

Problems of Translating Authentic Hadiths from Arabic into English: A Linguistic Perspective

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Abstract

This paper attempts to investigate some linguistic challenges encountered when translating authentic Hadiths from Arabic into English. The translation of hadith presents a number of linguistic and cultural challenges due to the complex nature of the Arabic texts. Hadiths often feature concise expressions, archaic vocabulary, cultural references, and religious terminology that do not always have direct equivalents in English. These features make the translation process difficult and can lead to misinterpretation or loss of meaning. This study aims to investigate the challenges of achieving equivalence in translating authentic hadiths from Arabic into English by adopting Koller's model "Equivalence in Translation Theory". The practical part of the current study identifies and analyzes the problems found in the English translation of "An-Nawawis Forty Hadith: An Anthology of the Prophet Muhammad" by Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson Davies.

Key words : Religious text , Linguistic Difficulties, Hadīth , Equivalence, Translation Strategy.

مشكلات ترجمة الأحاديث الصحيحة من العربية إلى الإنجليزية: منظور لغوي

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المستخلص

تحاول هذه الورقة البحثية استكشاف بعض التحديات اللغوية التي تواجه ترجمة الأحاديث المسندة من العربية إلى الإنجليزية. تواجه ترجمة الأحاديث عددًا من التحديات اللغوية والثقافية بسبب الطبيعة المعقدة للنصوص العربية. غالبًا ما تتميز الأحاديث بتعبيرات موجزة ومفردات قديمة وإشارات ثقافية ومصطلحات دينية ليس لها دائمًا مكافئات مباشرة في اللغة الإنجليزية مما تجعل هذه الميزات عملية الترجمة صعبة ويمكن أن تؤدي إلى سوء التفسير أو فقدان المعنى. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف تحديات تحقيق التكافؤ في ترجمة الأحاديث المسندة من العربية إلى الإنجليزية من خلال تبني نموذج كولر "التكافؤ في نظرية الترجمة". بينما يتناول الجزء العملي من هذه الدراسة تحليل المشكلات الموجودة في الترجمة الإنجليزية لكتاب "متن الأربعين النووية للإمام النووي"، لعز الدين إبراهيم ودنيس جونسون .

الكلمات المفتاحية: النص الديني، الصعوبات اللغوية، الحديث، التكافؤ، استراتيجية الترجمة

1.Introduction

It is evident that the hadith is the second sacred text of Islam, after the Quran. The concept of hadith, the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad, serves as the primary source of religious guidance and understanding. Translation of hadith is not impossible, since this well-known human activity

has been practiced between different languages of the world since ancient times, through which man conquered the barrier of language. On the other hand, it is not a smooth and straightforward activity that can be easily carried out. What supports this fact is that translators have always come across perplexing problems and difficulties while carrying out their tedious task, which demands many talents and capabilities on the part of the translator.

1.1 Statement of Problem

Translating authentic hadiths from Arabic into English is complex, particularly in achieving equivalence across multiple levels of meaning. Many translations fail to reflect subtle layers of meaning, rhetorical force, and pragmatic implications, resulting in loss, distortion, or oversimplification of the Prophet's message.

1.2 Aims of the Study

- Investigate linguistic and cultural challenges in achieving different types of equivalence in hadith translation.
- Examine how applying Koller's equivalence types improves communicative effectiveness.

1.3 Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that applying Koller's theory of equivalence by considering denotative, connotative, text-normative, pragmatic, and formal dimensions can significantly reduce semantic and cultural loss, thereby enhancing the accuracy, appropriateness, and communicative value of translated hadiths.

2. Theoretical Background

Translating hadiths presents complex linguistic and semantic challenges due to structural differences between Arabic and the target languages. Many expressions carry specific religious meanings that are difficult to convey accurately in another language.

