

Translation of Religious Terminology: *al-fat-h al-islami* as a Model

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to illustrate the importance of understanding the religious and cultural background of the ST in the translation process in order to reach an accurate and precise translation product in the TL. The paper affirms that differences between cultures may cause complications which are even more serious for the translator than those arising from differences in language structures. The sample of the study is concerned with an Islamic term, namely *al-fat-h al-islami*-commonly rendered into English as *Islamic Conquest* or *Invasion*- a religiously and culturally bound term/concept. The paper starts by defining culture, and then follows with an extensive lexical analysis of the selected term/concept. The study proves that it is difficult to translate this concept into the TL simply due to the lack of optimal or even near optimal cultural equivalents. The skill and the intervention of the translator are most crucial in this respect because, above all, translation is an act of communication. It is hoped that this study will provide a more precise equivalent of this significant concept; a matter which may better reflect the innate peaceful nature of Islam as a religion. The in-depth descriptive analytical method this study follows can be used to analyze other religiously and culturally bound terms/concepts.

Keywords: translation, religious, cultural, terminology, Arabic/English

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Language is a system of communication used by man to express himself and satisfy his/her needs. It is not a mere representation of facts; rather, it is an embodiment of culture and concepts which are constantly being formed and shaped, as well as a means of communication and mutual understanding. Culture, as defined by Newmark (1988, p. 94), is “the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression.” To quote Casagrande (1954, p. 338), “One does not translate language, one translates culture.” In the same vein, Muhaidat and Neimneh (2011, p. 22) highlighted the fact that aspects of the ST are not “limited to words on paper” as their far-reaching associations can be historical, cultural, social or moral. Bassnett (1980, pp. 13-14) considered language as “the heart within the body of culture.” To Goodenough (1964, pp. 39-40), culture is not “a material phenomenon” as it does not consist of “things, people, behavior, or emotions.” Rather, it is an organization of all these points together. To add further complexity to the issue of translating culture, Wolf (2008, p. 12) quoted and translated Said (1997, p. 44) who stated, “All cultures are hybrid, none is [...] [pure] [...], none is constituted by a homogeneous tissue.” Clearly, this adds more problems to the existing difficulty of translating cultural terms/concepts as translators have to deal with diversified aspects of culture even within the same society. Given this, one may say it is of great importance to attend not only to the lexical or semantic aspect of the ST, but also to its cultural impact and the manner in which it is perceived in the TL.

When a rendition of a foreign ST is read, access to an unfamiliar culture and a different conceptual system belonging to a society that speaks another language is thus gained. Such cultural and/or conceptual differences imbedded in linguistic codes of different societies may often constitute a formidable barrier to the comprehension of texts. This is a persistent problem that comes to the fore when religious and/or cultural discourse is involved.

This investigation is particularly concerned with types of terms/concepts whose denotations and connotations go beyond the limits of their religious and/or cultural nature and extend to the political and media arena; a matter

which directly affects the global society as well as relationships among human beings.

1.2 Objectives and Questions of the Study

The study aims at investigating the problems encountered by translators in translating religiously and culturally bound terms/concepts from Arabic into English. It is also an attempt to suggest some recommendations which can be used in the academic as well as media fields to help overcome the problems that arise due to representing these terms/concepts in English. In order to fulfill these aims, this examination will attempt to answer the following questions:

- 1) Can lexical/semantic analysis help understand the denotations and connotations of religiously and culturally bound terms/concepts?
- 2) Can the commonly used English equivalents of such terms/concepts be considered as either optimal or near optimal translations thereof?
- 3) What is the preferable strategy to solve such a translation problem?

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it contributes to the fields of contrastive linguistics and religious/cultural translation. It may help bridge the gap between two major cultures and languages; namely Arabic and English. To the researcher, the term in question has a great impact on the image of Islam in the eyes of the West as it contributes to shaping the nature of the relationship between Muslims and the other. Thereupon, it is hoped that this study will be a significant addition to the literature on translating religious/cultural terms from Arabic into English. Linguists, professional translators, students of translation, and contributors to the mass media may benefit from the outcomes of this humble attempt. It may also be of help to non-Arab Muslims and/or non-Muslims who are interested in Islam and its culture. Furthermore, the translation procedure applied in this study may be imitated in analyzing other religious/cultural terms beyond the selected sample.

1.4 Review of Related Literature

Vinay & Darbelnet (1958/1989) categorized translation procedures into direct and oblique, which correspond to literal and free methods of translation respectively. In the first category, they placed calque, borrowing and literal translation, while in the second they mentioned other procedures such as transposition, modulation, equivalence and adaptation.

