. However, there are certain translation situations in which there is no “equivalence at word level” between SL and TL, as used by Mona Baker (1992, p. 12) in her book *In Other Words*. Baker refers mainly to the lexical meaning of the word, which may be thought of as “the specific value it has in a particular linguistic system and the ‘personality’ it acquires through usage within that system”. Translation of sacred and religious texts is one of these occasions in which non-equivalence at word level may occur. Non-equivalence at word level, as Baker (1992, p. 20) states, means that “[t]he target language has no direct equivalent for a word which occurs in the source text”.

Transliteration as a translation strategy

When simple equivalence is not available, the translator must call upon more elaborate techniques or translation strategies, which may be understood as the set of rules or principles used to reach the goals determined by the translating situation. Hans Peter Krings (1986, p. 175) defines translation strategy as “the translator’s potentially conscious plans for solving concrete translation problems in the framework of a concrete translation task”. Transliteration is one type of translation strategy. Wright and Budin (1997, p. 257) define transliteration as “an operation whereby the characters of an alphabetic writing system are represented by characters from another alphabetic writing system”. Some scholars such as John Napier note that both translation and transliteration share common underlying processes although the former represents free interpretation and the latter represents literal interpretation. Napier (2002) defines translation as “the process by which concepts and meanings are translated from one language into another, by incorporating cultural norms and values; assumed knowledge about these values, and the search for linguistic and cultural equivalents”. Conversely, transliteration is defined as “literal interpretation” (p. 28). Napier’s definitions of both translation and transliteration make it clear that in translation – being a “free interpretation” – the translator closely follows the patterns of the target language whereas in transliteration – being a “literal interpretation” – the translator closely follows the patterns of the source language.

However, transliteration has certain disadvantages that have led some translators and researchers in translation studies to advocate translation rather than transliteration of religious terms. For example, transliterated IRTs may suggest a pronunciation in English which is different from the pronunciation of the Arabic original. The pronunciation of the transliterated words ‘*Abd Allāh*’ (عبد الله) and ‘*Isrā*’ (إسراء) in English is different from their pronunciation in Arabic in which they are pronounced with initial ‘*ayn*’ (ع) /ʕ/ in ‘*Abd Allāh*’ and final ‘*hamzah*’ (ء) /ʔ/ in ‘*Isrā*’. This problem stems from the absence of phonetic equivalences in English:

Ideally, one would hope for a one-to-one mapping of the graphemes, though this is not possible in Arabic-English transliteration due to the absence of consonantal equivalences in one of the two languages. The problem is compounded by the fact that short vowels are not represented by letters in Arabic but by vocalization diacritics, which are rarely used except in the Qur’ān. (Kharusi & Salman, 2011, p. 3).

Yet, the absence of phonetic equivalences in one of the two languages can be addressed by the use of special symbols, diacritics, and combinations of letters to change the sound value of the letter to which they are added, and thus compensate for the absence of phonetic equivalences between SL and TL combinations of letters (e.g. using the combination *gh* /y/ to stand for the Arabic letter *ghayn* (غ), or using *ṣ* /s/ to represent the Arabic letter *ṣād* (ص).

Another problem in the transliteration of IRTs is that the transliterated form may give a sense of the exotic and of cultural difference. Commenting on M. A. S. Abdel Haleem's *The Qur'ān, A New Translation*, Khaleel Mohammed (2005) recommends translation rather transliteration:

The translator renders the Arabic *Allah* as *God*, an astute choice, since the question of why many Muslims refuse to use the word *God* as a functional translation has created the misconception for many that Muslims worship a different deity than the Judeo-Christian creator. (p. 67).

Similarly, Ahmed Abdel Azim ElShiekh and Mona Ahmed Saleh (2011, p. 146) note that:

The use of transliterated religious terms rather than translations reflects some kind of an exclusive attitude rather than an inclusive one on part of the language user. In other words, it originates from as well as displays a high estimation of the transliterated Islamic concepts at the expense of their counterparts in other religions..

ElShiekh and Saleh (2011) assume that the use of transliteration rather than translation of IRTs may reflect an anti-others attitude, whereas translated IRTs are probably more favourable in discourses that advocate dialogue with the religious other: “[i]t turns out to be the better option for Muslims writing in English about Islamic religious concepts to resort to translation rather than transliteration.” (p. 146). However, this argument focuses only on the perception of non-Muslim readers of Islamic religious texts in English, which might be negative for reasons other than the insistence on transliterating IRTs and ignores other advantages that the transliteration of IRTs may yield.