2.1 Religious Text

Translating religious texts requires an additional consideration to be respected besides those associated with literary translation, such as sanctity of the text . Religious texts have appeared in the remote past. Some of them have been translated at different periods , this is why one comes across serious differences between them which are the result of different literary and stylistic conventions that characterize different eras. The language of some such translations is archaic and much distant from contemporary language (Ilyas ,1989:89) .

Elewa (2014:25) describes religious text as a "key element in disseminating the divine message throughout history. It was also employed for teaching converts the basics of religion and for mirroring the beauty of faith and morality around the globe". Religious texts can take various forms as in instructions, verses from sacred books and sayings or actions of a prophet. According to Nida (1964:195) "religious texts can be classified into: (1) texts that discuss

historical or present-day religious beliefs and practices of a believing community and (2) texts that are crucial in giving rise to believing community".

2.2 Hadith

Al-A'zamī (2010, 8) states that "while the Quran is the primary source of Islamic law, the prophetic hadith is the second primary source". Eminently instructive in nature, the hadith guides Muslims on how to live a life in accordance with Islamic teachings. Therefore, the sayings and deeds of the prophet Muhammad transmitted in the hadith serve a specific purpose for Muslims, who must obey him by following his instructions included in the hadith. In the literal sense, hadith is considered to comprise all the sayings of the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Bill (2010, 12) admits that "a hadith or a tradition, usually a long paragraph is an action, brief story or conversation about or by prophet Mohammed", and distinguishes all possible suggestions that the presence of the prophet Muhammad is crucial in an action, story, or conversation in which he participates. Zelaci (2014, 16) mentions that "the prophet's sayings are classified in various ways, according to specific criteria". Depending on the source, if the authority and meaning come from the prophet himself, it is considered a prophetic saying Hadith Nabaoui; and if the saying comes from Allah and was composed by the prophet, it is considered a hadith qudsi. A hadith must have specific qualities to be acceptable, and depending on the strength of those qualities, it may or may not be accepted. For example, the content of a hadith can be of high or low quality (Clements, 1996:163-171; Adamec, 1997:755-765).

Khan (2012:13-14) mentions that "each hadith is composed of a chain of narrators (sanad) and content/text (matn)". The sanad, long or short, refers to the names of the sources through whom the sayings or practices of the Prophet were reported. The matn is the words of the report, which communicate what the Prophet said or did. During the Prophet's time and three decades after, the chain of narrators was not questioned. During this period the entire focus was placed on the Hadith text. From the second half of the first century of Islam the chain of narrators and their associated biographic dictionaries assumed a significant place in Hadith authentication. This knowledge of Hadith narrators was then extensively used to check the authenticity of a chain. "If a chain was found reliable then the text reported through that chain was identified as authentic". Any problem in the chain would lead to the classification of the report as weak or unreliable. "Hadith experts developed five universally acceptable criteria to determine the credibility and authenticity of Hadith: chain continuity; integrity of narrators' character; and non-aberrance". If a hadith fulfills all these five criteria, it is declared authentic. A weak hadith is short of fulfilling the conditions of the authentic one. The chain of transmitters must be unbroken for the hadith to be acceptable; none of the transmitters can be missing from the chain of narrators. Each transmitter must have heard the hadith directly from the

transmitter before him. Each chain must link directly back to the Prophet or any of his Companions.

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ divides hadith into:

1. Sahīḥ Hadīth (Authentic ḥadīth)

It is one which has a continuous isnād, made up of reporters of trustworthy memory from similar authorities, and which is found to be free from any irregularities or defects (2006, 13).

2. Hasan hadīth (Good ḥadīth)

A ḥasan hadith is one whose source is known and whose transmitters are unambiguous. It is not as free from defects as the *ṣaḥīḥ* hadith, yet it is still accepted (Ibid, 17–18).

3. Da‘if ḥadīth (Weak ḥadīth)

A ḍa‘īf hadith is one that does not have the attributes of *ṣaḥīḥ* or *ḥasan*. It is a narration whose chain is broken or includes a weak transmitter (Ibid, 21).

