

Research Article

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Marriage Parties, Rules, and Contract Expressions in Qur'an Translations: A Critical Analysis

<https://doi.org/10.1515/culture-2024-0026>

received April 29, 2024; accepted September 5, 2024

Abstract: Marriage is one of many important topics discussed in the Qur'an and is a vital component of the customs and traditions of every community. This study aims to qualitatively investigate the procedures employed by classical and recent translators in rendering Qur'anic marriage expressions into English and see whether there has been improvement in tackling them. The collected data consists of a set of marriage expressions that are critically analyzed from a translational perspective. Eight famed English translations from 1930 to 2015, which are trustworthy and easily accessible, are examined, along with three exegesis. They are unlike other earlier translations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that were done by non-Muslims who had little knowledge or no background Islam and were often criticized for biased and erroneous content. The results reveal that both classical and recent translators offer successful renditions in some cases, but they fail to do so in several cases due to hurdles involving lexical and cultural gaps, as well as figurative usage. Although workable formal equivalence should remain a priority, paraphrase, transliteration, foot-noting, or combinations of them need to be considered when formal equivalence falters. Further, the results show that there has not been any noticeable improvement in this area from classical to recent translations. The differences between them mainly involve lexical variation only, apart from conceptual emendations. The study recommends that Qur'an translation be conducted by an expert team, rather than one individual, whose members must have high language and cultural competence in both languages, have solid religious and cultural background in Qur'anic discourse, consult authoritative exegeses, and have adequate knowledge of translation strategies and procedures.

Keywords: Qur'an translation, marriage expressions, formal equivalence, paraphrase, exegeses

1 Background of the Study

Translation is a communication process that seeks to reproduce the original text into another language (Catford, 1965). Over the past few decades, the Holy Qur'an has been translated into many different languages, including English. Recently, English translations have become increasingly significant as English has become a universal language. As a result, the Qur'an has become more accessible to non-Arabic speakers, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, as many non-Muslims desire to read translations of the Qur'an to aid them in the comprehension of Islamic and Arab culture. This places immense pressure on the translator. Translators should concentrate on a few key components, such as word meaning in context, sentence structure, and formal style

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(Issa & Hammood, 2020). Because of this, the translator must exert a lot of effort to develop their knowledge, abilities, and cultural competence in order to bridge both lexical and cultural gaps and convey the original text's meaning. Unfortunately, some English versions of Qur'an translations may fail to convey the intended meanings of culturally laden concepts.

The Qur'an is Islam's highest authority. It is the cornerstone and primary source of the Islamic religion's beliefs, traditions, ethics, and laws (Abdel-Haleem, 2004). The Qur'anic text serves as the foundation for all aspects of Muslim culture's religious life. Marriage is part and parcel of every culture in general and nearly every religion in particular. Thus, it constitutes a significant aspect of the customs and traditions of every community and is one of several essential issues covered in the Qur'an. In addition, Islam views marriage as a holy relationship between a man and a woman, which completes one's religious duties (Jaafar-Mohammad & Lehmann, 2011). Therefore, Islam heavily focuses on the love and respect that should exist between a husband and his wife. Many verses in the Qur'an urge a man to treat his wife with respect and kindness, in addition to warranting their economic security. Hence, the dowry of the bride is a must and sacred in Islam. This reveals a deep religious concern for women's rights, which supports the wife by establishing her financial independence from her parents. Furthermore, in the case of the husband's death, the wife duly acquires inheritance rights. Since marriage expressions vary from culture to culture, translators may encounter several challenges in rendering these expressions into other languages.

Translating religious texts is a challenging task because religious discourse often has cultural and linguistic gaps that can hardly be bridged (Weld-Ali *et al.*, 2023). Waard and Nida (1986) indicate that source language (SL) and target language (TL) readers never have directly corresponding linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Nevertheless, translators should be able to search for successful procedures that make their translations more accessible. Cultural expressions related to marriage may involve both lexical and cultural gaps and are viewed as an interdisciplinary part of religion, culture, and traditions in every community. Thus, translating the Holy Qur'an in general, and such marriage expressions, in particular, requires adequate working procedures to deliver the intended meaning and prevent misunderstanding.

Many researchers have investigated translating the Qur'an and highlighted significant problems encountered by translators (Al-Abbas & Haider, 2020; Ali *et al.*, 2012; Al-Kharabsheh & Al-Azzam, 2008; Anari & Sanjarani, 2016; Farghal & Al-Masri, 2000; Farghal & Bloushi, 2012; Moradi & Sadeghi, 2014; Zadeh *et al.*, 2018). They usually refer to cultural gaps as a significant obstacle. Several studies have compared different translations of the Qur'an and examined procedures employed by translators (Issa & Hammood, 2020; Moradi & Sadeghi, 2014 among others). However, this research is specifically interested in Qur'an marriage expressions, which constitute a significant aspect of culture in general and religious culture in particular, a research gap that this study seeks to fill. Consequently, this research critically investigates the translator's procedures for dealing with marriage expressions. In addition, it compares recent and classical translations to see if there is a tangible development in Qur'an translation in this area, assuming that recent translators are expected to exercise greater caution than their classical predecessors when rendering such cultural terms as the motivation for retranslations should be triggered by the need to improve existing ones, especially regarding problematic areas. Hopefully, the data analysis for the selected expressions may contribute to raising the understanding of English-speaking Muslims and non-Muslims who are interested in reading the meanings of the Qur'an in English. Moreover, the research findings may encourage future Qur'an translators to adopt proper and adequate procedures to provide accurate, meaningful Qur'an translations rooted in classical Sunnite hermeneutical texts. This approach will likely enhance the target reader's understanding while ensuring the translator's faithfulness to the source text (ST).

2 Review of Literature

This section includes two parts, covering both theoretical and empirical studies.

2.1 Translation of the Holy Qur'an

Translation strategies can assist translators in overcoming many challenges by helping them understand and handle translation problems (Al Saideen et al., 2022; Jarrah et al., 2023; Shhaiber & Haider, 2023). This hones translators' skills and enhances translation quality. Consequently, several scholars have offered different models, processes, and theories throughout the history of translation studies.

Generally speaking, translation is a linguistic and cultural process. According to Hatim and Mason (1997), translation, from a cultural standpoint, is a communicative activity that takes place within a social context. Translation is a contextual process where loss and gain are inevitable. Achieving communication is one of translation's primary goals. However, total translation that takes account of all nuances of meaning and form is too difficult to attain, especially when translating cultural-specific items or expressions, and the difficulty even increases in rendering religious texts such as the Holy Qur'an (Farghal, 2012). On the one hand, according to Bassnett (2013), gains in translation are made for enhancement or clarification of the ST during the translation process into another language. On the other hand, Dickins et al. (2016) state that translation loss is the inability of a translator to faithfully reproduce the ST or effectively communicate its meaning to readers of the target text (TT). Nida (1964) defines dynamic equivalence as reproducing in the SL the closest natural equivalence of the TL, so that the target reader may produce a similar response as the source reader. He further observes that loss in translation may be caused by the absence of dynamic equivalence during the translation process. A translator may occasionally experience loss in translation, while at other times, may achieve some gains by employing successful strategies.