One such advantage is that transliteration is more appropriate with IRTs that have no direct equivalents in the TL. Also, transliteration strategy allows back-translation, so that readers, translators and researchers can easily reconvert the transliterated IRT from English into Arabic. For instance, reconvertling transliterated words such as *Allāh*, *zakāh*, *ṣalāh*, and *hajj* back into Arabic as الله, الزكاة, الصلاة and الحج is much easier than reconvertling translated words such as *god*, *alms*, *prayer*, and *pilgrimage*, which might be rendered as إله, صدقة, دعاء and رحلة إلى مكان مقدس respectively.

It is important to note that none of the aforementioned English words (*God*, *alms*, *prayer*, and *pilgrimage*) actually convey the true religious connotations of the Arabic words. Translating *ṣalāh* as *prayer* is not precise enough, as *prayer* can indicate several different ways of relating to *Allāh*; personal prayer or supplication is called *du'ā'* (literally *supplication*) in Islamic usage. Translating *zakāh* as *alms* will not confirm the distinction between *zakāh* as an obligatory act of worship and *sadaqah* as a voluntary act of giving alms. Also, translating *hajj* as *pilgrimage* does not necessarily refer to journeying to Mecca during the month of *Dhū Al-Hijjah* to perform religious duties. Also, if we accept the word *pilgrimage*, regardless of its wide range of connotations, as an equivalent to *hajj*, then what is the word that will be used to stand for to the same journey to Mecca, performed

by Muslims, which can be undertaken at any time of the year (i.e. *'umrah*)? Even if the translator uses both words *God* and *god* in English to mark the distinction between *Allāh* (الله) and *ilāh* (اله), this will not be possible in a language such as German where all nouns are capitalized, and in this case the German word *Gott* will be used to refer to both *Allāh* (الله) and *ilāh* (اله). Another advantage of transliteration is that the transliterated form looks more like an English word since it is written using the alphabetical system of English. Therefore, many translators may choose to transliterate words and thus create new words in English, instead of using existing English words with partially equivalent meanings.

3. Research questions and method

Throughout this article I will attempt to semantically investigate translation versus transliteration of IRTs in English in Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies' translation of *An-Nawawī's Forty Ḥadīths*. The main focus will be on key lexical items that include names of Allah, names of prophets and their companions, names of sacred places, and terms related to the pillars and rituals of Islam so as to determine situations where either of the two techniques should be applied. Some of the major questions that the article attempts to answer are: How well do Ibrahim and Johnson-Davies manage to translate IRTs into English in their translation of *An-Nawawī's Forty Ḥadīths*? In what ways are IRTs unique lexical items? When should the translator use translation or transliteration in translating IRTs into English? Are there any translation situations in which transliteration of IRTs is a must?

In order to find answers to the aforementioned questions, I will make use of key concepts and ideas from the field of semantics to analyse examples of IRTs in Ibrahim and Johnson-Davies' translation of *An-Nawawī's Forty Ḥadīths*. With its focus on the study of meaning, changes in the signification of words and theories of denotation, connotation and ambiguity, semantics proves itself an essential approach to explore problems of understanding and word selection in the process of translating IRTs into English. In the discussion of examples of IRTs in Ibrahim and Johnson-Davies' translation of *An-Nawawī's Forty Ḥadīths*, a three-level analysis is attempted. First, the denotational and connotational meanings of selected IRTs are illustrated. According to Xiuguo Zhang, "The meaning of a word has two aspects: denotation and connotation. Denotation is the specific, direct, and literal meaning of a word. Connotation is the associative or suggestive meaning of a word" (2005, p. 53). Second, the meanings of the selected IRTs are sought in relation to their contexts in the Qur'ān and Prophet Muḥammad's Ḥadīth. Finally, attempts are made to provide alternative or appropriate English translations of some IRTs which might convey complexity and ambiguity.