According to Nida (1964), who conferred equal importance to both linguistic and cultural differences between different languages, a translator encounters difficulties due to the different cultures which may be even more serious than the difficulties caused by differences in language structure. In relation to the translation of cultural elements, Nida proposed dynamic equivalence as a solution that might bridge the gap between different cultures. However, it concentrates on referring the target reader to modes of behavior relevant within the context of his own culture, with no emphasis on whether or not s/he comprehends the cultural pattern of the SL context. Nida considers this method to be clearer for the target reader than other translation methods.

However, Nida (1964, p. 167) admitted that “[N]o translation that attempts to bridge a wide cultural gap can hope to eliminate all traces of the foreign setting.” He further added that it is inevitable that many basic themes and accounts cannot be naturalized by the process of translating when source and receptor languages represent very different cultures.

The same cultural element was considered by Nida (1964, p. 13) upon defining translation and the role of the translator by stating “[T]he role of a translator is to facilitate the transfer of the message, meaning, and cultural elements from one language into another, and create an equivalent response from the receivers.” He also emphasized the fact that the SL message is embedded in a cultural context that should not be overlooked.

The German translator Vermeer (1978), as cited and rendered into English by Nord (1997, p. 29), introduced the “skopos theory” which is mainly concerned with the purpose of the translation process or the function of the translation product. He elaborated on the skopos rule as follows:

Each text is produced for a given purpose and should serve this purpose. The skopos rule thus reads as follows: translate/interpret/speak/write in a way that enables your text/translation to function in the situation [in which] it is used and with the people who want to use it and precisely in the way they want it to function.

Among the translation strategies or procedures introduced by Newmark (1988, pp. 81-93) were transference, cultural equivalent, neutralization, literal translation, label, naturalization, componential analysis, deletion,

couplet, accepted standard translation, classifier, paraphrase, glosses, and notes. Notes, additions and glosses, as per Newmark, are mainly concerned with supplying additional information to the translation.

Larson (1984, p. 180) considered “terms which deal with the religious aspects of a culture” to be the most difficult in terms of analyzing their lexical source text as well as finding the best TL equivalent. The speakers’ unawareness of the “various aspects of meaning involved” is the cause of this. Therefore, much difficulty is encountered in translating the terms and/or expressions that are not used in the TL.

Venuti (1992) discussed the two main translation strategies: domestication which dominates the TL culture and foreignization which bestows visibility on the translator and draws the target reader’s attention to the fact that s/he is reading a rendition of a foreign work that belongs to a foreign culture.

Baker (1992, pp. 26-42) listed a widely applicable strategy used by translators which encompasses: translation by a more general word, translation by a more neutral/less expressive word, translation by cultural substitution, translation using a loan word or a loan word plus an explanation, translation by paraphrase using a related word, translation by paraphrase using unrelated words, translation by omission, and finally, translation by illustration.

Hatim & Mason (1997) examined the degree of mediation a translator of sensitive texts can supply in the translation of ideology.

Chesterman (1997), as quoted by Bergen (n.d., p. 117), proposed another model of different translation procedures which revolve around a basic strategy, namely “*change something*”. He classified the normal types of changes made by translators into three categories, which are subcategorized respectively as follows:

a. *Syntactic Strategies*: which include literal translation, clause, transposition, unit shift, phrase structure change, clause structure change, sentence structure change, cohesion change, level shift, and scheme change; and,

b. *Semantic Strategies*: which involve synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, converses, abstraction change, distribution change, emphasis change, paraphrase, and trope change; and,

c. *Pragmatic Strategies*: which refer to cultural filtering, explicitness change, information change, interpersonal change, illocutionary change, coherence change, partial change, visibility change, and transediting.

Bassnett & Lefevere (1998, p. 11) looked for a method for translating the “cultural capital of other civilizations” in such a way that might preserve at least part of the inherent nature of these civilizations or cultures.

Reflecting upon the practical and theoretical challenges of rendering the ST into the TL, Koskinen (2004) described translation as an act of cultural mediation or intercultural communication.

Gaber (2005) stressed that culture-bound terms can be rendered into the TL using five distinct techniques; these are cultural equivalence, functional translation, paraphrasing, glossing, and borrowing.

Nord (2006, p. 43) argued that when the conditions of the target culture (TC) differ from those of the source culture (SC), only one of two options is applicable: either to transform the text so that it works under TC conditions, or to replace the ST functions with their respective meta-functions.

Bayar (2007) distinguished four types of equivalence: formal equivalence, semantic equivalence, cultural equivalence, and pragmatic equivalence. She regarded “cultural equivalence” as the most difficult and “controversial” among them all as it relates to “human identity”.