Foreignization and domestication are two fundamental translation orientations mainly used to deal with linguistic and cultural differences. According to Venuti (1993), domestication is a method of translation in which a clear style is used to reduce the foreignness of the text for target readers. In contrast, foreignization reserves some of the foreignness, intentionally breaking TL and culture conventions (Shuttleworth, 2014). Thus, domestication is target-culture-focused, and texts are adapted for the target reader's understanding. Foreignization, by contrast, is source-culture-focused and seeks to transmit as much of the source culture as possible to the target culture. According to Farghal (2012), it is the translators' job to decide whether they want to domesticate or foreignize the work, bearing in mind that the choice between domestication and foreignization is a matter of focus rather than exclusion; i.e., a translation cannot be offered in a full pure foreignized rendition or a completely domesticated one. For example, a translation may be called "domesticated" if the percentage of employing domestication is more than foreignization and a competent translator needs to strike a balance between the two. A skilled translator must adeptly balance these approaches to faithfully achieve the intended skopos, i.e. the purpose, of the translation.

Farghal (2012) assumes that skilled translators should explore several translation dichotomies and/or paradigms in pursuit of insightful answers to issues rather than limiting themselves to just one. Additionally, Pym (2023) states that when theorizing or creating a translation theory, the process begins by identifying a problem, such as a state of uncertainty that demands action or a query in need of clarification. Then follows, looking for thoughts that will aid in solving that issue. Furthermore, he adds that no one paradigm must be chosen as the place to begin, and there is no obligation to follow it.

Najjar (2012) describes "equivalence" as the creation of a translation in the TL that, in terms of form and content, is identical to the text in the SL. Nida (1964) suggests "dynamic equivalence" independently of form as an alternative to formal equivalence, which may not work in many cases. According to him, the fundamental prerequisites for creating a successful translation are the naturalness of expression and the equivalent effect on the target reader.

Harvey (2000) proposes the following four main types of equivalence that can be utilized to translate cultural-specific items: (1) formal equivalence, which mainly involves literal translation; (2) Functional equivalence (a later version of dynamic equivalence), which emphasizes matching the intended function or meaning between the SL and the TL. This approach prioritizes conveying the same impact and purpose in the TL, rather than strictly adhering to the exact form or structure of the original SL text; (3) transcription or borrowing equivalence which transliterates SL items as they are into TL, and (4) descriptive equivalence which communicates the meaning using a general description. Similarly, but more economically, Farghal (2012) suggests

three types of equivalence. First, there is formal equivalence, which occurs when an expression in the TL corresponds formally to an expression in the SL. Second is functional equivalence in which the function (but not the form) of a cultural expression in the TL is equivalent to that of an expression in the SL. Finally, we have ideational equivalence, which relays the general communicative message independently of form and function by merely focusing on content apart from idiomaticity and/or metaphor. One should note that we may have combinations of these types of equivalence; e.g., formal equivalence may coincide with functional equivalence in some cases or may be supplemented with descriptive translation between parentheses.

In Qur'an translation, achievement of optimal equivalence where form and function may converge is desired, e.g., the existence of the same metaphor or idiomatic expression in both languages. However, Elimam (2009) states that the absence of an equivalent for several Islamic phrases is one of the lexical issues with interpreting the Holy Qur'an. This may lead translators to opt for approximating the meaning by either under-translating or over-translating cultural expressions. Thus, the semantic scope of the concepts in the Qur'an may not be fully conveyed.

Consequently, translating the Holy Qur'an requires several procedures to make the renditions comprehensible for the target reader. For this purpose, one can fall back on some classifications suggested by many scholars, such as Chesterman (2016), Ivir (1981), and Newmark (1988). Ivir (1981) suggests seven procedures for translating phrases with cultural connotations, namely literal translation, addition, definition, omission, substitution, lexical creation, and borrowing. For his part, Newmark (1988) suggests different translation procedures commonly employed for rendering cultural items, such as transliteration, cultural equivalence, literal translation, couplets (notes, additions, and glosses), paraphrasing, compensation, naturalization, and modulation. He particularly warns against over-translation, where the amount of information in the TL exceeds its counterpart in the SL, and under-translation, where the amount of information in the TL is less than its counterpart in the SL, which both may involve distortion of intended meaning in Qur'an translation. Similarly, Baker (1992) shows that non-equivalence between cultural expressions may be caused by mismatches in lexical relations in the language pair, e.g., hypernym vs. hyponym. Finally, Chesterman (2016) divides translation techniques into three categories: (1) pragmatic techniques, such as cultural filtering, explicitness change, coherence change, and interpersonal changes; (2) syntactic techniques, such as literal translation, loans, transposition, and unit shifts; and (3) semantic techniques, such as synonymy and hyponymy.

The above classifications of translation procedures that can be employed in handling translation problems in general and the translation of cultural expressions in particular largely overlap. They include both general approaches, such as formal/literal equivalence or paraphrase/ideational equivalence, and specific procedures, such as over-translation and under-translation. In this study, an eclectic approach to classifying relevant translation procedures in the Qur'anic corpus under investigation is used, which involves general labels and specific ones as the need arises. The purpose is to shed light on Qur'anic cultural subtleties that may have escaped some translators over the years.

2.2 Empirical Studies

This part presents several empirical studies related to the research topic, which are classified chronologically from the oldest to the newest, covering the period 2000 to 2022. Several studies have investigated the challenges in Qur'an translation. For instance, Farghal and Al-Masri (2000) explore the problem of referential gaps in translating unmatched cultural elements by drawing evidence from selected Qur'anic verses. The findings are based on two open and closed questionnaires, which reveal false conceptions of native English speakers about cultural concepts in the Qur'an, thus leading to communication breakdowns in the TL. They argue that reader responses should be regarded as a crucial key in Qur'an translation, suggesting that translators should use communicative translation, along with semantic translation, in order to ensure comprehensibility. Additionally, they urge translators to employ supplementary procedures like footnoting and addition to clarify unfamiliar items.

Ali et al. (2012) identify problems with the lexical, syntactic, and semantic aspects of Qur'an translation. Specifically, they illustrate examples of figurative features in the Qur'an, like polysemy, metonymy, ellipsis, and metaphor. Based on their investigation, they argue that the main issue in translating the Qur'an is that translators fail to capture the total meaning of certain items due to the lack of equivalence for specific Islamic terms. They further suggest that to ascertain the precise meaning of such terms, translators need to rely on various Arabic and English dictionaries and exegeses to determine the proper interpretation of Qur'anic passages.

Zadeh et al. (2018) examine four translations of Surat Al-Fatiha, including Arbery, Pickthal, Ali, and Shakir. Nida's theory of translation is used to assess their translations. The findings show that Pickthal and Ali's translations use more "formal correspondences" since they stick to the grammar and word order of the SL. However, they need to pay more attention to the surat's exact meaning. By contrast, the two other translations opt for dynamic equivalence because they provide extra information for the readers and are based on the TL grammar.

Al-Abbas and Haider (2020) state that translating the Qur'an demands much precision in translating synonyms into English, which mostly depends on a profound understanding of word meaning. They focus on three translations of three words listed in the same verse: غفر and صفح عفى. The study shows that the translators have used a variety of lexical choices to minimize repetition. Furthermore, it shows that the translations are inaccurate because lexical items are typically translated into more generic words. Therefore, they advise translators to read the Arabic exegeses of the Qur'an and adopt specific strategies to tackle the problem more accurately in the future.

The above studies have shed light on various challenges in rendering Qur'anic items, including cultural, lexical, syntactic, and semantic obstacles. They also examine what translation procedures can be employed to handle such challenges. However, no study has specifically examined Qur'an marriage expressions as a culturally challenging domain when translating them into English, which is a research gap this study seeks to fill.