4. Results & discussion

An-Nawawī's Forty Ḥadīths is a small but popular book in which Al-Nawawī gathered forty-two of the sayings of Prophet Muḥammad, which together form an explanation of the most important aspects of Islam. What is significant about the selected translation of *An-Nawawī's Forty Ḥadīths* by Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies is that it is made by two persons whose cultural and academic backgrounds complement each other. Ibrahim is a Professor of Arabic

Table 1. IRTs in *An-Nawawī's Forty Ḥadīths* and their Arabic counterparts

ST Word	TT Word	Ḥadīth No.	Strategy Used
الله	Allāh	1	Transliteration
محمد	Muḥammad	2	Transliteration
عمر	'Umar	2	Transliteration
الإسلام	Islam	2	loan word
نبي	Prophet	2	Translation
رسول	Messenger	2	Translation
الزكاة	<i>zakāt</i>	2	Transliteration
الصلاة	prayer	2	Translation
الحج	pilgrimage	2	Translation
البيت الحرام	the House	2	Translation
الايمن	<i>imān</i>	2	Transliteration
اليوم الآخر	Last Day	2	Translation
الاحسان	<i>iḥsān</i>	2	Transliteration
الساعة	the Hour	2	Translation
جبريل	Gabriel	2	Translation
رمضان	Ramadan	3	loan word
الجنة	Paradise	4	Translation
النار	Hell-fire	4	Translation
الرزق	means of livelihood	4	Translation
عائشة	'A'isha	5	Transliteration
النصيحة	sincerity	7	Translation
أبو هريرة	Abū Huraira	9	Transliteration
آية	verse	10	Translation
سورة	chapter	10	Translation
الاحسان	proficiency	17	Translation
السيئة	bad deed	18	Translation
الحسنة	good deed	19	Translation
الحلال	lawful	22	Translation
الحرام	forbidden	22	Translation
الحمد لله	<i>Al-ḥamdu lillāh</i> [Praise be to Allah]	23	Transliteration & Translation
سبحان الله	<i>Subḥāna'llāh</i> [How far is Allah from every imperfection]	23	Transliteration & Translation
الصدقة	charity	23	Translation
الصبر	patience	23	Translation
الجن	Jinn	24	loan word
الصحابة	Companions	25	Translation
تسبيحة	<i>tasbīḥa</i>	25	Transliteration
تكبيرة	<i>takbīra</i>	25	Transliteration
تحميدة	<i>tahmīda</i>	25	Transliteration
تهليلة	<i>tahlīla</i>	25	Transliteration
أجر	reward	25	Translation
وزر	sin	25	Translation
البر	righteousness	27	Translation
السنة	<i>sunna</i>	28	Transliteration
الخلفاء الراشدين	Rashidite Caliphs	28	Translation
بدعة	innovation	28	Translation
الجهاد	<i>Jihād</i>	29	Transliteration
الفرائض	religious duties	30	Translation
منكر	evil action	34	Translation
التقوى	piety	35	Translation
كربة	grief	36	Translation
النوافل	supererogatory works	38	Translation

literature, and is active in Islamic scholarship, and Johnson-Davies is an eminent Arabic-English literary translator. Table 1 above contains examples of IRTs in Ibrahim and Johnson-Davies' translation of *An-Nawawī's Forty Ḥadīths*, their Arabic counterparts, and the strategy used by the translators for each term. Immediately following the table, some pertinent observations on these examples are given.

Observation 1

The translators chose to translate IRTs in English where they have identified TL words that can adequately function as cross-cultural equivalents for SL words, or loan words from the SL with the same meaning in the TL. In either case, the translators consider that the SL and TL words have sufficiently similar referents and connotations in both cultures as to justify translating rather than transliterating the following IRTs:

Table 2. Translated IRTs in *An-Nawawī's Forty Ḥadīths*

ST Word	TT Word	TT Word Type
الإسلام	Islam	loan word
نبي	Prophet	cross-cultural equivalent
رسول	Messenger	cross-cultural equivalent
اليوم الآخر	Last Day	cross-cultural equivalent
الساعة	the Hour	cross-cultural equivalent
جبريل	Gabriel	cross-cultural equivalent
رمضان	Ramadān	loan word
الجنة	Paradise	cross-cultural equivalent
الرزق	means of livelihood	partially-equivalent
النصيحة	sincerity	partially-equivalent
آية	verse	non-equivalent
سورة	chapter	non-equivalent
الاحسان	proficiency	partially-equivalent
السيئة	bad deed	cross-cultural equivalent
الحسنة	good deed	cross-cultural equivalent
الحلال	lawful	partially-equivalent
الحرام	forbidden	partially-equivalent
الصدقة	charity	cross-cultural equivalent
الصبر	patience	partially-equivalent
الجن	Jinn	loan word
الصحابة	Companions	cross-cultural equivalent
أجر	reward	cross-cultural equivalent
وزر	sin	cross-cultural equivalent
البر	righteousness	cross-cultural equivalent
الخلفاء الراشدين	Rashidite Caliphs	loan word
بدعة	innovation	non-equivalent
الفرائض	religious duties	cross-cultural equivalent
منكر	evil action	partially-equivalent
التقوى	piety	cross-cultural equivalent
كربة	grief	cross-cultural equivalent
النوافل	supererogatory works	cross-cultural equivalent

