

The Translation of Hadiths on Prophet Muhammad's Personal Attributes: A Foreignising Approach

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Abstract

As a category of religious texts, prophetic hadiths present distinct challenges for translators. This study aims to investigate the linguistic and cultural issues inherent in Najjar's (2012) translation of hadiths concerning prophetic personal attributes. The analysis encompasses a selection of eight hadiths, four of which illustrate linguistic challenges, while the remaining four exemplify cultural difficulties. The theoretical framework employed in this study is a foreignizing approach, which seeks to preserve the linguistic features, cultural norms, and value systems of the original texts in their English translations. To facilitate this process, Baker's taxonomy (1992) is utilized to identify and evaluate samples with linguistic issues, whereas Newmark's cultural categorisation (1988) is applied to select and assess samples with cultural concerns. Specifically, linguistic samples are chosen based on Baker's taxonomy, which analyses equivalence at both the word and grammatical levels, while cultural samples are selected in accordance with Newmark's concept of 'material culture,' encompassing aspects such as food and clothing. Additionally, Halimah's (ACNCS) criteria (2015) are employed to analyse and evaluate the quality of the translated hadiths. The findings of this study suggest a pressing need for the retranslation of prophetic personal attributes hadiths through the application of a foreignising approach. Although the scope of this research is not exhaustive, it is anticipated that the study will contribute to the understanding of these texts among non-Arab Muslims and stimulate further scholarly inquiry in this area.

Keywords: Translation, hadith, religious, prophetic, attributes, foreignisation, approach

1. Introduction

Unlike other text types of translation, religious translation as described by Elewa (2014:25) is 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 1994:195) "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."

As a religious genre, Islamic texts have certain unique linguistic and cultural properties that make their translation quite difficult. With prophetic hadiths, for example, we are met with Classical Arabic and its "syntactical and stylistic peculiarities for the Arabic language is very concise, idiomatic, figurative and elliptic." Abdel Haleem (2011:67). Aside from the difficulties the language brings, hadiths are also "characterised as a human product with a divine touch" Halimah (2017:9) and stand as the second resource for Islamic legislation after the Holy Quran. This means both linguistic and legislative knowledge are required of a translator to bring the meaning of a hadith into the target language.

These challenges, however, have not deterred translators from initiating considerable attempts to translate prophetic hadiths. Regardless of the accuracy of the translations, the efforts of those such as Khan (1994), Ibrahim and Jonson-Davis (2002), Halimah (2012), and Najjar (2012) are significant. Many studies have been carried out to evaluate and recreate these translations in order to accurately convey the message into the target language, some of which are Hassan (2016), Halimah (2017), and Alghamdi (2016).

In parallel, there are many studies which have paved the way to criticise, evaluate, and recreate translations. These studies are considered as guidelines and typically offer methods, approaches, and strategies that translators can use in their endeavours. Nida (1945), Newark (1988), Venuti (1995), Munday (2008), Elewa (2014), Ghazalah (2014), and Halimah (2020) are examples of such studies.

This study attempts to investigate the linguistic and cultural problems and difficulties in Najjar's (2012) translation of prophetic hadiths on personal attributes. Eight hadith translations, 4 representing linguistic problems, and 4 representing cultural problems are taken as samples. A foreignising approach is then used as a theoretical framework to assess them. Baker's taxonomy (1992) is used for samples with linguistic problems and Newmark's cultural categorisation (1988) used for those with cultural problems. To analyse and evaluate the

selected samples, Halimah's (2015) ACNCS criteria are used to assess the quality of the translated hadiths. These criteria are: accuracy, clarity, naturalness, communicative effects, and stylistic features.

Research Questions

The following questions were formed to investigate the linguistic and cultural problems and difficulties in Najjar's (2012) translation of hadiths on the Prophet (ﷺ)'s personal attributes:

- 1) Does the translation of hadiths on the Prophet (ﷺ)'s personal attributes into English cause linguistic and cultural problems and difficulties? If it does, what are the issues faced?
- 2) How can religious translators overcome linguistic and cultural problems and difficulties in translating hadiths on the Prophet (ﷺ)'s personal attributes?

2. Theoretical Considerations

For Newmark (1988:39), religious texts have the same features as expressive texts being "serious imaginative literature, authoritative statements, and autobiographies, essays, personal correspondence with personal effusions" (ibid). Nida (1994), however, divides religious texts into two main categories, texts that discuss historical or present-day religious beliefs and practices of a believing community, and texts that are crucial in giving rise to a believing community. Nida's categorisation is significant in differentiating between divine and non-divine texts.