3 Methodology

The current study is qualitative in nature. It examines eight English translations of Qur'anic marriage expressions. The quality of these translations is examined to see whether Qur'an translators have managed to deliver the intended meaning of such expressions with the help of consulting authoritative exegeses in this regard. The impact of the time period on these translations is also checked. The corpus of the data contains a set of marriage expressions, which contain the TT renditions of eight translators in classical and recent translations, starting with Pickthall (1930) and ending with Itani (2015). The selected data are classified thematically into three categories: (1) marriage parties, (2) marriage rules, and (3) marriage contract expressions. Then, the data are tabulated to show the eight different renditions of marriage expressions along with the relevant translation procedure. In addition, Pickthall's translation (being the oldest among the selected translations) is given in full to highlight the context. The choice of the eight translations is informed by the time period in which they appeared to see whether there have been any changes or improvements in the procedures used.

3.1 Selected Translations

Eight prominent translations were chosen based on the time period. Thus, four classical translations were selected to be compared with four recent ones, as Table 1 shows.

3.2 A Brief Biography of Qur'an Translators

Marmaduke William Pickthall (1875–1936). A British scholar who converted to Islam. He is renowned for his translation titled *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*. His rendition is among the most popular and extensively

Table 1: Classical and recent translations of the Holy Qur'an

Time period	Translation	Year	Title
Classical translations	Pickthall, Marmaduke	(1930)	The Meaning of the Glorious Koran
	Ali, Yusuf	(1934)	The Holy Qur'an: The Translation and Commentary
	Arberry, Arthur	(1955)	The Koran Interpreted
	Shakir, Muhammad	(1968)	The Holy Qur'an
Recent translations	Sarwar, Muhammad	(1982)	The Holy Qur'an; Arabic Text and English Translation
	Ghali, Mahmood	(2003)	Towards Understanding the Ever-Glorious Qur'an
	Abdel-Haleem, Mohammed	(2004)	The Qur'an: A New Translation
	Itani, Talal	(2015)	Qur'an English Translation: Clear, Pure, and Easy to Read Modern English

utilized translations in the English-speaking community. Further, his work was translated into many languages, including Turkish and Portuguese, i.e., his English translation of the Qur'an served as a bridge and reference for subsequent translations into those languages.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali (187–1953). An Indian–British attorney who authored several works about Islam, one of which was his Qur'an translation. He was a Sunni Muslim who graduated with honors from the University of Bombay with a Bachelor of Arts in English literature.

Arthur John Arberry (1905–1969). An author, scholar, translator, editor, and a British orientalist who produced and translated about ninety volumes of Persian and Arabic, particularly known for his translation of the Qur'an. At London University, Arberry held a number of positions in the chairs of Arabic and Persian. Because of his extensive research on Islamic mystics, he had lost his Christian faith and converted to Islam.

Mohammad Habib Shakir (1866–1939). Shakir was an Egyptian judge, born in Cairo and was a graduate of al-Azhar University. He occupied many prominent positions including Secretary General of al-Azhar, Dean of Alexandria's Scholars, Legislative Committee Member, and Supreme Judge of Sudan for 4 years.

Muhammad Sarwar (1933–2018). A Pakistani Islamic scientist specializing in Islamic philosophy. His works include the first contemporary English translation of the Qur'an (1982) and many books about Islam. In recent years, his focus has been on the translation of Islamic Hadith.

Mohammad Mahmoud Ghali (1920–2016). An Islamic Studies and Linguistics Professor at al-Azhar University. Ghali received his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Michigan with a focus on phonetics. He spent 20 years translating the meanings of the Qur'an into English. Further, he is the author of 16 volumes on Islamic studies, published in both Arabic and English.

Muhammad Abd al-Halim (1930–till now). He was born in Egypt and memorized the Qur'an when he was a small child. After receiving his education at al-Azhar and Cambridge Universities, he spent many years teaching Arabic at Cambridge and London Universities, where he also taught advanced translation and Qur'anic studies. He has been a professor of Islamic Studies at the University of London since 1995. His Qur'an translation, published by Oxford University Press in 2004, is one of the most reliable ones.

Talal Itani (1961–till now). Itani, born in Beirut, is a writer, software developer, and electronics engineer. He initially came into contact with the Holy Qur'an in 1992, the year he relocated to the United States at the age of 18. He spent 15 years reading and researching Qur'an. Itani chose to translate the Qur'an into simple, readable, modern English. His translation was released in 2012, and it has received praise for being accurate, lucid, and extremely faithful to the Arabic original.

3.3 A Brief Biography on Exegetes

Abu al-Fida Isma'il ibn Umar ibn Kathir al-Dimashqi (1300 AH (Bosra, Syria)–1373 AH (Damascus, Syria)). A Muslim scholar, a highly influential Arab historian, and an expert on tafsir (Qur'anic exegesis) and fiqh

(jurisprudence). He memorized the Qur'an at the age of eleven and followed the approach of his instructor, Ibn Taymiyyah.

Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir ibn Yazid al-Tabari (224 AH/839 CE (Tabaristan)–310 AH/923 CE (Baghdad)). A Sunni Muslim scholar and one of the most famous individuals of the Islamic golden age. He is renowned for his historical writings and his proficiency in Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir). He memorized the Qur'an at the age of seven and was a qualified prayer leader at eight (islamichistory.info, 2021).

Abdullah Ibn Abbas (3 AH/619 CE (Mecca)–68 AH/687 CE Mecca)). He was one of Prophet Muhammad's cousins. He is thought to be the greatest interpreter of the Qur'an and the Qur'an's first exegete, and he was also prominent for his familiarity with customs and his critical reading of the Qur'an.

3.4 Study Procedures

The study began with the selection of a sample of marriage expressions from the Qur'an. The selected expressions are classified thematically into three categories. Eight popular translations were then examined. After that, the verses containing marriage expressions were recorded alongside their different translations under each category. The renditions are then critically analyzed, with attention paid to the translators' procedures. The challenges and problems that arise from culturally laden concepts are highlighted. Different interpretations, definitions, and exegeses are also showcased and relied on in the analysis, specifically those of Al-Tabari (1958), Ibn Abbas (2014), and Ibn Kathir (2011) are often referred to. Finally, classical and recent translations are compared.

4 Data Analysis and Discussion

This section presents examples of Qur'anic marriage expressions and examines them in the light of eight renditions. The discussion aims to critique the translation procedures followed when rendering marriage expressions into English. The selected marriage expressions are classified thematically into three categories based on the themes they cover as follows: (1) marriage parties, (2) marriage rules, and (3) marriage contract expressions.

4.1 Marriage Parties

In Islam, marriage involves four core parties. They are the groom, the bride, and the *bride's guardian* الولي in addition to two witnesses, whose presence and acceptance are required for the marriage contract to be fulfilled. Further, marriage can be performed at the bride's home by a *marriage officiant* (مأذون) or at a legal court to make the marriage notarized and to legally issue a marriage certificate. Thus, the marriage contract is signed by the mutual agreement of three core parties: the groom, the bride, and the *bride's guardian* (الولي), in the presence of two witnesses. The *bride's guardian* (الولي) is a male relative of the bride, preferably her father. If the three parties give their consent after agreeing on conditions, then the *marriage officiant* (مأذون) can declare them as "husband and wife."

In the Qur'an, many items have different senses resulting from "polysemy," which means the translator should have a solid Islamic background, in addition to his language competence in both SL and TL, to deliver the accurate meaning in the context. In this section, five expressions (verses) related to marriage parties will be presented, discussed, and analyzed, viz. the renditions of the lexical item زوج in (1) أزواج مطهرة (Surat Al-Baqarah), (2) من أزواجنا (Surah Al-Furqan), (3) بعولتهن (Surat Al-Baqarah), (4) نسبا وصهراً (Surah Al-Furqan), and (5) بنين وحفدة (Surat An-Nahl) into English.