However, the assumption that SL and TL words given in Table 2 have the same referents and connotations is not accurate. Even loan words, adopted without translation, sometimes carry additional cultural connotations in the TL culture that they do not have in the SL culture. Also, there are some words in Table 2 that are taken to be cross-culturally equivalent even though they are not. For example, the

SL word *bid'ah* (بدعة) and the TL word *innovation* are considered equivalent. Yet, in contrast to the English term *innovation* which refers to worldly matters that are generally acceptable and encouraged as long as they do not violate *sharī'ah*, the Arabic word *bid'ah* (بدعة) carries a negative connotation in Islamic religious contexts as it entails anything not specifically performed or confirmed by the Prophet. Umar Faruq Abd-Allah (2006) explains the connotations the word *bid'ah* can have:

Bid'a could take on various shades of meaning. When used without qualifying adjectives, it tended to be condemnatory, as, for example, in the statement, “*bid'a* must be avoided.” Nevertheless, *bid'a* was not always something bad. In certain contexts, especially when qualified by adjectives, *bid'a* could cover a wide range of meanings from what was praiseworthy to what was completely wrong. (p. 2).

The SL word *rizq* (رزق) is translated as *means of livelihood*, although the Arabic word has shades of meaning that go beyond the pragmatic meaning of the TL word as material wealth or income to encompass all forms of Allah's blessings. Similarly, the word *naṣīḥah* (النصيحة) is translated into *sincerity* although the SL word and the TL word are partially equivalent. The words *verse* and *chapter* are used as equivalent to *āyah* (آية) and *sūrah* (سورة) respectively. However, the use of the word *verse*, a synonym for *poetry*, in this religious context to refer to the statements (*āyāt*) of the Qur'ān, contradicts the Qur'ān, (يس (69) وَمَا عَلَّمْنَاهُ الشُّعْرَ وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لَهُ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ وَقُرْآنٌ مُّبِينٌ) “And We have not taught him (Muhammad) poetry, nor is it suitable for him. This is only a Reminder and a plain Qur'ān” (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1999, Yā-Sīn, 69). Also, the word *chapter*, which describes part or a division of a narrative or a story, should not be used as equivalent to *sura*, which has already become an English word since the seventeenth century as given in *Collins English Dictionary* (2015). If the word *sura* is already accepted in English, then it is logical to use its partner term *āyah* instead of *verse*.

The words *lawful* and *forbidden* are used by the translators as equivalents to the Arabic words *ḥalāl* (حلال) and *ḥarām* (حرام) respectively, even though they are not. The attempt to translate *ḥalāl* (حلال) and *ḥarām* (حرام) using partially-equivalent TL words, i.e. *lawful* and *forbidden* would inevitably result in a problem of generalization because the TL word will have a wider meaning than SL word. In Islamic culture, concepts of *ḥalāl* (حلال) and *ḥarām* (حرام) have to do basically with what is permitted or not permitted by Allah. In English, the word *lawful* could refer to what is allowed by Allah or by human laws. In this case, the loan word *halal*, a term designating any object or an action which is permissible according to Islamic law, is more appropriate. Similarly, the word *forbidden* could refer to what is not permitted or allowed by Allah or by human laws. The problem here has to do with the degree of permission or prohibition expressed by the words *ḥalāl* (حلال) and *ḥarām* (حرام).

