

A Stylistic Analysis of the Prophet Traditions Translation

تحليل اسلوبي لترجمة الأحاديث النبوية

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المستخلص

ترجمة النصوص الدينية، ولا سيما تلك ذات الأهمية الكبيرة مثل الأحاديث النبوية، تُعد تحديًا خاصًا نظرًا لقدسيتها وارتباطها العميق بالسياقات اللغوية والثقافية والتاريخية التي نشأت فيها. إن ترجمة هذه النصوص إلى لغات أخرى تتطلب توازنًا دقيقًا بين الحفاظ على الدقة والأمانة للنص الأصلي وبين ضمان الوصول والفهم للجمهور المستهدف. تقدم هذه الدراسة تحليلًا شاملاً للأسلوب في ترجمة الأحاديث، حيث تستكشف كيف تؤثر الخيارات اللغوية والثقافية والتفسيرية المختلفة على فهم وتلقي هذه التقاليد في اللغات المختلفة.

يعتمد التحليل على نهج متعدد الأبعاد لفحص الأسلوب، يتضمن تحليلات معجمية ونحوية وخطابية. ومن الناحية المنهجية، تجمع الدراسة بين التقييمات الكمية والنوعية، مما يوفر منظورًا متوازنًا حول كيفية تأثير الخيارات الأسلوبية على نتائج الترجمة.

تكشف الدراسة أن القرارات الأسلوبية المتخذة في ترجمة الأحاديث لها تأثير كبير على تفسير وتلقي هذه النصوص. فعلى الرغم من أن الترجمات الحرفية تحافظ على الصياغة الأصلية والتركيب، إلا أنها غالبًا ما تواجه صعوبة في نقل المعاني الدقيقة والسياقات الثقافية المتأصلة في النص العربي. وعلى الجانب الآخر، قد تحقق الترجمات الأكثر تفسيرًا قابلية أكبر للفهم والوصول، لكنها قد تخاطر بتغيير الرسالة الأصلية أو إدخال تناقضات تاريخية. إن تحقيق التوازن بين هذين النهجين أمر حساس ويعتمد على السياق، مما يتطلب من المترجمين اتخاذ قرارات مدروسة بناءً على الجمهور المستهدف.

والغرض من الترجمة. تؤكد النتائج على الأهمية الحاسمة لاتباع نهج دقيق في ترجمة النصوص الدينية، مما يبرز الحاجة إلى مراعاة دقيقة للاختيارات الأسلوبية لضمان الدقة والأمانة والوصول. **كلمات مفتاحية:** أسلوبية، ترجمة، الأحاديث النبوية.

Abstract

The translation of religious texts, particularly those as significant as the Prophet Traditions (Hadith), presents distinct challenges due to their sacred nature and deep entrenchment in the linguistic, cultural, and historical contexts of their origin. Translating these texts into other languages necessitates a careful equilibrium between maintaining fidelity to the original text and ensuring accessibility for the target audience. This study conducts a comprehensive stylistic analysis of Hadith translations, exploring the ways in which various linguistic, cultural, and interpretive decisions influence the understanding and reception of these traditions across different languages.

The analysis adopts a multi-dimensional approach to stylistic examination, incorporating lexical, syntactic, and discourse analyses. Methodologically, the study integrates both quantitative and qualitative assessments, offering a balanced perspective on how stylistic choices shape translation outcomes. The study reveals that the stylistic decisions made in translating the Hadith significantly impact the interpretation and reception of these texts. Literal translations, while preserving the original wording and structure, often struggle to convey the nuanced meanings and cultural contexts inherent in the Arabic text. Conversely, more interpretive translations may enhance readability and accessibility but risk altering the original message or introducing anachronisms. Achieving a balance between these approaches is delicate and context-dependent, requiring translators to make informed decisions based on the intended audience and the purpose of the translation. The findings underscore the critical importance of a nuanced approach to translating religious texts, highlighting the need for careful consideration of stylistic choices to ensure both fidelity and accessibility.

Keywords: Stylistic, Translation, Hadiths.