2.3 Hadith Translation

As a religious genre, Islamic texts possess certain unique linguistic and cultural properties that make their translation considerably difficult. Abdel Haleem (2011: 67), states that "prophetic hadiths are found in classical Arabic, whose syntactical and stylistic peculiarities make the Arabic language very concise, idiomatic, figurative, and elliptical". In addition to the difficulties inherent in the language, hadiths are also "characterized as a human product with a divine touch", and constitute the second resource for Islamic legislation after the Holy Quran. This means that a translator requires both linguistic and legislative knowledge to translate the meaning of a hadith into the target language. Nida (1997: 194) argues that "religious terminology has always been conservative because many consider the words themselves to be essentially dictated by the deity".

Ultimately, the translation of a hadith presents the same characteristics as the translation of any religious text. "Translators of religious texts must relate the text to specific contexts and occasions to capture the exact meaning and remain faithful to the original text, which is a delicate text to translate". When using a free or literal translation, as Eugene Nida asserts, free translation is appropriate for addressing religious texts, since the emphasis is not on the formal characteristics of the text itself, but on the semantic content. Therefore, diverse approaches and strategies are required to translate religious texts (Butnariu, 2017: 354).

2.4. Difficulties of Translating Hadith

During the translation process, translators may encounter numerous problems related to meaning and vocabulary. Ghazala (1995:17) states that "a translation problem is any difficulty we encounter while translating that forces us to stop the translation to revise, reconsider, or rewrite it, or to use a dictionary or some reference to overcome it and understand it. It is any element of the sign language text that forces us to stop the translation". Furthermore, these problems cause

translators to take longer than usual to translate texts due to the difficulties they face, which prevent them from completing the work easily .

One may classify the main problems and difficulties that a translator is expected to face into:

2.4.1 Lexical Problems

This type of problems implies the difficulty in finding an appropriate translation equivalent for a certain SL lexical item. Catford(1965:) mentions three types of lexical problems which he calls “shared exponence ,polysemy and oligosemy”.

When a homonymous sign is made ambiguous on purpose by the author ,the translator has no right in resolving the ambiguity, and should instead try to reproduce the same ambiguity or a similar one in order to fulfil the same function of the intended ambiguity either by rewriting the S.L. word and making use of an explanatory footnote, or to render the functionally relevant ambiguous S.L. form by a different but corresponding T.L. form that may serve the same function .The linguistic context does not always resolve the ambiguity of homonymous signs ,as is explicit in the following example : " وانت حل بهذا البلد :

" the homonymous sign (حل) has been taken by the commentators of the holy Quran as signifying : dwelling , free to act ,exposed to harm. In the case of polysemous signs, a word is said to have more than one related meaning. When more than one of the meanings included in a polysomic word matches the context, it becomes problematic for the translator to find out the specific equivalent. The translator, in such a circumstances, has to make use of the extra-linguistic context (context of situation) or any useful information in his endeavour to select the correct equivalent. When the translator’s attempt with regard to the context of situation proves to be futile too, he may resort either to a haphazard choice with an explanatory footnote, in which he has to make his uncertainty about the equivalent clear to the reader, or to employ transference of the S.L. form and use an explanatory footnote (Ilyas,1989:119).

2.4.2 Syntactic Problems

In addition to lexical problems that are usually much encountered by the translators or religious text ,the translator may also come across some serious syntactic ambiguities. Structural ambiguity is a common aspect of human languages, and is often the result of a tendency for economy which characterizes natural languages. The linguistic and or extra-linguistic context sometimes help in resolving such syntactic ambiguities. Such ambiguities (i.e. the structural ones) may be classified into:

- Structural ambiguity (in terms of structural relations that hold between the constituents).
- Potential ellipsis
- Indeterminacy of the pronominal reference (Ibid: 99,120).