Elewa (2014, p. 27) classified religious lexical items, in the Islamic context, into three categories, namely (1) Islamic terms which are totally unfamiliar to the translator as they are only used in Islamic contexts, such as *altaq̄yyah* (التقية) “dissimulation”; (2) Islamic terms which are familiar to the translator as they are used in contexts that are not necessarily Islamic but look as if they are being used to refer to some specific Islamic term in the ST, such as *alwalā* (الولاء) “allegiance to Muslims”; (3) Islamic terms which are familiar to the translator as they are used in contexts that are not necessarily religious and do not look as if they are being used to refer to some specific Islamic term in the ST, such as *alḥajb* (الحجب) “exclusion of some relatives from the inheritance”.

This brief overview of some of the important procedures and strategies put forward to translate cultural and religious texts is but an introduction that is hoped will pave the way to the main idea of this paper.

2. Method

2.1 Data Choice and Analysis

This paper focuses on examining a model problematic Islamic-cultural term, namely *al-fat-ḥ al-Islami*, and the way it is rendered into English using one of two terms, *conquest* or *invasion*. According to Al-Khudrawi (1995, p.

318), *al-fat-h al-Islami*, as a term, is translated into English as *conquest* or *invasion*, as in *fat-h* Makkah (فتح مكة), meaning “the Conquest of Makkah”.

This paper suggests that these English equivalents are not only inaccurate but also misleading, as neither of them reflects the real nature of this religious culture-specific Arabic term, as will be elaborated in the following pages.

2.1.1 Lexical and Semantic Analysis

By lexically and semantically analyzing this term, exploring its various uses within the frame of religious texts, and reviewing the English equivalents allocated thereto, this paper seeks to determine its most appropriate translation. It also seeks to set up valid criteria for rendering this term—or any similar terms that may fall into the same category—into English to help bridge the gap between these two major languages and cultures.

According to Al-Halawani (2004, pp. xiv-xv), the analysis of the selected religious culture-bound term will be as follows:

- a) To identify the term’s lexical and technical meaning(s) in Arabic;
- b) To semantically analyze its meaning;
- c) To lexically and semantically analyze the common English equivalent(s) given to the Arabic term;
- d) To assess this/these English equivalent(s) in terms of its/their adequacy for establishing successful interlingual religious-cultural communication;
- e) To suggest, if necessary, one or more equivalents for the selected term to be used in both the academic and the mass media fields.

For brevity, the lexicons consulted here are given reference numbers as follows: Ibn Manzur, 1978(1); Al-Fairuzabadi, n.d.(2); Lane, 1980(3); Al-Bustani, 1987(4); Mustafa, 1960(5); Masoud, 1992(6); Murray et al., 1989(7); Webster et al., 1983(8); Webster, 1998(9); Rundell, 2002(10).

2.2 Analysis of *al-fat-h al-islami*

The term *al-fat-h* as well as its common English equivalents, namely *conquest* and *invasion*, will be thoroughly examined, both lexically and semantically. Both denotative and connotative meanings of all three terms will be examined to see the degree of matching or equivalence among them.

2.2.1 Al-fat-h in the Lexicon

The term *al-fat-h* is derived from the Arabic root /F.T.H/ which has many derivatives; foremost among which are as follows:

The term *fatah-a* (فَتَحَ), inf. n. (فَتْحَ), to open (1), (3), (5).

The term *istaftah-a* (استَفْتَحَ), to seek or demand to open a thing or object (1), (4).

The term *fatah-a* (فَتَحَ), inf. n. (فَتْحَ), to lay open as a result of invasion; to win or take by force (2). (Note 1)

The phrase *fatah-a ‘alaih-i* (فَتَحَ عَلَيْهِ), to teach or inform (a person) about something (3).

The phrase *fatah-a bayn-a al-nās-i aw al-khasmayn-i* (فَتَحَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَوْ الْخَصْمَيْنِ), inf. n. (فَتْحَ), to judge between people, or between men, or between two litigants (1), (3).

The term *fātahah-u* (فَاتَحَهُ), to be the first to address someone (5).

The term *fātahah-u* (فَاتَحَهُ), to bargain with him but give him nothing (4).

The phrase *tafatah-a filkalām-i* (تَفَتَّحَ فِي الْكَلَامِ), to show off, or make an ostentatious display in speech, or speak boastfully (1), (3).

The phrase *infatah-a ‘anh-u* (انْفَتَحَ عَنْهُ), to become removed from over it, e.g. from over a place (3).

The phrase *istaftah-a Allah-a* (اسْتَفْتَحَ اللَّهَ), to ask Allah to grant aid or victory (2), (4).