1. Introduction

The translation of religious texts, especially those as revered and historically significant as the Hadith, is a complex and nuanced task that extends far beyond mere linguistic conversion. The Hadith, which encompass the sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad, hold a central place in Islamic theology and jurisprudence. As such, their translation into other languages is not only a linguistic endeavor but also a cultural, theological, and interpretive challenge.

The intricate relationship between language and meaning in religious texts poses unique difficulties for translators. The original Arabic text of the Hadith is rich with cultural and historical references, metaphors, and linguistic subtleties that are often difficult, if not impossible, to fully convey in another language. Moreover, the translator must navigate the fine line between staying true to the original text and making it comprehensible and relevant to contemporary audiences from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

This study seeks to explore the stylistic aspects of Hadith translation, focusing on how various linguistic and cultural choices impact the interpretation and reception of these texts in different languages. By examining different translations and employing a multifaceted approach to stylistic analysis, this research aims to shed light on the delicate balance between literal and interpretive translation strategies. It also considers the implications of these stylistic choices within broader translation theories, such as dynamic and formal equivalence.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader discourse on religious translation, highlighting the importance of careful and informed translation practices that respect both the sanctity of the original text and the needs of the target audience. The findings of this research underscore the critical role of the translator as both a linguistic mediator and a cultural interpreter, whose choices have far-reaching implications for how religious texts are understood and practiced across different cultural contexts.

2. Stylistic

2.1 What is Stylistic?

With the goal of interpreting a text, stylistics examines its basic linguistic forms in great detail. It is similar to practical criticism in that it is important even in reader reaction and reception theories. In actuality, stylistics has a big impact on almost all critical perspectives. The meanings of “stylistics” are several and include “the science of literary style” and “the art of crafting exceptional writing style.” The definition given by Leech and Short (1981: 13) is “the linguistic study of style.” In order to bridge the gap between literary criticism and linguistics, stylistics entails analyzing literary discourse via a linguistic lens, according to Widdowson (1975: 4).

Its morphological composition suggests that stylistics is fundamentally a synthesis of both; style links it to the former, but aesthetics is also inherent. Another viewpoint is provided by Verdonk (2002: 4), who defines stylistics as “the investigation of unique language expression and the clarification of its meaning and significance.” Bradford (1997: 1) also emphasizes the elusive and complex aspect of stylistics, pointing out that every addition to the vast and varied area of literary studies inevitably deals with the idea of style.

With its objectivity, linguistic insights, and helpful vocabulary, stylistics strengthens our appreciation of literature and supports our interpretations. As stylistics is now an integral part of modern critique, no serious student can afford to overlook it. For this reason, stylistic analysis is not always isolated by literary critics from a more comprehensive literary theory. The writer’s purpose, which is to construct moral assessments and scenarios, is inextricably linked to the style, which consists of its techniques and elegant texture. In a painting, color and composition blend literary and linguistic patterns (Carter & Stockwell, 2008: 44).

Although stylistics is a deceptive phrase, stylistics is the study of literary language through linguistic analysis. In the past, the term “style” was used to describe specific linguistic patterns, as those seen in legal or religious texts. These documents are now frequently referred to as “registers.”

The definitions of “style” and “stylistics” have evolved over time to become more narrowly defined and to concentrate on the use of linguistic analysis in literary works. Variations from standard language usage are widespread in literary language. Certain aspects are frequently and occasionally purposefully accentuated or highlighted, sometimes through the use of unique or uncommon terminology (Carter & Stockwell, 2008: 44).

Aitchison (1999: 141) offers a useful parallel that helps explain the construction of literary language. Writers are like expert knitters who try to make interesting new patterns. Instead of employing tried-and-true pairs like “blue sky” or “dark despair,” they come up with novel and eye-catching combinations that draw in listeners and readers. As Dylan Thomas’s “a grief ago” serves as an example, they try to introduce unique and rare words that have a profound effect on readers.