Robinson (2000) discusses the problem of translating religious texts by asking questions such as: Are religious texts translatable or not? Do the texts remain sacred after translation? What boundaries should be set up around the textuality of religious texts? Naude (2010) tries to answer the aforementioned by providing assumptions for the translation of religious texts. He believes that there are two main problems that impede coherence in the translation of religious texts or even render it impossible: the absence of culture-specific background knowledge and when nonverbal behaviour cannot be interpreted correctly. The lack of either can negatively affect a translation.

Holt (2006) considers religious texts to be on the same level of importance as the epistemological status and nature of religious belief. He believes that the translator of a religious text should not only look at the meaningfulness criterion but also at other criteria such as genre, mode, time, and sociolinguistics.

Elewa (2014), proposes a model of translation, starting from simple structures before going into more sophisticated structures, focusing on phonology, morphology, lexis, syntax, and semantics, in an attempt to make it easier when translators want to translate such texts. Ghazalah (2014), argues for the possibility of translating Islamic terms through transferring or explaining meaning and then lists the most common problems which face translators of Islamic texts, such as the absence of Arabic equivalent terms in the target language and cultural contradiction.

With regard to methods and approaches used in translation in general, Newmark (1988:45) suggests a dichotomy of language emphasis methods for translators: those that emphasise the source language (Word-for-word, Literal, Faithful and Semantic methods) and those that emphasise the target language (Adaptation, Free, Idiomatic and Communicative methods). Faithful/Semantic translation belongs to the former and seeks to reveal the act of translation as much as possible. This classification of Newmark is utilised in this research as this study adopts an emphasis of the source language.

Schleiermacher (1838) was the first to introduce the terms of alienating and naturalising in his essay "On the Different Methods of Translating". He believes that there are two ways for true translation: "Either the translator leaves the writer alone as much as possible and moves the reader toward the writer, or he leaves the reader alone as much as possible and moves the writer toward the reader". The former is preferred in translating religious texts as the main aim of this approach is to make the target reader feel that he reads a translated text.

Venuti (1995) renames Schleiermacher's terms as foreignising (source-oriented approach) and domesticating (target-oriented approach). The foreignisation would be alienating, and naturalising would be domesticating. Venuti was the representative advocate of foreignisation and tried to combat the dominance of the target language. He called for producing translation approaches that allow readers to experience the target culture. That is to say, translators need to make target readers notice the value system and linguistic features of a source text. Venuti's Foreignisation Approach is used in this research as a macro paradigm.

In a scholarly endeavour, Harb (2010) evaluates the translation of specific hadiths related to pilgrimage and finds that both cultural and equivalent challenges manifest in their translation. Consequently, Harb puts forth a set of recommendations intended to assist translators in effectively rendering these texts. Al-Harahsheh (2013), discusses and investigates the idea of translation of Islamic texts and ideology. His work concludes that Muslim translators are unconsciously influenced by their religious, social, and cultural ideologies when they translate the same.

AlGhamdi (2016) discusses an applied study that evaluates the Arabic-English translation of the biography of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, called 'The Sealed Nectar', using Juliane House's (1997) translation quality assessment model. The study enhances House's model to make it applicable to culture-bound texts, introducing Nord's (1988\2005) cultural concepts, Nida's (1961;1975) categorisation of cultural features, Dickins et al.'s (2002) compensation strategies, Martin and White's (2005) appraisal theory, and Katan's (2004) model. An application of the enhanced model reveals mismatches on all discourse variables and overt errors. The study complements House's framework of translation quality assessment and provides a model that can be applied to evaluate overt translations.

Hassan (2016) discusses the problem of translation versus transliteration of Islamic religious terms. He chooses a translation of Nawwawi's Forty Hadiths translated by Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies (2002) to take samples from and concludes that the translation of religious translated texts into English is only appropriate when words of the source language and words of the target language are cross-culturally equivalent. Faizi (2014) also studies the translation of the forty Nawwawi hadiths and tests the influence of using the transliteration method in rendering meaning. He finds that the successful translation of such hadiths is only possible if the translator chooses the exact equivalent to the Islamic lexis and concepts.