The term *fat-h* (فَتَحَ), inf. n. of *fatah-a* (فَتَحَ), the act of entering a territory by force: pl. *futūh* (فُتُوح) and *futūhāt* (فُتُوحَات) (5).

The term *yawm-ul fat-h-i* (يَوْمَ الْفَتْحِ), the day in which the early Muslims managed to overcome the Makkans [in the 8th year after *Hijrah*, 630 A.C.] (4).

The term *futūh* (فُتُوح), the first drops of rain (4).

The term *fat-h* (فَتَحَ), the act of making a vain display of what one has or possesses; to try to impress others with one’s abilities or possessions (4).

The term *fatūh* (فَتْوح), a she-camel having wide orifices in her teats (4).

The term *fitāhah* (فِتَاحَة), the commencement or beginning of something (3).

The term *Fātihat al-Kitāb* (فَاتِحَة الْكِتَاب), the Opening *surah* [Chapter] of the Qur'an (1), (2), (3).

The term *maftah* (مَفْتَح), a place in which things are deposited (6).

The term *mafātih* (مَفَاتِح), treasures or buried property, or keys (3).

The term *mafātih al-ghayb* (مَفَاتِح الْغَيْب), keys [i.e. knowledge] of the Unseen (1).

The phrase *fātah-a al-Rajul-u al-mar'at-a* (فَاتِح الرَّجُلِ الْمَرَأَة), the man had an intimate relationship with a woman (1).

The term *mafātih-ulkalim-i* (مَفَاتِح الْكَلِم), which occurs in a Prophetic *hadith* which reads in Arabic,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ: قَالَ النَّبِيُّ (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ): "أَعْطَيْتُ مَفَاتِيحَ الْكَلِمِ، ..."

(Al-Asqalani, 1993, vol. 16, hadith No. 6597, p. 407)

This can be transliterated as follows:

'An Abi Hurairat-a qal-a: qal-a Al-Nabi-u (salla Allah-u 'alayh-i wasalam-a): "U'ūl-u mafātih-a al-kalim-i, ...".

And the hadith may be translated as:

Abu Hurairah narrated: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "I have been given the keys of eloquent speech, ..." (English translation of Al-Bukhari, 2001).

This means that Allah, according to Lane (1980), facilitated for the Prophet (peace be upon him) "the acquirement of eloquence and chastity of speech," and made him (peace be upon him) attain "the understanding of obscure meanings, and novel and admirable kinds of knowledge, and the beauties of expressions and phrases" which others may find difficult to attain.

And finally the term *tafātah-ā* (تَفَاتِحَا), to talk together in a low voice, to the exclusion of others, i.e., so as not to be heard by others (1), (3).

2.2.2 Conquest in the Lexicon

This is the first and may be the most common translation of the term *al-fat-h* in English. Basically, this term, /conquest/, n., stands for the act or process of conquering or acquiring something by force. Looking this term up in English dictionaries to see its different denotations as well as connotations reveals the following:

Conquest is derived from *conquer* which means "to acquire (by effort)".

To acquire, succeed in gaining, obtain possession of (by effort); to win, gain, attain; to procure by effort (7), (8).

To gain or acquire by force of arms; take possession of by violent means; gain dominion over; subjugate; to acquire by fighting (7), (8).

To overcome by force; to overcome (an adversary), gain the victory over, vanquish, subdue. *Transf.* and *fig.*, to get the better of; to master, overcome. In mountaineering, to climb successfully (7), (8).

To subdue or overcome by mental or moral power; surmount: "conquer difficulties", "conquer her fear" (8).

Conquest stands for the action of gaining by force of arms; acquisition by war; subjugation of a country, etc. (7), (8).

Transf. and *fig.*; *esp.* the gaining or capturing of the favour, affections, or hand of another (7).

The action of overcoming or vanquishing; gaining of victory. (7).

That which is acquired by force or arms; a possession or acquisition made in war; a conquered country, etc.: now restricted to territorial acquisitions, formerly also including booty (7), (8).

Conquest of marriage: property acquired during wedlock and provided for in the marriage contract (7), (8).

It is noteworthy that the term *conquer* stands also for a succession of conflicts, unlike "vanquish" which is more individual and refers usually to a single conflict. Thus we may say: "Alexander conquered Asia in a succession of battles, and vanquished Darius in one decisive engagement" (9).