4.1.1 Rendering أزواج مطهرة and أزواجنا into English

The lexeme زوج is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an around 17 times, and the plural form أزواج is repeated 38 times. However, it does not refer to the same referent in all contexts. For instance, it may refer to different entities depending on the context. In some instances, it refers to the hypernym "spouse," and in others, it refers to one of its two hyponyms, either "husband" or "wife." In other cases, it may refer to "pairs/kinds" in a sense unrelated to marriage. A translator should engage in understanding the context and their knowledge of the Qur'an and Islam to decide on the proper translation of this lexeme in each verse. Table 2 illustrates how أزواج مطهرة is translated.

In this verse, Allah describes Jannah (Heaven) for man believers who will enjoy gardens with rivers underneath, where they will eat delightful fruits and be bestowed with purified wives; hence, Al-Tabari (1958, p. 395) identifies the lexeme أزواج as a plural of زوج, which means "the wife of a man." In addition, these wives are described as "purified" مُطَهَّرَة, which Ibn Kathir (2011) interprets as "wives" who are totally purified of all sensory impurities, including excreta and urine, menstruation and puberty, mucus, and spit. Also, the term means that the wives are free from other kinds of harm and immoral attributes such as intolerance, hatred, envy, and jealousy, as well as other illnesses, sins, bad morals, and relations.

Therefore, contextually, the marriage expression أزواج مطهرة refers to (wives/women) rather than (husbands/men). Unjustifiably, however, the translators employ the superordinate/hypernym, i.e., "spouse," instead of using a hyponym, i.e., "wife." Confusing a hypernym (spouse/companion/mate) with the hyponym "wife" in this Qur'anic verse will most likely result in a reader-focused coherence shift (Blum-Kulka, 2000). That is, target readers will understand the address as targeting both men and women rather than only men. In this way, "the purified spouses" may be taken wrongly to mean "husbands," in addition to meaning "wives," which is the exclusively intended sense here. It should be noted that Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), unlike English, does not have a separate word for "spouse," i.e., there is a lexical gap here. Whereas English has the word "spouse" as a hypernym for the hyponyms "husband" and "wife," classical Arabic uses the word زوج for both "husband" and "wife." However, MSA lexically distinguishes between "زوج/husband" and "زوجة/wife," thus leaving the hypernym's slot as a lexical gap.

By observing the classical and recent translations, the mistranslation is clear, as none of the translators properly render the exclusive, specific meaning of أزواج as "wives." This shows that there has been no progress

Table 2: Rendering أزواج مطهرة into English

			Translation procedure
“ويُسر الذين آمنوا وعملوا الصالحات أن لهم جنات تجري من تحتها الأنهار كلما رزقوا منها من ثمرة رزقا قالوا هذا الذي رزقنا من قبل وأتوا به متشابها ولهم فيها أزواج مطهرة وهم فيها خالدون.” And give glad tidings (O Muhammad) unto those who believe and do good works; that theirs are Gardens underneath which rivers flow; as often as they are regaled with food of the fruit thereof, they say: this is what was given us aforetime; and it is given to them in resemblance. There for them are pure companions; there for ever they abide. (Surat Al-Baqarah, Verse 25)			
Classical translations	Pickthall	Pure companions	Under-translation/hypernym
	Ali	Companions pure	Under-translation/hypernym
	Arberry	Spouses shall be purified	Under-translation/hypernym
	Shakir	Pure mates	Under-translation/hypernym
Recent translations	Sarwar	Purified spouses	Under-translation/hypernym
	Ghali	Purified spouses	Under-translation/hypernym
	Abdel-Haleem	Pure spouses	Under-translation/hypernym
	Itani	Pure spouses	Under-translation/hypernym

or improvement with time. It also indicates that recent translations may have just been copied out from classical ones. To explain, Arberry, Itani, Sarwar, Abdel-Haleem, and Ghali translated أزواج مطهرة as “pure spouses” and “purified spouses.” These are inaccurate translations for two reasons; the first one is that “spouse” is a superordinate that may refer to a “male or female,” depending on the context, while, in fact, in this context, it refers only to “females.” Secondly, the term “purified” is an ambiguous term that may also confuse the target reader because they do not know where, how, or from what these females are “purified”; hence, a footnote should be provided.

For their part, Ali and Pickthall render this expression as “companions pure and holy,” which is also inaccurate because the word “companion” is gender underspecified; i.e., it can refer to both “husbands” and “wives.” Nevertheless, what distinguishes Ali as a classical translator is that he employs a glossary and a footnote to explain the lexeme مطهرة, denoting purity in the highest degree, which implies the reference is to “wives” rather than “husbands.” Finally, Shakir also offers an inaccurate rendition as he renders this expression as “pure mates” because the lexeme “mate” is too general and may refer to any partner like a friend or colleague, in addition to indicating a marital partner “husband, wife, or spouse.”

To conclude, both classical and recent translators, except for Ali (who uses a footnote to delimit the sense), distort the intended meaning by providing a more generic hypernym that is not based on context and is clearly unacceptable. The target reader will be misled by understanding that Allah’s address is directed to both men and women rather than exclusively to men, which is a serious reader-focused coherence shift.

Table 3 also demonstrates the procedures of both classical and recent translators in rendering من أزواجنا.

In this verse, the lexical item أزواجنا again refers exclusively to “wives.” Al-Tabari (1958) indicates that أزواجنا in this verse refers to a “female spouse/wife.” The classical translators Pickthall, Ali, Arberry, and Shakir successfully render the intended meaning of the lexeme أزواجنا as “wives.” By contrast, the recent translators Sarwar, Ghali, Abdel-Haleem, and Itani render it inaccurately by using the hypernym “spouses.” This is surprising because recent translators are supposed to be more careful than their classical counterparts when rendering such cultural items, as the motivation for retranslations should be an improvement from the existing ones. However, the classical translators prove to be more accurate in this case. The contextual meaning is transparent even to an averagely educated person. In addition, when confusion occurs, the standard exegeses are there to illuminate the problem.

4.1.2 Rendering بعولتهن into English

Table 4 shows the translators’ renditions for the lexical item in the marriage expression بعولتهن.

Table 3: Rendering من أزواجنا into English

والذين يقولون ربنا هب لنا من أزواجنا وذرياتنا قرة أعين واجعلنا للمتقين إماما. And who say: Our Lord! Vouchsafe us comfort of our wives and of our offspring, and make us patterns for (all) those who ward off (evil) (Surah Al-Furqan, verse 74)			Translation procedure
Classical translations	Pickthall	Wives	Correct translation/hyponym
	Ali	Wives	Correct translation/hyponym
	Arberry	Wives	Correct translation/hyponym
	Shakir	Wives	Correct translation/hyponym
Recent translations	Sarwar	Spouses	Over-translation/hyponym
	Ghali	Spouses	Over-translation/hyponym
	Abdel-Haleem	Spouses	Over-translation/hyponym
	Itani	Spouses	Over-translation/hyponym