2.4.3 Cultural Problems

When the translator comes across the problem of not finding a corresponding T.L. equivalent for the S.L. item to be translated, he usually resorts to a non – corresponding equivalent item which may have an equivalent function in the T.L. culture . A more serious pitfall for translators is the translator’s non-acquaintance with the T.L.’s cultural background ,which may lead the translator to render some culture-specific features in a literal way, and miss the cultural significance of the S.L. text. The translator who cannot find a corresponding or non-corresponding equivalent expression in T.L., is to try render the S.L. by paraphrasing its communicative function ,for example " واشتعل الرأس شيبا " his hair turned grey(Ilyas,1989:124,132).

The cultural gap constitutes the most important problem in the translation of hadith . Lang (2005 : 13) criticizes “the excessive literalism in hadith translations”. He argues that two problems need to be addressed through academic studies: (a) the excessive use of literal translations and (b) the lack of consideration of the cultural dimension in translation .On the other hand, Xue-bing (2006:82-93) states that “translating Islamic expressions presents a problem for the translator, as they do not exist in the source language culture, or the source language usually has no equivalents for these terms”. In this case, “a lexical gap is created in the source language, leaving the translator with no choice but to find appropriate means to transfer the concepts denoted by these terms into that language”. The magnitude of this problem depends on the degree of differences between the source language and the target language. Therefore, translation between languages of distant cultures, such as English and Arabic, is more difficult than translation between culturally related or similar languages; therefore, the translator is expected to encounter more problems and difficulties when translating .

Abdul-Raof (2005 : 172) states that, one of the problems that arises when translating Islamic text “is the rich implications of religious expression, which prevents the equivalent, even if available in the target language, from conveying the same message”. Mahmoud(2014: 8) states, when translating a word like " إنفاق - infāq," one of the pillars of the Islamic economic system and of Islam itself as a religion, faith, and way of life. Literally, "infāq" is an Arabic word meaning "expense." However, it implies other meanings related to the purpose and intention of spending, which are not included in the word "expense" Another problem is that some Islamic expressions are culturally untranslatable; this means that the cultural context in which we use language to express meanings in the source language does not exist in the target language. An expression like (mahram محرم) is so religiously and culturally charged that it will not be accurately translatable. Furthermore, Halahla (2010: 24) emphasizes that “Islamic religious texts are bound to archaic Arabic expressions”. For examples (الخناس الوسواس) the evil of the withdrawing whisperer or that they form lexical gaps ; (سحور) a food to be eaten before dawn in preparation for fasting. Polysemy such as (كفر) meaning disbelief, covering, or ingratitude, and

connotation (there are, for example, three Arabic words for "sword," each of which has a different connotation (سيف) is neutral, (مهند) means the sword in its sheath, while (حسام) refers to a very sharp one.

2.5 Equivalence

All translation theories focus primarily on the search for equivalent terms and expressions in the target language for terms and expressions in the source language . This concept of equivalence, although debatable, is undoubtedly one of the most problematic and controversial aspects in the field of translation theory. The term has sparked intense debate in translation studies. Panou (2013:1-6) illustrates that equivalence became a central concept in translation studies in the 1960s and 1970s, with equivalence being understood as the similarity between traditional and mainstream translation. He adds that the type and degree of similarity is the issue that gave rise to different approaches to equivalence introduced by different scholars. Karimi (2000:46) simply defines equivalence in translation as the decoding of the mainstream translation by defining the meaning, message, and intention of the original author, and then seeking to encode the same meaning, message, and intention in the mainstream translation. Kashgary (2011:50) argues that "equivalence is not a set of criteria that translations must meet, but rather a set of features that characterize the relationships that link the traditional translation to its traditional translation" .While the concept of equivalence is a central topic in translation, its definition and applicability are controversial in translation studies. Wilss (1982:134) states that "hardly any other concept in translation theory has generated as many conflicting claims as the concept of translation equivalence. Werner Koller has rightly pointed out that the principle that the translator should produce the same effect on his readers as the SL author produced on the original readers is becoming generally superordinate ,both in translation theory and practice ,to the principle of primacy of form and primacy of content ,the principle of equivalent effect is the one basic guideline in translation (Shaheen,1991:39-40) .