In translating the word *ṣabr* (صبر) into *patience*, there is a problem of particularization. *Patience* is defined in the *Oxford Dictionary of English* as “The capacity to accept or tolerate delay, problems, or suffering without becoming annoyed or anxious” (Stevenson, 2010, p. 1302), and in *Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary* (2015) as “able to remain calm and not become annoyed when waiting for a long time or when dealing with problems or difficult people” or “done in a careful way over a long period of time without hurrying”. However, in Islamic culture, *ṣabr* (صبر) implies patience, forbearance, perseverance, determination, fortitude, constancy and steadfastness. *Ṣabr* assumes different

dimensions in Islam depending on the intended meaning in each case. In Sūrat Al-Kahf, *ṣabr* implies the perseverance, steadfastness and constancy that Muslims must demonstrate in fulfilling their duties of establishing Islam in their own lives, (وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْعَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ) (الكهف 28) “And keep yourself (O Muhammad) patiently with those who call on their Lord (i.e. your companions who remember their Lord with glorification, praising in prayers, etc., and other righteous deeds) morning and afternoon, seeking His Face” (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1999, Al-Kahf, 28). The concept of *ṣabr* is also in *jihād*, (وَلَمَّا (البقرة 250) (بَرَزُوا لَجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ) “And when they advanced to meet Jālūt (Goliath) and his forces, they invoked: ‘Our Lord! Pour forth on us patience, and set firm our feet and make us victorious over the disbelieving people’” (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1999, Al-Baqarah, 250).

As shown in these examples, the word *ṣabr* is semantically complex, i.e. it expresses a complex set of meanings depending upon its context, with the result that the translator may find it difficult to identify the intended meaning and choose the right equivalent each time the word is used. Therefore, it would be appropriate for the translator to retain the Arabic original term when it appears in its basic form (*ṣabr* صبر) in the Arabic text and to translate its derivations *ṣābir* (صابر), *ṣabūr* (صبور), *ṣābirīn* (صابرين), into suitable TL words as explanations of the intended meaning of *ṣabr* in ST. In Ḥadīth no. 23, the word *ṣabr* (صبر) is used in its basic form to give a general meaning. Also, concepts of *ṣabr*, *riḍā*, *tawakkūl*, *rajā*, *khawf* are of special religious significance in Islam because they are *‘ibadāt qulūb* (worships of the heart).

Translating the word *munkar* (منكر), meaning *denounced*, as *evil action* to refer to what is immoral, cruel or very unpleasant, creates a problem in the degree of prohibition expressed in the TL. In Islamic culture, *munkar* (منكر) is a noun that includes everything that is looked upon as bad by Islam; if an action or statement goes against the morals and laws of Islam, it is *munkar*. Hence, the definition of *munkar* (منكر) is based not on the customs and traditions of people, but rather on Islam as revealed by Allah and on the definitions in *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* and other rules. If ‘evil action’ is simply defined as the opposite of ‘good action’, the meaning will be entirely dependent on what counts as ‘evil’ or ‘not good.’ In other words, the definition of an ‘evil action’ would require a definition of other associated terms, which will vary according to the definer’s personal and cultural perspective. Therefore, the TL words ‘evil action’ seem to lack the overriding religious sense of prohibition embedded in the word *munkar* (منكر).

Words such as *good deed*, *bad deed*, *sin*, *charity*, *piety*, *religious duties*, and *supererogatory works* are aptly used by the translators because they are used with religious connotations in TL. Other words such as *Prophet*, *Messenger*, *Last Day*, *the Hour*, *Gabriel*, *Paradise*, and *Hell* are acceptable in translation only when they are used as common theological concepts in the so-called Abrahamic religions or, to use the Islamic religious term, in *Millat Ibrāhīm* (i.e. Islamic Monotheism) having the same references and connotations as in Islam, or else the use of the transliterated word, with a note or footnote, is recommended. It is important to note that such words are capitalized when they are used as proper nouns or epithets referring to unique entities. The word *Prophet*, for example, is capitalized when it is used to refer to Prophet Muḥammad.

Observation 2

The translators chose to transliterate IRTs which have no equivalents in TL, giving explanatory notes only to some of them. These IRTs include proper nouns

(personal and place names) and culture-specific terms (CSTs). Proper nouns are “names of a particular person, place or thing” and are spelled “with a capital letter” (Richards et al., 1985, p. 68). However, transliteration of proper nouns should not be limited to names of Arabic origin but should also include names such as *Mūsā* for Moses, *Ḥawwā’* for Eve, *‘Īsā* for Jesus, and *Ibrāhīm* for Abraham. Similarly, culture-specific terms are transliterated by the translators. Harvey (2003, p. 2) defines CSTs as the terms which “refer to concepts, institutions and personnel which are specific to the SL culture”. Thus, CSTs are lexical items in the ST that have no equivalents in the TT because, to use Baker’s words, “they express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture” (1992, p. 21). In our case the translators use italics to distinguish CSTs from other words within the text. Table 3 includes some examples of the IRTs that are transliterated (with footnotes) because there are no available TL equivalents or because they are proper nouns and culture-specific terms:

Table 3. Transliterated IRTs in *An-Nawawī’s Forty Ḥadīths*

ST Word	TT Word	TT Word Type
الله	Allah	Proper Noun
محمد	Muḥammad	Proper Noun
عمر	‘Umar	Proper Noun
الزكاة	<i>zakāt</i>	CST
الإيمان	<i>imān</i>	CST
الاحسان	<i>iḥsān</i>	CST
عائشة	‘A’isha	Proper Noun
أبو هريرة	Abū Huraira	Proper Noun
تسبيحة	<i>tasbīḥa</i>	CST
تكبيرة	<i>takbīra</i>	CST
تحميدة	<i>tahmīda</i>	CST
تهليلة	<i>tahlīla</i>	CST
السنة	<i>sunna</i>	CST
الجهاد	<i>jihād</i>	CST

ElShiekh and Saleh (2011, p. 144) argue that “In the case of translating ‘الله’ [Allāh] into English there is hardly any need for transliteration. The concept of ‘الله’ is neither lacking in the target language culture in our case, nor even fundamentally different”. However, this is the entry given by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* for the word *Allāh*, “Allah, Arabic Allāh (“God”), the one and only God in Islam (...). Allāh is the standard Arabic word for God and is used by Arab Christians as well as by Muslims”. Although the word “Allāh” is used by Arab Christians as well as by Muslims as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* suggests, Yoel Natan (2006, p. 594) argues that “Though Arab Christians spoke the Arabic language and they used the appellation *Allah*, meaning the “God,” they clearly were Trinitarian (...). When Christians used the title *Allah*, they had “The God” of the Bible in mind”. If the word *Allah* entailed different meanings for Arab Christians and Muslims who spoke the same language and lived in the same region, then the argument that the meaning of *Allah* in Arabic is not fundamentally different from “God” in English is not valid. In their translation, Ibrahim and Johnson-Davies (2002, p. 11) use the transliterated word *Allah* (الله), clarifying that “[o]n the question of whether to translate *Allah* as *God* or retain the word in its Arabic form, we decided on the word *Allah* because it is in general use amongst Muslims (...). Were it not for this consideration the word *Allah* would have been rendered as *God*”. However, it is necessary to retain the word in its Arabic form to maintain its Islamic conception. In translating *lā ilāha ila Allāh* (لا

(إله إلا الله) into *there is no god but Allāh* in Ḥadīth no.2, the Islamic conception of *tawḥīd* (monotheism) is maintained by using *god* for *ilāh* (إله) and the transliterated form *Allāh* for (الله). In contexts where *lā ilāha ila Allāh* (لا إله إلا الله) is used as one of the Islamic *adhkār* (*tahlīla*), transliteration of the word *ilāh* (إله) would help the average English-speaking reader to know that it is one of the formal recitations of Islam and the emphasis is therefore on its phonetic form. .

Observation 3

The problem of translation versus transliteration of IRTs appears in words of SL and TL that have similar referents and different connotations or senses. As Miles (2003, p. 137) argues, “[i]n the case of all words having the identical referent, if the sameness of referent cannot be determined just on the basis of their connotations, on the basis of word meanings alone, then their connotations or senses are different, even though their referents are the same”. So, we cannot infer sameness of connotations from sameness of reference. The attempt to translate this type of words using partially-equivalent TL words would inevitably result in either particularization or generalization. The following figure, created by the researcher, sheds light on the relationship between (Non)-equivalence and translation/transliteration:

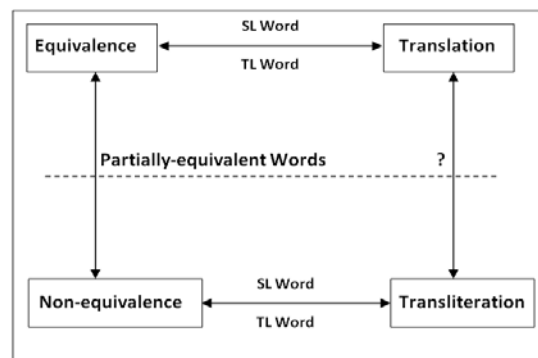


Figure 1: The relationship between (non)-equivalence & translation/transliteration