Table 4: Rendering *يعولنهن* into English

			Translation procedure
ويعولنهن أحق بردهن في ذلك إن أرادوا إصلاحاً^ط ولهن مثل الذي عليهن بالمعروف^ط وللرجال عليهن درجة^ط والله عزيز حكيم And their husbands would do better to take them back in that case if they desire a reconciliation. And they (women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them in kindness, and men are a degree above them. Allah is Mighty, Wise. (Surat Al-Baqarah, Verse 228)			
Classical translations	Pickthall	Their husbands	Correct translation/ hyponym
	Ali	Their husbands	Correct translation/ hyponym
	Arberry	Their mates	Under-translation/ hypernym
	Shakir	Their husbands	Correct translation/ hyponym
Recent translations	Sarwar	Their husbands	Correct translation/ hyponym
	Ghali	Their husbands	Correct translation/ hyponym
	Abdel-Haleem	Their husbands	Correct translation/ hyponym
	Itani	Their husbands	Correct translation/ hyponym

This verse features the marriage expression *يعولنهن*, which specifically refers to “their husbands.” As can be observed, seven of them (Pickthall, Ali, Shakir, Sarwar, Ghali, Abdel-Haleem, and Itani) have successfully captured the transparent meaning. As for Arberry, he has decided to render the contextual meaning “their mates” rather than the transparent meaning “their husbands” based on the co-text. That is, the morphology in this verse indicates that the possessive pronoun *هن* in *لهن*, *بردهن*, *يعولنهن*, and *عليهن* can only refer to “wives” as the counterparts of “husbands.” Therefore, Arberry’s “their mates” can be successfully interpreted as “their husbands” in this verse.

4.1.3 Rendering *نسبا وصهراً* into English

Table 5 shows how different translators handle the totality of meaning in the expression (*نسبا وصهراً*), which involves both marriage and lineage relations.

Ibn Kathir (2011) refers to *as a “descent” and to صهر as “in-laws.”* Examining the eight translations above, we can see that all the classical translations and three of the recent ones (Sarwar, Ghali, and Abdel-Haleem) have successfully been interpreted as involving blood/lineage relations and as involving marriage relations. As for Itani’s rendition, it has fallen short of capturing the totality of the two Qur’anic terms by bringing out the marriage side while ignoring the lineage side, *namely*, “relationships through marriage and mating,” which focuses only on marriage relations.

4.1.4 Rendering *بنين وحفدة* into English

Table 6 reflects how recent and classical translators render the marriage expression, *بنين وحفدة* into English.

The above Qur’anic verse employs two hypernyms *بنين* “children” and *حفدة* “grandchildren,” respectively, for the hyponyms “sons” and “daughters” on the one hand and “grandsons” and “granddaughters” on the other. Both prove problematic to some classical and recent translations alike. The classical translators Pickthall and Arberry offer hyponyms to stand for hypernyms, *namely*, “sons and grandsons,” which may result in a reader-focused coherence shift. The target reader will most likely wonder why “daughters” and “granddaughters” are excluded here. Ali and Shakir, for their part, offer paraphrases and hypernyms and a

Table 5: Rendering نَسَباً وَصِهْرًا into English

وهو الذي خلق من الماء بشرا فجعله نسبا وصهرا وكان ربك قديرا And He it is Who hath created man from water, and hath appointed for him kindred by blood and kindred by marriage; for thy Lord is ever Powerful. (Surah Al-Furqan, Verse 54)			Translation procedure
Classical translations	Pickthall	Kindred by blood and kindred by marriage	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Ali	Relationships of lineage and marriage	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Arberry	Kindred of blood and marriage	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Shakir	Blood relationship and marriage relationship	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
Recent translations	Sarwar	Relationships of both lineage and wedlock	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Ghali	Made him related by blood and marriage	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Abdel-Haleem	Makes them kin by blood and marriage	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Itani	Relationships through marriage and mating	Under-translation by partial omission

mix of hyponyms and hypernyms, respectively, *namely* “sons and daughters and grandchildren” and “sons and grandchildren.” Thus, with the exception of Ali’s awkward rendering, all the classical translations have failed to relay the intended meaning.

By contrast, two of the recent translators (Abdel-Haleem and Itani) show substantial improvement by successfully rendering the two marriage-related terms into “children and grandchildren.” As for Sarwar, just like most of the classical translators, he has fallen into the trap of employing hyponyms for hypernyms. Lastly, Ghali’s rendering suffers from wordiness, *namely*, “sons (i.e., Sons and daughters; seeds) and grandchildren.”

4.2 Marriage Rules

The most important and authoritative source of legislation in Islam is the Holy Qur’an, which offers a host of rules that manage life affairs for Muslims. Among them are the rules that regulate and manage marriage.

Table 6: Rendering بنين وحفدة into English

الله جعل لكم من أنفسكم أزواجا وجعل لكم من أزواجكم بنين وحفدة ورزقكم من الطيبات And Allah hath given you wives of your own kind, and hath given you, from your wives, sons and grandsons, and hath made provision of good things for you. (Surah An-Nahl, Verse 72)			Translation procedure
Classical translations	Pickthall	Sons and grandsons	Over-translation/hyponym
	Ali	Sons and daughters and grandchildren	Over-translation/hyponym
	Arberry	Sons and grandsons	Over-translation/hyponym
	Shakir	Sons and grandchildren	
Recent translations	Sarwar	Sons and grandsons	Over-translation/hyponym
	Ghali	Sons (i.e., sons and daughters; seeds) and grandchildren	Over-translation + paraphrase
	Abdel-Haleem	Children and grandchildren	Correct translation/hypernym
	Itani	Children and grandchildren	Correct translation/hypernym

Translators might have to pay great attention to recognizing marriage moralities and the rules governing them.

A marriage contract takes place in the light of some conditions and rules. For example, assigning مهر “dowry” is one of the most important rules that govern marriage, noting that the marriage is invalid without assigning the bride’s dowry, and no obligation can make the marriage official and legal. Although the word *mahr* is not mentioned in the Qur’an, it is very common in Arab traditions and culture. However, this item is mentioned in the Qur’an in different lexical forms and styles, such as *الصدّق*, *قنطار*, and *الأجر*, each of which carries its own connotations, depending on the context it occurs in. Three examples below illustrate these items within Qur’anic marriage expressions, as follows: (1) *صدقاتهن* (Surat An-Nisa), (2) *وَأَتَيْتُم إِحْدَاهُن قَنْطَارًا* (Surat An-Nisa), (3) *فَاتَوْهْنَ أَجُورَهُن فَرِيضَةً* (Surat An-Nisa), (4) *لَعَدْتَهُن وَأَحْصُوا الْعِدَّةَ* (Surat At-Talaq), (5) *حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ* (Surat Al-Baqarah), and (6) *فَلَا تَمِيلُوا كُلَّ الْمِيلِ فَتَدْرُوهَا كَالْمَعْلُوقَةِ* (Surat An-Nisa).

4.2.1 Rendering *صدقاتهن* نحلة into English

Table 7 shows the renditions of the expression *صدقاتهن* نحلة.

According to Ibn Abbas (2014) and Ibn Kathir (2011), a Muslim who plans to marry a woman must clearly state a dowry *mahr* for her in the marriage contract. Stating a dowry is an obligatory duty in Islam, and the Qur’anic word *نَحْلَةً* contextually indicates this “obligatory sense.” Furthermore, according to islamswomen.com (2023), the term *صدّق* is derived from the source root “honesty” صدق, which denotes the honesty of the man with his wife in the marriage contract. Additionally, giving *mahr* to the wife is a tradition in pre-Islamic culture.