As for the noun *conquest*, its original sense in medieval Latin and French used to be acquisition, especially as a result of exerting effort; it also included the meaning of getting something by force of arms as well as by other means. According to the OED (1989), two lines of development emerged: firstly, with the feudal jurists,

“personal acquisition of estate, as opposed to [acquisition through] inheritance.” Secondly, “acquisition by force of arms, military conquest”; only the second meaning has survived as it was the first and has been the most common one among English users throughout history. Only the Scots use the term *acquisition* in its legal sense as opposed to inheritance, and it is outstanding in Scottish law (8).

In the same vein, in feudal law “conquest” stands for acquisition of property by purchase or by means other than inheritance (8), (9).

Generally, it stands also for the act of possession gained by force, either physical or moral.

A difference in meaning may result due to the term’s being countable or uncountable, as follows:

Conquest /noun/:

{*Singular/uncountable*} the process of taking control of land or people during a war;

{*Countable*} the land or people that a more powerful army or government has taken control of during a war;

{*Uncountable*} the process of gaining control of something through great effort;

{*Countable*} often humorous, someone you have persuaded to have sex with you (10).

2.2.3 Invasion in the Lexicon

This is the second common translation of the term *al-fat-h* in to English. It is derived from the verb *invade* which stands for many meanings, according to English lexicons, as follows:

Trans. to enter in a hostile manner, or with armed force; to make an inroad or hostile incursion into; overrun with a view to conquest or plunder: “*Soldiers invaded enemy territory*” (7), (8).

Trans. to intrude upon, infringe, encroach on, violate (property, rights, liberties, etc.): “*You did their natural rights invade*”; to encroach, intrude, or trespass upon; to infringe: “*You can obtain legal counsel to determine if any of your rights have been invaded.*” And “*During his absence his house was invaded and plundered*” (7), (8).

To usurp, seize upon, take possession of: “*At this day the family of Este being extinct, the Bishop of Rome hath invaded this Dukedom*” (7).

To penetrate in the manner of an invader; to grow over or spread into; to permeate: “*The growing city has invaded the surrounding countryside*”; to affect injuriously and progressively: “*Gangrene invades healthy tissues.*” And “*Cholera invades the city*” (8).

To make a personal attack upon; assault: “*What madness could provoke a mortal man to invade a sleeping god*” [An obsolete usage] (7), (8).

Transf. and fig., to enter or penetrate after the manner of an invader, (invasion of) a. a physical agent: “*Let it fall, rather, though the forke invade the region of my heart.*” b. sounds, diseases, feelings, etc., such as: “*A deadly and burning sweate invaded their bodyes*” (7).

To penetrate steadily by taking up residence (in an area occupied by a population of a different class or ethnic composition) (8).

Invasion, as a noun, is derived from the Latin term *invasio* and it stands for the act of encroaching upon the rights or possessions of another.

In other words, it is the action of invading a country or territory as an enemy; an entrance or incursion with armed force; a hostile inroad: “*A foe ever watching the opportunity for invasion and spoil*” (7).

Figuratively, it stands for a harmful incursion of any kind, e.g. of the sea, of disease, moral evil, etc. (7).

In medical language, it stands for the spreading of pathogenic microorganisms or malignant cells that are already in the body to new sites (7).

The process by which a particular organ or part becomes affected with a disease or parasites existing elsewhere in the organism (7).

Infringement by intrusion; encroachment upon the property, rights, privacy, etc., of anyone: “*Invasion of privacy*” (7).

In ecology, *invade* means, the spread of a plant or animal population into an area formerly free of the species concerned (7).

A hostile entrance or armed attack on the property or territory of another for conquest or plunder: “*The invasion of South Korea resulted in the first police action by United Nations forces*” (8).

An attack on a person; assault. [An obsolete usage] (8).

The introduction or spread of something hurtful or pernicious: “*invasion of locusts*”; specifically, the period during which a pathogen multiplies and is distributed through the body of a host prior to the development of any clinically evident disease: “*Vaccine helps to defeat a virus invasion by promoting the production of antibodies in the bloodstream*” (8).

A penetration or occupation by an outside force or agency: “*Tourists ... making their annual invasion of France*” (8).

The penetration and gradual occupation of an area by a population group of different socioeconomic status, or racial or cultural origin, than its original inhabitants (8).

Encroachment, intrusion: an encroachment upon a right protected by law affording grounds for an action for damages or some other remedy (8).

The incursion of an army for conquest or plunder (9).

The incoming or first attack of anything hurtful or pernicious, such as: “*The invasion of a disease*” (9).