2.2 The Purpose of Stylistics

According to Leech and Short (1981: 11), stylistics is usually studied as a tool for explanation rather than just as a way to describe how language is employed. The main goal of literary stylistics, whether stated openly or tacitly, is to clarify the relationship between language and artistic purpose. They go on to explain that, rather than “what,” the main issues guiding stylistics are “why” and “how.” Linguists question, “Why did the author choose this particular expression in this context?” Meanwhile, “How does the use of language achieve a specific aesthetic impact?” is a question posed by literary critics. Literary stylistics thus seeks to reconcile the linguist’s emphasis on linguistic description with the critic’s concern for aesthetic appreciation, which includes both critical judgment and interpretation. It is important to remember that stylistics is primarily concerned with the interpretation process (ibid.: 11–12).

Hasan (1971: 299) argues that the usefulness of studying literary language for stylistic reasons is not found in proving how many “facts” about language

are particularly applicable to a given literary text, but rather in the collection of “facts” about language.

Wales (2001: 331) makes a similar argument, stating that the main objective of the majority of stylistic analyses is to show the formal characteristics of texts’ functional significance in the text’s interpretation rather than just describing the elements in isolation. The goal of stylistics is to make a relationship between literary effects and the linguistic components deemed necessary to achieve those effects.

According to Simpson (2004: 3), studying stylistics, which digs into the study of language itself and places a special emphasis on originality in language usage, enhances our comprehension of language. Using language models allows this analytical inquiry method to become much more reflective because it sheds light on the language system that it comes from. By regularly analyzing texts in which these norms are twisted, stretched, or pushed to their limits, stylistics illuminates the “rules” of language. Consequently, a prerequisite for contemporary stylistic analysis is a deep interest in language (*ibid.*).

Bradford (1997: xi) claims that stylistics is a technique that helps us recognize and characterize the distinctive features of literary works. It enables us to identify the structural and generic divides seen in literature. Essentially, stylistics gives us the ability to identify and describe the unique qualities that set apart different literary works and aids in our classification of them within the larger body of literature.

Toolan (1990: 42–60), referenced in Stockwell (2006: 748), states that stylistics can be used for language and literature instruction among other things. It can also be used to clarify reactions to literature, understand why various readings of the same book can produce different results, and bring to light nuances and details that might otherwise be missed. A literary text’s complex structure can be revealed through stylistics, which also improves the nuance and complexity of interpretations. As a result, stylistics can serve as a catalyst for interpretation as well as a descriptive tool.

3. Translation

3.1 What is Translation?

The term “translation” is derived from the Latin word *translātus*, which means “to transfer” (Simpson and Weiner, 1989: 410). According to Simpson and Weiner, translation is defined as follows:

- The process of converting text from one language into another;
- The act of rendering something into a different medium or form.

In Arabic, the word ترجمة means “to explain speech into another language” (Al Buṣṭānī, 1998: 69) and “transfer speech into another language” (Al-Ba-sha, 1992: 253). Rida (1958: 391) says that ترجم كلامه means “explained it” and that المترجم refers to “the person who transfers speech from one language into another.” The word أول means “explain” (Rida, 1958: 224).

Translation can generally be defined as the process of transferring, reproducing, replacing, or interpreting the message, content, text, or meaning of a source text (ST) into another language, with particular attention to both meaning and style. Central to this definition is the concept of «reproduction,» which implies that translators carefully analyze the components of ST units in terms of their meaning and structure, and subsequently render these units into target texts (TTs). It is crucial for translators to account for the linguistic and cultural differences between English and Arabic when engaging in the translation process.

3.2 Methods of Translation

Methods of Translation refer to the various strategies and approaches that translators use to convert a text from one language into another. These methods range from those that focus on preserving the exact wording and structure of the source text (ST) to those that prioritize the overall meaning and readability in the target language (TL). The choice of method depends on factors such as the nature of the text, the purpose of the translation, and the cultural and linguistic differences between the languages involved.

Understanding these methods is crucial for translators to make informed decisions that balance fidelity to the original text with the needs and expectations of the target audience (Newmark: 9-12).