As can be noted, none of the translators has taken into account that the dowry is obligatory, which may be expressed within the text or in a footnote. Simply put, it would be better translated as “Give the women their dowries as a mandatory or an obligatory duty.” However, neither classical nor recent translators have captured this significant part of the expression of marriage. All of them have indicated that the dowry is “a free gift” rather than “a mandatory duty.” Therefore, it is vital to specify the exact sense of the post-modifier *نحلة* before offering a translation of this marriage expression.

4.2.2 Rendering *وَأَتَيْتُم إِحْدَاهُن قَنْطَارًا* into English

Table 8 presents classical and recent renditions of the expression *وَأَتَيْتُم إِحْدَاهُن قَنْطَارًا*.

Table 7: Rendering *صدقاتهن* نحلة into English

وَأَتُوا النِّسَاءَ صَدَقَاتِهِنَّ نَحْلَةً And give unto the women (whom ye marry) free gift of their marriage portions. (Surat An-Nisa, verse 4)			Translation procedure
Classical translations	Pickthall	And give unto the women (whom ye marry) free gift of their marriage portions	Under-translation/erroneous paraphrase
	Ali	And give the women (on marriage) their dowry as a free gift	Under-translation/erroneous paraphrase
	Arberry	And give the women their dowries as a gift spontaneous	Under-translation/erroneous paraphrase
	Shakir	And give women their dowries as a free gift	Erroneous paraphrase
	Sarwar	Pay the women their dowry as though it were a gift	Under-translation/erroneous paraphrase
Recent translations	Ghali	And bring the women their dowries as an endowment	Under-translation/erroneous paraphrase
	Abdel-Haleem	Give women their bridal gift upon marriage	Under-translation/erroneous paraphrase
	Itani	Give women their dowries graciously	Under-translation/erroneous paraphrase

Table 8: Rendering **وَأَتَيْتُمْ إِحْدَاهُنَّ قَنْطَارًا** into English

وَأَن أَرْدْتُمْ اسْتِبْدَالَ زَوْجٍ مَّكَانَ زَوْجٍ وَآتَيْتُمْ إِحْدَاهُنَّ قَنْطَارًا فَلَا تَأْخُذُوا مِنْهُ شَيْئًا. And if ye wish to exchange one wife for another and ye have given unto one of them a sum of money (however great), take nothing from it. (Surat An-Nisa, verse 20)			Translation procedure
Classical translations	Pickthall	Ye have given unto one of them a sum of money (however great)	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Ali	If ye had given the latter a whole treasure for dowry. Footnote: treasure: qintar – a talent of gold, see first note; page 14	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence + footnote
	Arberry	And you have given to one a hundredweight	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Shakir	Have given one of them a heap of gold.	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
Recent translations	Sarwar	You paid was a large amount of gold.	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Ghali	Brought one of them a hundredweight, (Literally: a Kantar)	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Abdel-Haleem	You have given her a great amount of gold.	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Itani	You have given one of them a fortune.	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence

Ibn Kathir (2011) indicates that the word refers to a large amount of money or gold (about twelve thousand ounces). Al-Tabari (1958) adds that the amount may be a two hundred heavy of silver or one hundred pounds of gold. As can be seen, exegeses are not certain about what the exact equivalent is in money or gold; they only emphasize its large quantity. All the translators, classical and recent, have brought out this nuance of meaning by referring to a large amount of money/gold given to the bride upon marriage. To be more accurate, Ali (1934) opts to provide a footnote that explicates this term and emphasizes its large volume. All in all, the translators have successfully rendered the message intended by this marriage expression, which refers to “dowry.”

4.2.3 Rendering **فَاتَوْهَنَ أَجُورَهَنَ فَرِيضَةً** into English

Table 9 showcases another expression that indicates in **فَاتَوْهَنَ أَجُورَهَنَ فَرِيضَةً**.

Table 9: Rendering **فَاتَوْهَنَ أَجُورَهَنَ فَرِيضَةً** into English

فَمَا اسْتَعْتَمَ بِهِ مِنْهُنَّ فَآتَوْهُنَّ أَجُورَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً. And those of whom ye seek content (by marrying them), give unto them their portions as a duty. (Surah An-Nisa, Verse 24)			Translation procedure
Classical translations	Pickthall	Give unto them their portions as a duty	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Ali	Give them their dowers (at least) as prescribed	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Arberry	Give them their wages apportionate	Under-translation
	Shakir	Give them their dowries as appointed	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
Recent translations	Sarwar	You must pay their dowries	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Ghali	You seek after (them) with your riches (i.e., that you pay them a dowry) in wedlock	Under-translation
	Abdel-Haleem	Give them their bride gift- this is obligatory	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Itani	Give them their dowry – a legal obligation	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence

This expression explicitly shows that paying a dowry is obligatory. If we exclude Arberry (classical) and Ghali (recent), the other translators have captured the message that the bride's dowry/compensation is obligatory, which is the intended meaning of this marriage expression. Both Arberry and Ghali have missed the emphasis communicated by the post-modifier فريضة “obligatorily.”

4.2.4 Rendering فطلقوهن لعدتهن وأحصوا العدة فطلقوهن into English

Table 10 highlights different translators' procedures in rendering the expression فطلقوهن لعدتهن وأحصوا العدة.

The Qur'an also contains jurisprudential rules like the rule of 'عدة'. This is an allocated period that a divorced or widowed woman must wait before she can remarry. This period exists to ensure that the womb is free of pregnancy, depending on the case in question. Specifically, it is 3 months as a standard case, or 4 months and 10 days for a widow, and for pregnant women until they give birth, while ' is not required in the case the man did not sleep with his divorcee. According to Al-Tabari (1958) and Ibn Kathir (2011), 'in this context refers to “the calculated period of purity from three successive menstrual cycles.”

As this concept is alien to the West, it constitutes a complete referential gap. Therefore, translators must rely on translation procedures to properly render this term in a clear and understandable way, taking into consideration that this technical term is a Qur'anic euphemism for the legally mandated waiting period.

All translators, with the exception of Arberry (classical) and Itani (recent), have tried to paraphrase this concept for the target reader by explaining the meaning in its first occurrence and then using a general term for the second occurrence. Thus, the descriptive phrases, *namely*, “the waiting period,” “the prescribed period,” “the legal period,” and “the fixed spell,” “the period of purity,” all attempt to explain what is meant by '. Furthermore, Ali and Abdel-Haleem rightly support their translations with elaborate footnotes to ensure communicating this Islamic concept. Abdel-Haleem adds the following footnote: “the waiting period starts properly after menstruation and before intercourse is resumed, and lasts for three menstrual cycles.” For his part, Ali defines it within his footnote as: “a period of waiting for 3 monthly courses is prescribed, in order to see if the marriage conditionally dissolved is likely to result in issue.”

As for Arberry's and Itani's translations, they employ general/unspecified terms “period” and “period of purity” as equivalents for the term, which are misleading for the target reader. The former may be wrongly associated with women's monthly menstruation. This was confirmed by Farghal and Al-Masri (2000) who examined a group of twenty American native speakers of English that mostly provided interpretations related to the menstrual cycle rather than the intended meaning. Thus, Arberry's translation is vague and may lead

Table 10: Rendering فطلقوهن لعدتهن وأحصوا العدة into English

يا أيها النبي إذا طلقتم النساء فطلقوهن لعدتهن وأحصوا العدة. O Prophet! When ye (men) put away women, put them away for their (legal) period and reckon the period. (Surat At-Talaq, Verse 1)			Translation procedure
Classical translations	Pickthall	Their (legal) period and reckon the period	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Ali	Their prescribed periods, and count (accurately), their prescribed periods	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence + footnote
	Arberry	Their period. Count the period	under-translation/hypernym
	Shakir	Their prescribed time, and calculate the number of the days prescribed	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
Recent translations	Sarwar	Their waiting period. Let them keep an account of the number of days in the waiting period	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Ghali	Their (fixed) spell, and enumerate the (fixed) spell	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Abdel-Haleem	Their prescribed waiting period can properly start, and calculate the period carefully	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence + footnote
	Itani	Their period of purity, and calculate their term	Under-translation/hypernym

the target reader into misconceptions or irrelevant tracks. Likewise, the latter (Itani's rendition) suffers from lack of clarity because the term "purity" is too abstract and general. If the target reader is not highly educated, they might fail to understand it, for example, they may think that the intended meaning of "purity" refers to the daily purity for the performance of الصلاة (e.g., purity after sexual intercourse), or purity from sins (i.e., repentance), although the intended meaning of purity specifically refers to menstrual cycles.