Jakobson approaches the problem of equivalence with the following ;now-famous, definition: “ Equivalence in difference is the cardinal problem of language and the pivotal concern of linguistics “. Jakobson focuses on differences in the structure and terminology of languages rather than on any inability of one language to render a message that has been written in another verbal language (Munday ,2001:37) .

One of the biggest problems facing translators of Islamic vocabulary is the difficulty of translating some lexical items, and one of them is the lack or nonexistence of equivalence. The translator may not find the equivalent word or become confused at first, as some words have multiple meanings, leading to confusion when selecting the exact equivalent. In other words, the translator must look into the context of the translation. "These problems occur when a word, phrase, or expression is not clearly and directly understood, is

misinterpreted, is completely unfamiliar to students, or is not found in the standard dictionary" (Ghazala, 1995:19).

3. Methodology

This study will adopt a qualitative approach based on Koller's model of equivalence as the main theoretical framework. The methodology will consist of the following steps:

- Textual and Contextual Analysis: Each hadith will be analyzed in terms of meaning, style, pragmatic function, and formal structure to identify equivalence achieved or lost.
- Comparative Analysis: English translations will be compared to the original Arabic texts to detect semantic shifts, cultural adaptation, and distortion.
- Evaluation Framework: The translated version of hadith will be evaluated in terms of appropriateness (+,-)

3.1. Data Collection

Five samples of authentic hadiths from *An-Nawawi's Forty Hadiths : An Anthology of Prophet Muhammad*, translated by Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies (1997), were selected for comparative analysis.

3.2. The Model Adopted

In order to verify the hypothesis, Koller's theory of equivalence was chosen as the theoretical framework.

Werner Koller (Introduction to Translation Studies/Science) has been a point of reference for German-speaking students and teachers ever since it was first published in (1979 a:186-191). Koller examines more closely the concept of equivalence and its linked term correspondence. Koller (1992: 13,24) views that "there are different attempts to systematize the magnitude of equivalence. He proposed to apply the following five equivalence frameworks: (1) the extra linguistic situation, which is mediated in a text (=denotative equivalence), (2) the connotations mediated in the text through the type of verbalization (especially through the specific selection between synonymous or quasi-synonymous possibilities of expression) in relation to the stylistic level, the sociolectal and geographical dimension, frequency, etc. (=connotative equivalence), (3) the textual and linguistic norms (norms of use), which are valid for certain texts (=normative text) equivalence), (4) the receiver (reader) to whom the translation is addressed and who could receive the text in which the translation is "placed", depending on his conditions of understanding, so that the translation fulfils its communicative function (=pragmatic equivalence), (5) certain aesthetic, formal and individual characteristics of the text in sign language (=formal-aesthetic equivalence)".

4. Analysis and Discussion

Text 1

عن ام المؤمنين ام عبدالله عائشة رضي الله عنها قالت : قال رسول الله (ﷺ) :
 ” من عمل عملا ليس عليه امرنا فهو رد“
 رواه البخاري ومسلم

Table (1)

TT	He who does an act which our matter is not (in agreement) with will have it rejected (Ibrahim and Davies,1997:40-41).						
ST items	TT items	Denotative Equivalence	Connotative Equivalence	Text-normative Equivalence	Pragmatic Equivalence	Formal Equivalence	Appropriateness (+/-)
من عمل عملا	who does an act	+	-	-	-	+	-
ليس عليه امرنا	Our matter	-	-	-	-	-	-
فهو ردّ	will have it rejected.	+	-	-	-	-	-

Discussion

Al-Nawawi(2010:20) says that (الرد) here means “that which is rejected”, and its meaning is invalid and not accepted .This hadith is a foundational principle of Islam, and it is among the concise and comprehensive sayings of the prophet (ﷺ).It clearly indicates that any act of worship or deed not in accordance with the Islamic law is invalid and rejected, and this includes all kinds of innovation (bid’ah) introduced into the religion .