Notably, analyzing Mikhail (1994, p. 149) revealed that the 37 adjectives associated with and modifying the term *invasion(s)* are distributed as follows: 1 carrying a positive connotation, 14 neutral, and 22 carrying negative connotations. This is simply depicted in Figure 1 as follows:

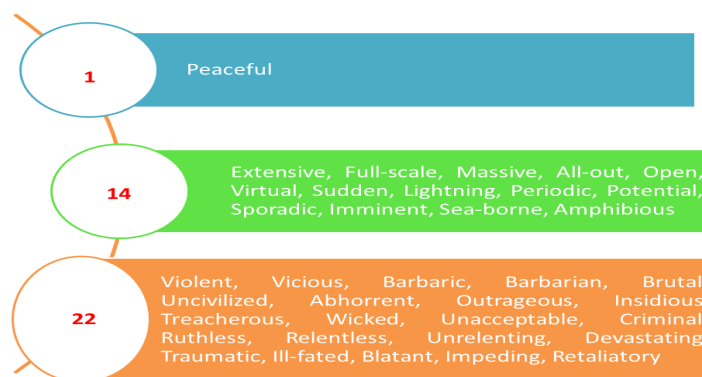


Figure 1. Adjectives associated with the term *invasion(s)*

In the same vein, adjectives associated with the term *conquest* in Runcie (2003) included negative ones, such as *violent*, *sexual*, and *military*, along with *Muslim*, *Norman*, *Roman* and *Spanish*, which may give the impression that conquests were conducted only by these nations. It also provided neutral adjectives such as *colonial*, *imperial*, and *territorial*, but no positive ones at all.

3. Discussion and Results

Linguists agree on three basic types of lexical meaning: denotative, emotive and stylistic, and connotative meaning.

As Crystal (1992, p. 80) stated, the denotative meaning of a word is “its objective meaning in the dictionary.” To Lyons (1977, p. 207), it is “the relationship that holds between that lexeme (word) and persons, things, places, properties, processes and activities external to the language system.” Whereas the emotive as well as the stylistic meaning, as observed by Asher et al. (1994, vol. 4, p. 2154), stands for “[t]he part of the meaning of an item that communicates the speaker’s evaluation of, or his attitude towards, the referent of the expression.” Hence, this type includes the previous experiences stored in the mind of a given speaker, including the different contexts in which the word is used (Leech, 1977, p. 14). In other words, language reflects the personal feelings of the speaker, including his attitude to the listener or his attitude to something he is talking about. Terms such as *liberal*, *jihad*, *crusade* and *martyr operations* are good examples of this. The first has a good meaning in England whereas it has a negative one in South Africa due to the practices perpetuated during the apartheid period. Though the second is always associated with negative and harmful practices by non-Muslims, it represents positive and constructive meanings to Muslims who comprehend it as a variety of ways to achieve excellence in all fields of life using peaceful means. They distinguish it (*jihad*) (i.e., striving for a good cause or the cause of Allah (the Creator)) from *qital* (i.e., fighting) as Ibn Al-Qayyim, according to Abdul-Aziz (1999, pp. 94-97),

divided *jihad* into four main categories: *jihad* against the whims of the self, *jihad* against the temptations of Satan, *jihad* against disbelievers and hypocrites, and *jihad* against injustice and heresies. Ibn Al-Qayyim further subdivided these four categories into thirteen subcategories, in which *jihad* using force (i.e., fighting) represents only one category. That is why the English cultural term *Holy War* cannot be used as a natural equivalent of the Arabic term *Jihad*, as there is nothing holy about war, especially the oppressive type, in Islam as no war of aggression is ordained by Islam *per se* and thus believed by the majority of Muslims. Rather, it should be rendered into English as *striving in the cause of Allah* along with a transliteration as the word has become well-known and actually entered the English lexicon a long time ago (Al-Halawani, 2004, p. 60).

The same is true for the term *crusade*, which recalls to the minds of Middle-Easterners the many fierce wars waged by Europeans against them with the aim of invading Jerusalem, whereas the term itself has become inoffensive in the eyes of Westerners nowadays as it denotes “any vigorous, aggressive movement for the defense or advancement of an idea, cause, etc., such as ‘a crusade against child abuse’” (Dictionary.com). Obviously, Muslims have no cause of dissent with this new meaning of the term!

As for the fourth term, *martyr operations*, politics and political agendas play a significant role here. Those who emphasize the right of the occupied and oppressed to resistance translate the original Arabic term ‘*amaliyyāt istishhādīyyah* (عمليات استشهادية) as *martyr operations*, emphasizing the legal nature of the resistance act, while the occupiers and their supporters render it into “suicide bombings,” ‘*amaliyyāt intihārīyyah* (عمليات انتحارية), relating these operations or acts to an agreed-upon illegal practice as far as Islam is concerned, which is committing suicide. The aim behind this is to dissuade others from following suit and to criminalize the resistance act *per se*.