The main methods of translation include literal translation, which emphasizes word-for-word accuracy, and free translation, which allows for more flexibility and adaptation to ensure the translated text is natural and accessible in the target language. Each method has its strengths and weaknesses, making it important for translators to choose the most appropriate approach based on the context of the translation task.

3.2.1 Rosyd's Methods of Translation

Rosyd's methods of translation emphasize the importance of balancing fidelity to the original text with the need for the translated text to resonate with the target audience. His approach categorizes translation methods into two primary types: direct translation and oblique translation. Direct translation involves a word-for-word approach where possible, ensuring that the structure and meaning of the source text (ST) are preserved. Oblique translation, on the other hand, allows for more flexibility, enabling the translator to adapt the text when direct translation fails to convey the intended meaning or when cultural differences necessitate adjustments (Rosyd, 2017: 45-47).

3.2.2 Sirriyya's Methods of Translation

Sirriyya's methods of translation focus on the dynamic interaction between the source text and the cultural context of the target language. Sirriyya proposes a method called contextual translation, which integrates the cultural, social, and linguistic contexts of both the source and target languages. This method aims to preserve the original text's essence while ensuring that the translation is culturally appropriate and understandable to the target audience. Sirriyya emphasizes that translators must be deeply aware of cultural nuances and idiomatic expressions to achieve a translation that is both faithful and culturally sensitive (Sirriyya, 2019: 112-115).

3.2.3 Newmark's Methods of Translation

Peter Newmark's methods of translation are widely recognized in translation studies and are classified into two main categories: semantic translation and communicative translation. Semantic translation strives to remain as close as possible to the original text, focusing on preserving the meaning and style of the source text. This method is particularly effective for literary and religious texts where the exact wording is significant. Communicative translation, in contrast, prioritizes the readability and comprehensibility of the translation, making it more suitable for texts where the primary goal is effective communication with the target audience. Newmark argues that the choice between these methods depends on the purpose of the translation and the nature of the text being translated (Newmark, 1988: 39-42).

3.3 Types of Translation

Types of Translation encompass different approaches to converting text from one language to another, each serving distinct purposes based on the nature of the text and the translation objectives. These methods can broadly be categorized into approaches that emphasize maintaining close adherence to the original text and those that prioritize conveying the overall meaning and readability in the target language. Understanding these types is essential for selecting the appropriate strategy to ensure that the translation meets the needs of both the source text and the target audience (Newmark, 1988: 9-12).

3.3.1 Literal Translation

Literal translation is a method that attempts to translate the source text (ST) word-for-word into the target language (TL), preserving the original structure and meaning as closely as possible. This approach is often used when the primary goal is to maintain the exact wording, syntax, and stylistic features of the original text. While literal translation can be useful in technical, legal, or scientific contexts where precision is crucial, it can lead to awkward or unnatural phrasing in the TL, particularly when cultural or idiomatic

expressions are involved.

Peter Newmark discusses the limitations of literal translation, noting that while it may work well with languages that share similar structures, it often fails to convey the nuanced meanings embedded in the ST (Newmark, 1988: 68-70).

3.3.2 Free Translation

Free translation, on the other hand, focuses on conveying the overall meaning and intent of the source text rather than adhering strictly to its form. This method prioritizes the fluidity and readability of the translation in the target language, often at the expense of staying close to the original text's wording and structure. Free translation is typically used in contexts where the aim is to produce a text that is accessible and engaging for the target audience, such as in literary translations or when translating texts with significant cultural differences. While this approach allows for greater creativity and adaptation, it can sometimes result in the loss of specific details or nuances from the original text. Newmark categorizes free translation as a method that seeks to produce a more natural and idiomatic translation, which is particularly important when cultural and linguistic differences are significant (Newmark, 1988: 45-46).

4. Translating Hadith

Translating Hadith involves rendering the sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) from Arabic into other languages. This task is particularly challenging due to the sacred and contextually rich nature of these texts. The translation of Hadith requires not only linguistic accuracy but also a deep understanding of the cultural, historical, and theological contexts in which they were originally conveyed. Several problems arise when translating Hadith:

- **Cultural and Historical Context:** Hadith often contain references to specific cultural and historical contexts that may not have direct equivalents in other languages. This can make it difficult to convey the full

meaning and significance of the text without additional explanation or adaptation (Ibrahim, 2014: 78-80).