The translated Hadith presents varying degrees of equivalence across its three key segments when analyzed according to Koller’s model.

The first segment, “من عمل عملاً” rendered as “He who does an act”, demonstrates a high degree of denotative and formal equivalence, as the translation successfully conveys the general conditional structure of the source text. However, in the second segment, “ليس عليه أمرنا”, translated as “which our matter is not (in agreement) with”, several translation problems arise. At the denotative level, the expression “our matter” is semantically inaccurate, as it fails to convey the religious concept of “أمرنا”, meaning our command or our religion. This lexical inappropriateness causes a semantic gap, leading to misinterpretation or ambiguity. At the connotative level, the original Arabic conveys the Prophet’s warning, while the English rendering lacks the spiritual weight. In terms of

pragmatic equivalence, the communicative function warning Muslims against actions not prescribed by Islamic law is not fully achieved due to the vague wording that weakens the intended message. The third segment “فهو رد” , translated as “will have it rejected”, partially achieves denotative and pragmatic equivalence, as it conveys the notion of rejection and invalidity of the act. Nevertheless, the translation lacks the connotative strength of the Arabic word “رد” which in the religious context implies divine rejection and nullification of the deed .Ultimately , this translation is inappropriate.

Proposed rendering:

“Whoever performs a deed that is not in accordance with our command will have it rejected”.

Text 2

عن ابي رقية تميم بن اوس الداري رضي الله عنه ان النبي (ﷺ) قال :
 "الدين النصيحة " قلنا لمن قال : " لله ولكتابه ولرسوله ولانمه المسلمين وعامتهم " .
 رواه مسلم

Table (2)

TT	Religion is sincerity .We said: To whom ? He said : To Allah and his book , and his messenger ,and to the leaders of the Muslims and their common folk (Ibrahim and Davies,1997:44-45).						
ST items	TT items	Denotative Equivalence	Connotative Equivalence	Text-normative Equivalence	Pragmatic Equivalence	Formal Equivalence	Appropriateness (+/-)
الدين	Religion	+	+	+	-	+	+
النصيحة	is sincerity	-	-	-	-	-	-

Discussion

According to Al-‘Asqalānī , the hadith “الدين النصيحة” may imply exaggeration, meaning that most of religion consists of sincere advice; and it may also be taken literally, since any deed that is not done with sincerity and pure intention is not truly part of religion”.The word “نصيحة” (advice or sincerity) is derived from the expression “naṣaḥtu al-‘asal” “purified the honey” meaning to make it pure and free from impurities.Thus, “نصيحة” something means to make it sincere or pure, and “naṣaḥa lahu al-qawl” means he spoke to him with sincerity and truthfulness.This ḥadīth is considered one of the sayings that summarize the core principles of Islam, and it has been said that it is one of the four ḥadīths upon which the entire religion is built(2000: 183).

The translation “Religion is sincerity” conveys the general idea that faith is linked to moral integrity and truthfulness; however, it does not accurately capture the denotative and connotative meanings of the Arabic term “النصيحة.” In Arabic, “النصيحة” in this hadith has a broader meaning than “sincerity.” The translator narrows the semantic scope of the original term; this constitutes a denotative problem. From a connotative perspective, the Arabic word has spiritual and communal connotations that reflect moral responsibility toward the community of believers, whereas “sincerity” in English only expresses an internal personal quality. Regarding textual-normative equivalence, the translation conforms to the English style of religious maxims brief, clear, and aphoristic which aligns with the stylistic norm for hadith translation. Regarding pragmatic equivalence, this translation is inappropriate to TL readers and lacks the depth sought in the original text. Regarding formal equivalence, the brevity of the structure reflects the brevity of the Arabic hadith, but the semantic compression results in a loss of meaning.

The proposed rendering : Religion is sincere advice and good will .