As for the connotative meaning, according to Crystal (1992, p. 378), it varies greatly from one speaker to another. The connotation of a word includes the real experiences and associations of this word or expression which are shared by a given speech community. This means that the connotative meaning is the meaning which individuals associate with a particular linguistic sign.

As is mentioned in section 3.2, Elewa (2014, p. 27) distinguishes three categories of religious lexical items in Islamic contexts, the second of which is Islamic terms familiar to translators as they are used in contexts that are not necessarily religious—or not necessarily Islamic, as indicated by Elewa—but seem as if they are being used to refer to some specific Islamic term in the ST, such as *al-walā’* (الولاء) “allegiance to Muslims”. Interestingly, the term *al-fat-h* falls into this second category as it is used alike in contexts which are religious and those which are not necessarily religious, and is already used in a specific way in the ST.

Obviously, the lexical or semantic aspect of a term represents a crucial portal to the study of the way of thinking (i.e., weltanschauung) and feelings of language users. Thereupon, terms represent the infrastructure of culture whose essence is a particular way of thinking and style of life. Based on this, several meanings were revealed upon the examination of the three terms under investigation in this study. The examination of the root /F. T. H/ revealed a number of points that reflect the civilizational characteristics of those who carried out these “military campaigns”. Hence, the term *fat-h* gives rise to several indications and a variety of meanings; the same is true for both *conquest* and *invasion*. The meanings of all three terms can be summarized and compared as follows in Table 1.

Table 1. Meanings of *al-fat-h* vs. *conquest & invasion*

| No. | Meanings of <i>al-fat-h</i> | Meanings of <i>conquest & invasion</i> |
|-----|---|---|
| 1 | Entering a foreign territory driven by good will. | Entering others' properties with hostile intentions. |
| 2 | The beginning or commencement of something which is good. | The beginning or first attack of anything harmful; or the harmful incursion of anything such as disease or moral evil; or the introduction or spread of something hurtful or pernicious. |
| 3 | Establishing intimate humane relationships among people. | Suppressing and oppressing others; carrying out campaigns for mischief and plunder; encroaching upon and violating the rights, privacy or possessions of others; gaining or capturing the favour, affections, or hand of another. |
| 4 | Overcoming something or someone bad/evil by force. | Acquiring something by force of arms or by fighting. |
| 5 | Judging fairly between litigants and opponents. | --- |
| 6 | Asking for victory from Allah, the Creator. | --- |
| 7 | --- | Acquiring something by exerting effort. |
| 8 | --- | Subduing or overcoming through mental or moral power. |
| 9 | --- | Affecting others or the body, for example injuriously and progressively. |

Given the above and the fact that the adjectives associated with the term *invasion* proved to be mostly negative

and undesirable as is shown in Figure 1, it becomes clear that there is a wide gap between the denotations and connotations of the Arabic term *al-fat-h* and those of *conquest* and *invasion*. Viewing the latter two terms as equivalents to the former will not only be erroneous but also misleading. Obviously *al-fat-h*, as a term, is highly loaded with many religious and cultural denotations and connotations. This makes its translation into any other language a difficult task. Therefore, depending on the literal meanings provided by dictionaries while neglecting the real connotations adds to the common misconceptions and does not serve the Islamic cause in any way. Rather, it may discourage others from regarding Islam, as deemed by Muslims, as a peaceful faith.

It has now become evident that neither *invasion* nor *conquest* reflects the true nature of *al-fat-h al-islami*, which revolves around meanings of “free will”, “justice” and “mercy”. This can be further clarified by running a compositional analysis of the three terms, *al-fat-h*, *invasion* and *conquest* respectively, to see to what extent their internal components agree and/or disagree as can be seen in Figure 2.

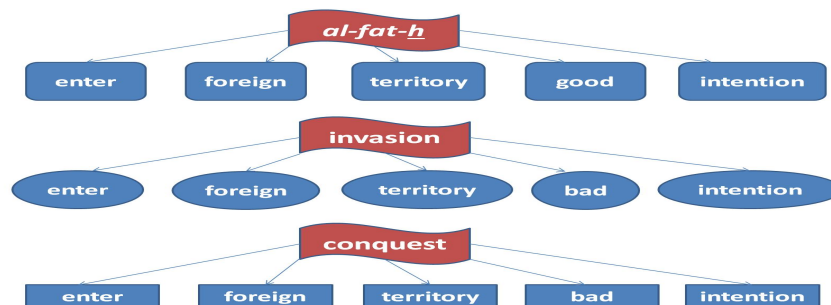


Figure 2. Compositional analysis of the terms *al-fat-h*, *invasion* and *conquest*

Hence, *al-fat-h al-Islami*, as a term, is loaded with civilizational content or advanced social meanings/concepts and represents a system which is characterized by impartiality and justice on the part of those who carried it out, i.e. Muslims, who played the role of “just judges” between the peoples of those territories. Integration between Muslims and those peoples is not a factor to be overlooked as it could have never been achieved unless there was absolute free will as well as the adoption of peaceful mechanisms without any trace of hegemony or compulsion; a matter which can be contemporarily expressed as “freedom for all”.