- **Linguistic Nuances:** The Arabic language used in Hadith includes idiomatic expressions, metaphors, and nuances that may not translate easily into other languages. Literal translations may fail to capture these subtleties, potentially leading to misunderstandings or misinterpretations (Suleiman, 2016: 55-57).
- **Religious Sensitivity:** The sacred nature of Hadith means that translators must be exceptionally cautious to avoid altering the original message or introducing errors that could affect religious understanding and practice. This requires a balance between maintaining fidelity to the original text and ensuring clarity for the target audience (Al-Qaradawi, 2006: 92-94).
- **Interpreting Variants:** Many Hadith have multiple versions with slight variations. Translators must navigate these differences carefully to ensure that their translation accurately reflects the intended meaning and significance of the Hadith (Miller, 2017: 102-104).

In Bukhari, we encounter a series of structures that feature grammatical ambiguity because of pronominal reference. For instance, the structure (خلق الله ادم على صورته) has a pronominal affix (ـه) cliticized to the proper noun (الله), resulting in syntactic ambiguity, which has also led to different interpretations and translations. This pronominal object affix can either refer to (God) which leads to the meaning that Adam has a form as Allah has a form (both are not identical or similar) or refer to (Adam) thus leading to the meaning that Adam has been created in the form Allah has chosen for him. Khan chooses the second meaning by assuming that the antecedent of the pronoun is Adam, thus meaning that Allah created Adam in his (meaning Adam's) complete form (directly) (Bukhari, 8:246). This, however, conflicts with the other variant

version related by Ibn Abi Asim (1:328) in which the Prophet said, (فإن ابن آدم، خلق على صورة الرحمن). In comparing the two narrations, it is evident that the most appropriate translation would be “Allah created Adam in His form”, but explanatory notes must be provided to clarify all likely creedal misconceptions.

There are numerous examples of Prophetic traditions that employ syntactic mechanisms to achieve an intended rhetorical and aesthetic sense. In the following example the morphological form of the word that is used implies a meaning that should be conveyed in the target text.

In Bukhari we read: (وكان يلقاه في كل ليلة من رمضان فيدارسه القرآن) “Gabriel used to meet him every night of Ramadan to teach him the Qur’ān” (Bukhari, 1:4). The verb (يدارسه – teach him) also connotes a sense of mutual participation of both the student and the instructor which is not conveyed by the English verb (teach). Thus, the Arabic word adds textual value to the text, i.e. a textual enhancement which is not reflected in the translation. The proper translation would be ‘Gabriel used to confer with him’ or ‘Gabriel to go through the Qur’an with him’ (Belewy: 1:4). With regard to the sphere of particles, Arabic is rich in particles that add semantic and rhetorical meaning. Overlooking specific Arabic particles in the English translation may lead to drastic distortion of the source text, particularly those of semantic and rhetorical impact.

In order to achieve an eloquent style, prepositions of some Hadith structures are dropped without any linguistic effect on the structure of the source text itself. A translator needs to show those deleted prepositions in the target language. Khan renders those deleted prepositions in his translation as in (اسق) «Is it because he (i.e. Zubair) is your aunt’s son?» (Bukhari, 3:320). In this example the preposition (لـ - because) must be employed before the word (أن). Translators sometimes do not identify a deleted preposition in the source text. It may result in misinterpreting the structure as in (ما عملت عملا أرجى عندي اني لم اتطهر) (الا صليت) “the best deed, which I think to be the best, is”. The preposition (من)

should be employed after the word (عندي) (Mubarkafuri, 1984:4:359). Therefore, the text should read, “I have never offered a deed for which I am more hopeful [that I am rewarded] than that I have never performed ablution except that I prayed thereafter”.