Text 3

عن ابي محمد الحسن بن علي بن ابي طالب سبط رسول الله (ﷺ) وريحانته رضي الله عنهما قال
حفظت من رسول الله (ﷺ) : " دع ما يريبك الى ما لا يريبك "

رواه الترمذي والنسائي

Table (3)

TT	Leave that which makes you doubt for that which does not make you doubt (Ibrahim and Davies,1997:52-53) .						
ST items	TT items	Denotative equivalence	Connotative Equivalence	Text-normative	Pragmatic Equivalence	Formal Equivalence	Appropriateness (+/-)
دع ما يريبك	Leave that which makes you doubt	+	-	-	-	+	-
الى ما لا يريبك	for that which does not make you doubt	+	-	-	-	+	-

Discussion

Al-'Asqalānī (2000:366-367) in his explanation of the hadith ,states that the word “يريبك” (with the first letter pronounced with a fatḥah may also be read with damma رَابَهُ وَيَرِيئُهُ and رَابَهُ), refers to the word (ريبية) means doubt or hesitation. The meaning is if you feel doubtful about something, then leave it. Avoiding what arouses doubt is a fundamental principle of wara‘ (piety and moral caution).

According to Koller’s equivalence model, the translation of the hadith “دع ما لا يريبك” as “Leave what makes you doubt for what does not make you doubt” demonstrates a generally appropriate level of equivalence across most dimensions. From a denotative perspective, the literal meaning is accurately translated, as both versions convey the idea of abandoning doubtful matters for those that are certain. However, with regard to connotative equivalence, there is a slight loss because the Arabic verb “يريبك” carries emotional and psychological connotations of restlessness and internal disturbance, whereas “doubt” in English tends to emphasize a more rational or intellectual uncertainty. Text-normative equivalence is partially achieved as the balanced form of the original Prophetic utterance is maintained. From a pragmatic point of view, the translation fails to achieve the communicative function of moral guidance, preventing TL readers to grasp the intended ethical message. Eventually, formal equivalence is partially achieved because the Arabic structure “...دع ما... إلى ما...” possesses rhythmic and rhetorical qualities that are not fully reproduced in English rendering.

Proposed rendering :Avoid what stirs your doubts and hold to what brings you peace of heart .

Text 4

عن النواس بن سمعان رضي الله عنه عن النبي (ﷺ) قال:

"البر حسن الخلق والاثم ما حاك في نفسك وكرهت ان يطلع عليه الناس".

رواه مسلم

Table (4)

TT	Righteousness is good morality, and wrong doing is that which wavers in your soul and which you dislike people finding out about(Ibrahim and Davies,1997:90-91).						
ST items	TT items	Denotative Equivalence	Connotative Equivalence	Text-normative Equivalence	Pragmatic Equivalence	Formal Equivalence	Appropriateness (+/-)
Righteous	البر						

s-ness is good morality	حسن الخلق	+	-	-	+	-	-
and wrong doing is that which wavers in your soul and which you dislike people finding out about	والاثم ما حاك في نفسك وكرهت ان يطلع عليه الناس	+	-	-	-	-	-

Discussion

“البر” righteousness means “truthfulness, and it also means kindness, benevolence, and good companionship”.It also means “obedience, and all these qualities are among the comprehensive aspects of good character”.The phrase “حاك في صدرك” means “something that stirs doubt within you, and your heart does not feel at ease with it and you fear that it might be a sin”(Al-Nawawi, 2010:119).