As shown in Figure 1, the problem of translation versus transliteration arises in the translation of partially-equivalent SL and TL words. In the translation of *An-Nawawī’s Forty Ḥadīths*, Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies chose to translate some SL words into partially-equivalent TL words rather than to transliterate them. Examples of these words include: *prayer* (الصلاة), *pilgrimage* (الحج), and *the House* (البيت الحرام). Yet, the translators should have followed the same strategy they used with IRTs that have no equivalents in TL, i.e. transliteration (*ṣalāh* الصلاة, *ḥajj* الحج, and *Al-Masjid Al-Ḥarām* البيت الحرام) because partial-equivalents in the TL for the original religious term lack the religious aspect of the original terms. It should be noted here that the word *Al-Bayt* (البيت) in Ḥadīth No.2 refers to *Ka’bah* or *Al-Masjid Al-Ḥarām* as both words are used interchangeably: (البقرة 149) (فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ) “And from wheresoever you start forth (for prayers), turn your face in the direction of *Al-Masjid-Al-Harām*” (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1999, Al-Baqarah, 149), (وإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمْنًا) (البقرة 125) “And (remember) when We made the House (the *Ka’bah* at Makkah) a place of resort for mankind and a place of safety” (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1999, Al-Baqarah, 125).

In the words *prayer*, *pilgrimage*, and *the House*, there is a problem of generalization because these TL words have wider meanings than the SL words. First, the word *prayer* in English indicates *du‘ā’* or *invocation*, a common definition of *ṣalāh* in Arabic as in (التوبة 103) (إِنَّ صَلَاتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَهُمْ) “Your invocations are a source of security for them” (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1999, At-Taubah, 103), rather than a mandatory form of physical, mental and spiritual worship; second, the word *pilgrimage*, meaning a journey to a place which is considered special, and which one visits to show respect, does not necessarily mean the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca; and finally, using *the House* for the *Ka‘bah* or *Al-Masjid Al-Ḥarām* lacks the specificity of the Arabic, since *house* (generally, a dwelling or base for a particular activity), when capitalized can signify any number of eminent institutions such as the Stock Exchange, the Parliament, etc.. To address the problem of particularization, the translators used both translation and transliteration to render the meaning of the Arabic word *iḥsān* (الإحسان) into English. In Ḥadīth no.2, the word *iḥsān* (الإحسان) is transliterated to mean excellence in worship of Allah, whereas in Ḥadīth no.17, the same word is translated into the English word *proficiency* to mean excellence in all things.

Observation 4

The translators chose to use both translation and transliteration with words such as “*Al-ḥamdu lillāh* [Praise be to Allah]” and “*Subḥāna’llāh* [How far is Allah from every imperfection]” (Ibrahim & Johnson-Davies 2002, Ḥadīth no.23, p. 78). They present the transliterated word first followed by its TL explanation in parentheses. However, in these examples transliteration is a must whereas translation is optional. The transliterated words *Al-ḥamdu lillāh* and *Subḥāna’llāh* belong to a group of IRTs and phrases in Islam, i.e. *adhkār*, that, as per many Muslim scholars’ point of view, must be learned and pronounced by Muslims in their original language, i.e. Arabic. In this case, translation alone is not acceptable. This point is made clear in the Prophet’s Ḥadīth narrated by Al-Barā’ bin ‘Āzib:

The Prophet said to me, “Whenever you go to bed perform ablution like that for the *Ṣalāt* (prayer), lie on your right side and say: *Allāhumma inni aslamtu wajhī ilaika, wa fauwaḍtu ‘amrī ilaika, wa alja’tu zahrī ilaika raghbatan wa rahbatan ilaika. La Malja’ wa lā manja minka illā ilaika. Allāhumma āmantu bikitābikal-ladhī anzalta wa bi na-bīyikal-ladhī arsalta*, [O Allāh! I surrender to You and entrust all my affairs to You and depend upon You for Your Blessings both with hope and fear of You. There is no fleeing from You, and there is no place of protection and safety except with You O Allah! I believe in Your Book (the Qur’ān) which You have revealed and in Your Prophet (Muḥammad) whom You have sent]. Then if you die on that very night, you will die with faith (i.e. or the religion of Islām). Let the aforesaid words be your last utterance (before sleep).” I repeated it before the Prophet and when I reached “*Allāhumma āmantu bikitābikal-ladhī anzalta* (O Allāh I believe in Your Book which You have revealed).” I said, “*Wa Rasūlika* (and Your Messenger).” The Prophet said, “No, (but say): *Wa nabiyyikal-ladhī arsalta* (Your Prophet whom You have sent), instead.” [I:247-O.B.] (Khan, 1996, *Summarized Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhāri*, Chapter 59, Ḥadīth 184)