4.2.5 Rendering حتى يبلغ الكتاب أجله into English

Table 11 shows the translation procedures in rendering the expression حتى يبلغ الكتاب أجله.

Al-Tabari (1958) indicates that this verse contextually presents an Islamic rule stating that a man is not permitted to marry a widow until she has completed her ' time. So, the term الكتاب "book" refers figuratively to the term. As can be noted above, three of the translators (Arberry and Shakir/classical and Itani/recent) have opted for literal/semi-literal translation that may not communicate the intended meaning in the context of discussing the term'. Arberry translates the figure of speech literally by rendering it into "the book," which may amount to a mistranslation without a footnote. Similarly, Shakir and Itani have employed a general term "the writing," which may also be misinterpreted. By contrast, the other translators (Pickthall, Ali/classical, and Sarwar, Ghali and Abdel-Haleem/recent) have successfully referred to as a period of time, viz. "(the term) prescribed," "the term prescribed," "the appointed time," "the term has been reached," and "the prescribed period," respectively. Contextually, therefore, they have managed to paraphrase the figure of speech in a comprehensible manner to the target reader by avoiding the trap of literal/semi-literal translation.

4.2.6 Rendering فلا تميلوا كل الميل فتذروها كالمعلقة into English

Table 12 gives the renditions of this expression in the verse فلا تميلوا كل الميل فتذروها كالمعلقة in Surat An-Nisa, which is concerned with women's rights.

This verse discusses the concept of "polygamy" and recommends that a husband should fairly deal with his wives. In addition, it strictly draws attention to the fact that when a man decides to marry another wife, he will never be able to treat his two wives with equal fairness, especially in his affection, even if he wants to do so. This prescribed good treatment should be extended to all marriage manifestations, including affection, respect, maintenance, and other marriage duties. Al-Tabari (1958) identifies the meaning of this expression فلا تميلوا كل الميل فتذروها كالمعلقة as "not letting your greater love for one wife over another lead you to leave the rights or your duty toward the latter." A husband should be fair in his maintenance and have good treatment for both. Thus, leaving one of them "hanging (in the air)" or in "suspense," i.e., "neither divorced

Table 11: Rendering حتى يبلغ الكتاب أجله into English

ولا تعزموا عقدة النكاح حتى يبلغ الكتاب أجله. Do not decide for a marriage before the appointed time is over. (Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 235)			Translation procedure
Classical translations	Pickthall	Until (the term) prescribed is run	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Ali	Till the term prescribed is fulfilled	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Arberry	Until the book has reached its term	Formal equivalence (incomprehensible)
	Shakir	Until the writing is fulfilled	Under-translation/hyponym
Recent translations	Sarwar	Before the appointed time is over	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Ghali	Until the term (Literally: book) has been reached	Formal equivalence + paraphrase
	Abdel-Haleem	Until the prescribed period reaches its end	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Itani	Until the writing is fulfilled	Under-translation/hyponym

Table 12: Rendering فتذروها كالمعلقة into English

			Translation procedure
ولن تستطيعوا أن تعدلوا بين النساء ولو حرصتم، فلا تميلوا كل الميل فتذروها كالمعلقة. Ye are never able to be fair and just as between women, even if it is your ardent desire: But turn not away (from a woman) altogether, so as to leave her (as it were) hanging (in the air). (Surat An-Nisa, verse 129).			
Classical translations	Pickthall	But turn not altogether away (from one), leaving her in suspense	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Ali	But turn not away (from a woman) altogether, so as to leave her (as it were) hanging (in the air)	Paraphrase + formal equivalence + footnote
	Arberry	Yet do not be altogether partial so that you leave her as it were suspended	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Shakir	But be not disinclined (from one) with total disinclination, so that you leave her as it were in suspense	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
Recent translations	Sarwar	Do not give total preference to one of them, leaving the other as if in suspense	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Ghali	Yet do not incline away completely (Literally: incline away all inclining) (from one), so that you leave her (behind) as if she were suspended	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Abdel-Haleem	But do not ignore one wife altogether, leaving her suspended (between marriage and divorce)	Paraphrase + formal equivalence
	Itani	But do not be so biased as to leave another suspended	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence

nor married,” is unacceptable in Islam. Similarly, Ibn Abbas (2014) and Ibn Kathir (2011) assert the same interpretation.

Broadly speaking, figurative language is frequently used to create a broad oratorical impact. Abrams (1999) identifies figurative language as a departure from what speakers of a language perceive as the ordinary or standard significance or sequence of words in order to achieve some special meaning or effect. In this Qur’anic verse, the simile suggests that leaving one wife ignored is like leaving someone “hanging in the air/suspended.” This conversationally implicates (Grice, 1975) that the husband is ignoring one of his wives by not securing her rights and not performing his duties toward her, thus leaving her “neither divorced nor appropriately married.”

In this Qur’anic verse, a simile suggests that neglecting one wife is comparable to leaving someone ‘hanging in the air/suspended,’ implying (Grice, 1975) that the husband ignores one of his wives by not securing her rights and fulfilling his duties towards her. This leaves her “neither divorced nor appropriately married.”

As can be noted in the above translations, the intended meaning of the marriage expression is captured mostly through paraphrase and conversational implicature by referring to leaving a wife “in suspense/suspended,” thus implicating that “she is in a state between marriage and divorce.” Only Ali (classical) and Abdel-Haleem (recent) have explicitly referred to this state; *namely*, Ali translates the simile formally, “leaving her (as it were) hanging (in the air) and explicates in a footnote,” while Abdel-Haleem explicates using parenthetical material in the text “leaving her suspended [between marriage and divorce].” One should note that the intended meaning is conveyed in the ST by way of conversational implicature. Thus, it is necessary to explicate in the TT if the paraphrase has the same metaphorical potential, which is the case here. Explicitation, therefore, needs to be called up only when the conversational implicature may not come through.

4.3 Marriage Contract Expressions

Generally, marriage in Islam is called نكاح *or* زواج. The marriage contract means officially registering a marriage. The marriage contract is mentioned in the Qur’an as عَقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ (Surat Al-Baqarah). In Islamic culture

Table 13: Rendering **ولا تعزموا عقدة النكاح** into English

ولا تعزموا عقدة النكاح حتى يبلغ الكتاب أجله. And do not consummate the marriage until (the term) prescribed is run. (Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 235)			Translation procedure
Classical translations	Pickthall	Consume the marriage	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Ali	Resolve on the tie of marriage	Formal equivalence
	Arberry	Resolve on the knot of marriage	Formal equivalence
	Shakir	Confirm the marriage tie	Formal equivalence
Recent translations	Sarwar	Decide for a marriage	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Ghali	Resolve on the knot (i.e., the bond) of marriage	Formal equivalence
	Abdel-Haleem	Confirm the marriage tie	Formal equivalence
	Itani	Confirm the marriage tie	Formal equivalence

and norms, a marriage contract is sacred and is described as **ميثاقاً غليظاً** (Surat An-Nisa). These two expressions are discussed below.