According to Koller’s equivalence model, the translation of the hadith “البر حسن الخلق” as “Righteousness is good morality” achieves an acceptable degree of denotative and pragmatic equivalence. The literal meaning of the hadith is accurately conveyed, as the translation reflects the Prophet’s definition of righteousness and sin in a moral and psychological sense. However, connotative and formal equivalence is lost. The Arabic term “البر” has strong spiritual and religious connotations implying piety, fidelity, and virtue, while “righteousness” in English is broader and less spiritual. Likewise, “حسن الخلق” implies a noble character and refined manners, while “good morals” sounds generic and lacks the emotional and ethical depth of the Arabic expression. The second segment of the hadith (والاثم ما حاك في نفسك...) is rendered as “ wrong doing is that which wavers in your soul...”. However, this translation does not serve the communicative purpose of the hadith for TL readers, as it fails to fully capture the rhetorical elegance and emotional resonance of the original Arabic rhythm within the framework of formal and text -normative equivalences. Ultimately, this translation fails to provide an appropriate rendering of the hadith.

Proposed rendering : True righteousness lies in good character, and sin is what troubles your heart and what you would hate others to discover about you.

TEXT 5

عن ابي سعيد سعد بن مالك بن سنان الخدري رضي الله عنه ان رسول الله (ﷺ) قال :
” لأضُرر ولا ضرار ”
رواه ابن ماجه

Table (5)

TT	There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm (Ibrahim and Davies,1997:106-107).						
ST items	TT items	Denotative Equivalence	Connotative Equivalence	Text-normative Equivalence	Pragmatic Equivalence	Formal Equivalence	Appropriateness (+/-)
لأضُرر	There should be neither harming	+	-	+	+	-	+
ولاضُرر	nor reciprocating harm	+	-	+	-	-	+

Discussion

This ḥadīth represents a fundamental principle of Islamic law, namely that Shariah does not approve of harm, and it even more strongly condemns causing harm to others . As for the Prophet’s statement “ لا ضَرَرٌ وَلَا ضِرَارٌ ” (No harm and no reciprocating harm) some scholars said these are two synonymous expressions used together for emphasis.

Ibn Ḥabīb mentions that “الضَّرَرُ” in Arabic is a noun, while (الضِرَارُ) is a verb. He explained its meaning as “no one should suffer harm unless he has brought it upon himself and (لا ضرار) means no one should inflict harm on another” (Al-Andalusi ,2014:158) .

The translator successfully conveys the denotative meaning of the original hadith, “ لا ضَرَرٌ وَلَا ضِرَارٌ ” as it clearly expresses the prohibition of both initiating and returning harm. However, the connotative aspect of the original text is not fully reflected in the translation. From a textual-normative perspective, the translation follows the explanatory style commonly used when translating hadiths into English, prioritizing clarity and accessibility for readers unfamiliar with Arabic rhetorical patterns. In terms of pragmatic equivalence, the

translation is appropriate for an TL readers and clearly communicates the intended meaning, but it lacks the spiritual and authoritative tone conveyed by the Arabic version. The translator has maintained the moral and instructive function of the hadith, using a formal and clear style that conforms to the standards of English religious text. While the translation loses some of the rhetorical beauty and rhythm of the Arabic original, it remains acceptable and understandable in the TL reader . Therefore, the translation can be considered appropriate in terms of its denotative and text- normative equivalences, although its formal equivalence appears to be less expressive.

Proposed rendering :

Do not cause harm, nor respond to harm with harm .

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the analysis of translated hadiths reveals that the main challenges facing translators lie not in conveying the literal meaning, but in preserving the rhetorical beauty, emotional depth, and spiritual resonance of the original Arabic text. Prophetic traditions possess moral, cultural, and religious connotations that are often difficult to accurately reproduce in English without losing their aesthetic and affective dimension. Translators frequently struggle with terms that carry multifaceted meanings which embody both linguistic and cultural significance.

Koller's equivalence theory has proven to be a useful analytical framework for identifying and categorizing these translation problems. By examining the denotative, connotative, textual-normative, pragmatic, and formal levels of equivalence, the model allows for a more complete understanding of where and why shifts in meaning occur. However, while Koller's approach helps diagnose linguistic and stylistic deficiencies, it may not fully address the religious and cultural sensitivities inherent in hadith translation. Therefore, achieving a truly appropriate translation requires combining Koller's linguistic framework with a deep understanding of the spiritual and ethical context of the original text.

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