Historically, the main objective of launching those “campaigns” was to first defend Muslim lands in a preemptive manner; and second, communicate the message of Islam to others. Hence, Islam enabled those peoples to listen to the message of Islam and then to decide for themselves whether or not to adopt it, without any trace of compulsion. Al-Baladhuri (1978, vol. 1, p. 196) stated that Islam was the first system in human history to ensure the right of those under its rule to keep and maintain their beliefs, traditions and lifestyles. According to him, it was prevalent, before the coming of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), to compel the subjects to embrace the religion of their kings; however, Islam put an end to this.

Muslims believe Islam is a religion which Allah has ordered to be conveyed to all, and thus it is incumbent upon them to communicate its message along with its specific terms/concepts to clarify the nature of this message to others in a way that establishes successful interlingual and intercultural communication. It should be borne in mind that transliteration alone is not a viable translation procedure, since it may hinder the target reader’s understanding. However, transliteration accompanied with a partial equivalent may be an acceptable approach if the translator aims at acquainting the target reader with Arabic terms/concepts, as the spread of Islam as a religion is intrinsically connected to the spread of the Arabic language. Al-Faruqi (1986, p. 11) attributed many meanings of Arabic words and phrases to “divine provenance” and stressed that these meanings “[should] not be separated from their Arabic forms.” To him, it is “irreparable loss to Islam, to the Muslim, and to the human spirit” when change, alteration, transformation, or transvaluation through translation takes place.

However, to save the reader from deriving meanings that may be either completely or relatively different from the ones designated by the ST culture-bound expression, additional information may be included in the translated text in the form of an explanation or footnote. Since the aim is to communicate the meaning of the ST to the TR, the translator is allowed to do this. Neubert et al. (1992, p. 91) deemed it possible for the translator to intervene by inserting footnotes, translator’s notes, or by creating explanatory paraphrases as s/he is “trying to bring the L2 reader to an informational threshold by providing extra information.” To them, “Informativity is not just a function of transferring information already in a text.”

Compensation is one of the strategies Baker (1992, p. 71-78) mentioned for translating idioms. It represents the translator's intervention to supply information which is required to make the TT comprehensible to the TR. Without this intervention, the TR will not be able to understand the real essence of the ST. This is expressed by (Neubert et al., 1992, p. 76) as, "a good translator will invariably supply extra information in the L2 text." This is because the TL speakers lack the same knowledge required to make such things as references to "social, cultural and geographical phenomena" comprehensible to them.

Consequently, *al-fat-h al-Islami* can be translated as "Islamic liberation campaigns," and *fat-h Makkah* as "the Liberation of Makkah" in the media and/or academic texts. The media is significant here as it constitutes a major factor in shaping world public opinion. Whenever possible, the following explanation, or a similar one, may be added in the form of a footnote, glossary, or preface:

al-fat-h al-Islami (Islamic liberation campaigns) stands for the entering of Muslims into a foreign land to restore to its people their innate free will and freedom of choice so as to enable them to choose for themselves the faith and lifestyle they want, not those they were compelled to follow by their oppressive rulers.

This strategy of combining the ST term in transliteration and the partial TL equivalent with an explanation is here adopted to circumvent the mismatch between the two languages/cultures.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study analyzed specific semantic areas of non-equivalence across languages, especially when religious terms are loaded with unique denotations and connotations. It became apparent that the term *al-fat-h al-Islami* is a rich Arabic term with several shades of meaning; a matter which makes it difficult to translate. It was meant for liberating oppressed peoples as well as defending the very existence and unique identity of the Muslim *ummah*. Islamic and *shari'ah*-based terms are no longer confined to religious texts, rather, they are used as cultural concepts that may, through the media, affect human relations, and through political milieus affect international relations. Islam is seen by many as the most misrepresented religion in the West. Therefore, paying due attention to such terms and their TL equivalents may help further clarify the image of Islam in the others' minds. Just as the translation of the meanings of the Qur'an has received great attention, Islamic and *shari'ah*-based terms should also be paid due attention.

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Note

Note 1. Some Arabic words with exactly the same form may have different meanings, as is clearly seen in this section.

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