Future meaning, as in (من اعمار ارضا ليست لأحد فهو احق) “He who cultivates land that does not belong to anybody is more rightful” (Bukhari, 3:306). In some occasions where past tense implies future) meaning in Arabic, Translators do not consistently maintain the future meaning in the target language as in (يخرج من النار من قال لا اله الا الله). translated as, “Whoever said ‘None has the right to be worshipped but Allah and has in his heart good (faith) equal to the weight of a barley grain’ will be taken out of Hell.” (Bukhari, 1:37).

Further literally translates past tense in (من اكل من هذه الشجرة - يعني الثوم - فلا) [Whoever ate from this plant (i.e. garlic) should not enter our mosque.] (Bukhari, 1:451). In the translation of this example, there is a possibility that the legal ruling of prohibition to enter mosques upon eating garlic is temporal to the incident addressed by the hadith.

5. Conclusion

Translating Hadith presents a series of complex challenges that require a nuanced approach to ensure both fidelity to the original text and accessibility for the target audience. The Hadith, comprising the sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), hold immense religious significance and are deeply embedded in their cultural and historical contexts. As such, translating these texts is not merely a linguistic exercise but also a profound act of cultural and theological interpretation.

One of the primary challenges in translating Hadith is dealing with the cultural and historical contexts embedded within the texts. Hadith often reference specific practices, social norms, and historical events that may lack direct counterparts in the target language. This contextual richness can be difficult to convey accurately without risking distortion or loss of meaning. Translators must navigate these cultural nuances carefully to maintain the integrity of the original message while ensuring that the translation is comprehensible and

relevant to contemporary readers (Ibrahim, 2014: 78-80).

Another significant issue arises from the linguistic nuances of the Arabic language used in Hadith. Arabic is a language rich in idiomatic expressions, metaphors, and subtle meanings that may not translate easily into other languages. A literal translation approach can often result in awkward or unclear phrasing, potentially obscuring the intended message of the Hadith. This challenge underscores the need for translators to go beyond mere word-for-word translation and engage deeply with the text to capture its full meaning (Suleiman, 2016: 55-57).

Furthermore, the sacred nature of Hadith necessitates a high degree of sensitivity and accuracy. Translators must ensure that their work does not alter or misrepresent the original teachings, as this could have significant implications for religious understanding and practice. Maintaining fidelity to the original text while making it accessible to a diverse audience requires a delicate balance. This challenge is compounded by the presence of multiple variants of Hadith, which can differ slightly in wording and interpretation. Translators must carefully consider these variants to provide an accurate and respectful translation (Al-Qaradawi, 2006: 92-94; Miller, 2017: 102-104).

In light of these challenges, it is evident that a purely literal or free translation approach may not fully address the complexities involved in translating Hadith. Literal translation risks failing to capture the nuances and cultural contexts of the original text, while free translation, while more adaptable, may compromise the integrity of the message. To effectively translate Hadith, a more sophisticated approach is required, one that incorporates **stylistic analysis**.

Stylistic analysis offers a comprehensive method for translating Hadith by focusing on both the linguistic and contextual elements of the text. This approach involves examining the specific stylistic features of the original Hadith, such as its language, structure, and rhetorical devices, and finding equivalent expressions in the target language that preserve these features

while conveying the intended meaning. By analyzing the stylistic elements of the text, translators can better understand the nuances and cultural references embedded within the Hadith and ensure that these are faithfully represented in the translation.

Moreover, stylistic analysis allows for a more nuanced interpretation of the text, accommodating the various layers of meaning and context that may be present in the original. This method enables translators to produce translations that are not only accurate but also resonate with the target audience, maintaining the richness and depth of the Hadith while ensuring clarity and comprehensibility.

In conclusion, translating Hadith requires a thoughtful and methodical approach to address the inherent challenges and complexities. While literal and free translation methods each have their merits, the use of stylistic analysis provides a more effective framework for preserving the meaning and integrity of these sacred texts. By engaging with the text's stylistic features and contextual elements, translators can create translations that honor the original message of the Hadith while making it accessible and meaningful for readers in different linguistic and cultural contexts.

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