

Loss and Gain in Translating Some Religious Terms:

A Comparative Study

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Abstract

One of the most challenging tasks is translating sacred texts. For instance, the Holy Qur'an is an inimitable book with a miraculous style. In the Holy Qur'an there are many important Qur'anic terms. Many scholars have spent much time trying to understand them. The Qur'anic terms meanings differ from one context to another. Therefore, it is important to point out that the translator has to be aware of rendering their literal (lexical) and religious meanings according to the context in which they occur. Indeed, one of the most difficult problems which faced the translators is translating the religious terminologies in the Holy Qur'an. The translator is stuck between two choices either to minimize the strangeness of the terms and, therefore, stick to domestication or to retain the foreignness of terms and, hence, adhere to foreignization. Either ways, translating Qur'anic terms may cause a huge loss at the linguistic and religious levels. The aim of this paper is to pinpoint these losses and uncover the pitfalls of translating these Qur'anic terms from Arabic into English. What is more, this study suggests some alternative ways of translating Qur'anic terminology. For the sake of this study, four English translations of the Holy Quran translators have been selected as the corpus of this study. Verses from the Holy Quran will be extracted, analyzed and compared. The outcome of this research reveals that the field of translation is in need of other techniques and strategies that can be applicable to this type of translation and translators should be careful whiling translating this terminology because any misunderstanding of the source text may lead to the distortion of meaning at the linguistic and religious levels.

Key Words: Linguistic Loss, Religious Loss, Connotative meaning, denotative meaning, Translation