The Prophet’s insistence on the use of *wa-nabiyyika* and not *wa-rasūlika* indicates that *adhkār* are based on *tawqīf* (i.e. sticking to what the religious texts state) and therefore should be recited as they are in Arabic. In this regard, Imām Al-Shāfi‘ī makes it clear that there are certain IRTs and Islamic phrases (such as: *tasbīḥah*, *takbīrah*, *taḥmidah*, *tahlīlah*, *tashahhud*) that must be learned and

pronounced by Muslims in Arabic. In this case translation is not allowed, and transliteration becomes the appropriate strategy:

It is obligatory upon every Muslim to learn the Arabic tongue to the utmost of his ability in order [to be able] to profess through it that – there is none worthy of worship other than Allāh, and Muḥammad is His servant and Messenger – and to recite in [the Arabic tongue] the Book of Allah, and to speak in mentioning what is incumbent him – the *takbīr* [of *ṣalāh*] and what [other matters] are commanded, the *tasbīh*, the *tashahhud* and others. (Al-Shāfi‘ī, 820/1961, p. 93)

Hence, the translator can, in an attempt to maintain accuracy and readability together, make use of footnotes to draw the attention of the reader to the meanings of the transliterated IRTs. Once explained, the transliterated IRT can then be used on its own. This method is advocated by Newman (1988, p. 91) who suggests using the transliterated SL name, adding a detailed explanation, for instance, a footnote.

5. Conclusions

Based on the analysis of some examples of IRTs in the translation of *An-Nawawī's Forty Ḥadīths* by Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies, many points can be established in relation to the problem of translation versus transliteration of IRTs into English:

1. With its emphasis on accuracy and readability, Ibrahim and Johnson-Davies' translation of *An-Nawawī's Forty Ḥadīths* proves very helpful for English-speakers to understand the meanings and context of the Ḥadīths of Prophet Muḥammad.
2. In their work, Ibrahim and Johnson-Davies chose to translate some SL words into partially-equivalent TL words rather than to transliterate them such as *innovation* (بدعة), *lawful* (حلال), *forbidden* (حرام), *patience* (صبر), *evil action* (منكر), *prayer* (الصلاة), *pilgrimage* (الحج), and *the House* (البيت الحرام). However, I have argued that the translators should have followed the same strategy they used with IRTs that have no equivalents in TL, i.e. transliteration (with footnotes) so as to maintain accuracy as well as readability of the translation.
3. Translation of IRTs in English is only appropriate when SL and TL words have the same referents and same connotations in SL and TL cultures.
4. Transliteration is more appropriate for all IRTs such as proper nouns and culture-specific terms without equivalents in the TL. It is recommended here for the translator to use the transliterated SL word, adding, for instance, an explanatory note or a footnote.
5. To maintain accuracy in translation situations of partially-equivalent SL and TL words having the same referents and different connotations, transliteration of IRTs is more appropriate than translation, with corresponding explanations to be given in a footnote. Transliteration in this case will protect the IRT from any tampering or interpolation if transferred between languages other than the original, and the transliterated form will be absorbed into the lexicons of these languages over a period of time that will vary with the dynamics of each.

6. There are certain IRTs and phrases (*adhkār* such as: *tasbīḥah*, *takbīrah*, *tahmīdah*, *tahlīlah*, *tashahhud*) that must be learned and pronounced by Muslims in Arabic. In this case transliteration is a must.
7. Transliteration, and not translation, of IRTs can enhance familiarity with Arabic which might be helpful, as a start, for English-speaking Muslims who are willing to learn Arabic.
8. Based on the unique qualities of Islamic religious texts, the Qur'ān and Ḥadīths in particular, it becomes clear that a translation of Islamic religious texts into a language other than Arabic would require translators possessed of certain qualities, not least being mastery of the Arabic language, strong grounding in Islam, understanding of context (historical, religious, political, and cultural), and mastery of the TL.

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