4.3.1 Rendering **عقدة النكاح** into English

Table 13 shows eight renditions of the expression **ولا تعزموا عقدة النكاح**.

Ibn Kathir (2011) states that this expression specifically relates to confirming the marriage contract. This verse explicitly addresses men, stating that they are not allowed to confirm a marriage contract with a widow or a divorced woman until the designated period is over. Therefore, a man can keep his desire to wed a divorced or widowed woman to himself (in his heart) without revealing this, and he cannot officially wed her until she has completed her ‘time’. All the translations above successfully convey the message that a marriage contract cannot be legally concluded before the prescribed period has passed in order to rule out pregnancy from the previous marriage. Ali, Arberry, and Shakir (classical), and Ghali, Abdel-Haleem, and Itani (recent)

Table 14: Rendering **وأخذنا منكم ميثاقاً غليظاً** into English

وكيف تأخذونه وقد أفضى بعضكم إلى بعض وأخذنا منكم ميثاقاً غليظاً. How can ye take it (back) after one of you hath gone in unto the other, and they have taken a strong pledge from you? (Surat An-Nisa, verse 21)			Translation procedure
Classical translations	Pickthall	They have taken a strong pledge from you?	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Ali	They have taken from you a solemn covenant?	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Arberry	They have taken from you a solemn compact?	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Shakir	And they have made with you a firm covenant?	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
Recent translations	Sarwar	Made a solemn agreement with each other?	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Ghali	They have taken from you a solemn compact	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Abdel-Haleem	They have taken a solemn pledge from you?	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence
	Itani	They have received from you a solid commitment?	Paraphrase/ideational equivalence

have formally captured the Qur'anic metaphor عقدة النكاح by rendering it into “marriage knot/tie,” thus communicating the intended meaning metaphorically way it is expressed in the ST. For their part, Pickthall (classical) and Sarwar (recent) have opted to paraphrase the marriage metaphor using “decide/resolve,” which conveys the intended meaning apart from formal equivalence. One should note that when formal equivalence is workable the way it is in this case, it ought to be given priority in order to preserve the aesthetic parameter.

4.3.2 Rendering وأخذنا منكم ميثاقاً غليظاً into English

Table 14 shows the translation procedures for rendering the metaphorical expression وأخذنا منكم ميثاقاً غليظاً.

As can be noted, all the translators above (classical and recent) have successfully paraphrased the Qur'anic marriage metaphor ميثاقاً غليظاً variably into “solemn compact/agreement/pledge/covenant,” “strong pledge,” “firm covenant,” and “solid commitment.” Unlike the metaphorical marriage expression عقدة النكاح above, which may semantically lend itself to formal/literal equivalence, *namely*, “marriage knot/tie,” the metaphorical marriage expression ميثاقاً غليظاً literally/formally gives “a thick compact/agreement/covenant/commitment,” which are metaphorically alien to TL readers, hence may not be appropriately interpreted. Therefore, paraphrasing metaphorical expressions becomes inevitable in cases like this.

5 Conclusion

The Qur'an is renowned for its elegant language use and figurative language, both of which have an impact on the text's intended meaning and add to its aesthetic value. Translators have struggled with these issues for decades and have succeeded to a large extent. However, particularly when dealing with lexical and cultural differences in several spheres of life, including marriage as a social and religious institution, there is always room for improvement. The Qur'anic marriage terms that constitute the corpus of this study demonstrate that, in some instances, the translators are successful in capturing the intended meaning, while in other instances, they only managed to do so partially or they have missed the intended meaning.

The findings highlight two important points. First, the Qur'an contains numerous instances of polysemy phrases, which relate to various connotations of a single word. This may cause some translations to offer erroneous renderings, including the improper usage of hyponyms and hypernyms. Both classical and recent translators have made some errors involving the substitution of a superordinate or hypernym for an exclusively intended hyponym (e.g., *spouse* for *wife*). This certainly leads to a significant shift in the reader's concentration, which could perplex the intended reader and lead to misunderstandings. Similarly, some translators incorrectly choose to use a hyponym rather than the specifically intended hypernym (e.g., *son* for *child*). However, there are instances where a hypernym instead of a hyponym is effective if it is backed by co-textual hints. Before settling on a rendering, Qur'an translators need to be sensitive to co-text/context and may, in some cases, need to consult trustworthy exegeses and dictionaries in order to convey the intended meaning and avoid problems with under-translation (a hypernym for a hyponym) and over-translation (a hyponym for a hypernym).

Generally, the choice of which procedure should be given priority depends on a thorough understanding of Qur'anic context, SL, and TL, on the one hand, and a deep understanding of the historical, cultural, and religious expression's background on the other hand. For example, confusing the two senses of the word بنين in MSA (i.e., sons) with what it denotes in Qur'anic Arabic (i.e., children/sons and daughters) can cause serious coherence problems. In other words, the necessity for accuracy and fidelity to the original text must be balanced with the need for clarity and accessibility for the target reader. When translating expressions that have a distinct and unambiguous meaning and can be tolerated in the TL, a translator may often utilize formal equivalence, but when translating more intricate or abstract ideas, they may have to resort to ideational equivalence. As a rule, any Qur'anic translation's ultimate objective should be to faithfully preserve the Qur'an's original language and style while accurately and clearly expressing the text's message.

To conclude this study, formal equivalence/literal translation which attempts to capture metaphorical language between Qur'anic and English usage may work in some cases, but the translator needs to take utmost care in order not to fall victim to incomprehensible literalness, e.g., rendering الكتاب which denotes “the divorcee’s waiting period before remarrying” formally as “the book.” Thus, formal equivalence is a welcome option in authoritative texts like the Qur'an only insofar as the TL system allows. When formal falters, ideational equivalence/paraphrase, which relays the idea/content of the ST apart from figurative language, is a practical solution to convey the intended meaning. Striking a balance between formal equivalence and ideational equivalence can offer the best of both worlds, ensuring that the translation is both precise and understandable.

Apart from the type of equivalence, the data show that under-translation and over-translation may constitute serious traps for Qur'an translators in marriage expressions. While these two translation procedures may be tolerated in translating other genres of discourse such as fiction, they may cause serious coherence problems in Qur'an translation. For example, it makes a lot of difference when interpreting an Allah's address as directed to both husbands and wives when in fact it is exclusively meant for husbands. In particular, therefore, an extremely sensitive awareness of Qur'anic predicates' sense properties and their sense relations is of paramount importance when interpreting marriage expressions so that coherence mishaps can be avoided.

Funding information: This research received grant no. (83/2023) from the Arab Observatory for Translation (an affiliate of ALECSO), which is supported by the Literature, Publishing & Translation Commission in Saudi Arabia.

Author contributions: Haneen AbuAlkheir: Conceptualization; study design; data analysis and interpretation; drafting of the manuscript; final approval of the version to be published. Mohammed Farghal: Conceptualization; study design; data analysis and interpretation; critical revision of the manuscript for intellectual content; final approval of the version to be published. Ahmad S. Haider: Conceptualization; study design; data analysis and interpretation; critical revision of the manuscript for intellectual content; final approval of the version to be published.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no competing interests.

Data availability statement: The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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