Halimah (2017) examines the divine challenges facing the translators of prophetic hadiths. He believes that Islamic translated texts must convey the divine touch that is included in these texts. This can be accomplished by conveying meaning to the target language through linguistic, cultural, and rhetorical aspects. In the applied part of the study, he presents a critique and discussion of the translation of Sahih Albukhari, translated by Khan (1994) and introduces an organised process to evaluate such Islamic translated texts using a foreignisation approach. Halimah believes that there is an urgent need for Islamising (rather than Christianising or Jewishising) the translation of prophetic hadiths.

The above review has briefly explored a few studies in the realm of religious translation and attempted to illuminate their contributions to this field. In the context of translating prophetic hadiths on personal attributes, a foreignising approach should be adopted wherein the translator endeavours to convey both the textual meaning and the profound essence of the source text.

3. Methodology

The aim of this study is to investigate linguistic and cultural problems and difficulties that translators of prophetic hadiths face, with special reference to Najjar's (2012) translation of *'Prophetic Virtues and Habits'*. Najjar's book is a translation of hadiths on the Prophet (ﷺ)'s personal attributes which are included in an Islamic hadith book called (الشمائل المحمدية) Ash-Shama'il Al-Muhammadiyah. This book contains 417 hadiths, most of which describe Prophet Muhammad's (ﷺ) physical appearance, behaviour, and habits whether told by the Prophet (ﷺ) himself or by his companions (رضي الله عنهم).

To achieve the aim of this study, a set of 8 hadiths and their English equivalents have been taken from *'Prophetic Virtues and Habits'* (Najjar 2012) as samples with linguistic and cultural problems in their translation.

Four investigation instruments are used to collect and analyse the relevant data to fulfil the purpose of this study. The first is Venuti's (1995) foreignising approach of translation which is used to minimise the loss of essential linguistic, cultural and even sacredness of the prophetic hadiths and to bring the target reader into the culture of prophetic hadiths as a source text. Baker's taxonomy of equivalence (1992) at word level, above word level and at grammatical level is also used to collect and organise the samples that have linguistic problems. The third instrument is Newmark's cultural categorisation (1988), particularly the "material culture category" which covers terms related to food, clothing, and transportation. Halimah's (2015) set of five criteria; 'accuracy, clarity, naturalness, communicative effects, and stylistic features' is then the last instrument which is applied to assess the quality of translation.

It is worth mentioning that Ibn Manzūr's (2011) Lisān al-'Arab Arabic-Arabic dictionary is taken as a reference for Arabic terminology accuracy, Baalbaki's, M (2004) and Baalbaki's, R (1996) Al-Mawrid Al-Waseet Concise Arabic-English-Arabic dictionary and a dictionary of Arabic-English religious terms by AlMalki, A and Ibrahim, A (1997) as references for terms equivalence accuracy.

As a way to ensure the validity and reliability of the study instruments, a pilot study was conducted, which produced results that supported the anticipated findings of the current study. The pilot study helped to refine the research instruments and procedures, allowing any necessary adjustments to be made before the actual study was conducted. It is noteworthy that five professors reviewed the pilot study, checked the methods that were used for analysis and discussion and approved of the same.

Findings showed that Najjar as a translator employed inappropriate translation methods that negatively impacted the quality and accuracy of the target text, such as word-for-word translation/literal translation and strategies such as transliteration, borrowing and literal translation. This adversely affected the coherence of the translated hadiths and consequently negatively affected the quality and accuracy of the source message and the target message alike.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

The current study is mainly concerned with a qualitative analysis of 8 Arabic-English translation samples of prophetic personal attributes hadiths that pose linguistic and cultural problems. These samples were selected from *"Prophetic Virtues and Habits"* (Najjar, 2012).

Throughout the data analysis and discussion, it has been assumed that the target audience of Najjar's translation are English-speaking readers all around the world. A translator of the Arabic text should take into consideration the stylistic features, ideas, information, historical associations, linguistic meanings and cultural connotations of the source text and source culture (Halimah, 2017:52) so that the target readers (non-Arabs) understand the target text as it is in the source language. It is thus expected that the translation of such texts should be foreignised (Venuti, 1995) so as to bring the target readers towards the source text linguistically and culturally.

At a macro level, Venuti's (1995) foreignising approach is used to overcome the linguistic and cultural problems that arise in the translation samples and to suggest alternative translations. At a micro level, Halimah (2015) five criteria; 'accuracy, clarity, naturalness, communication, and stylistic features', are used to analyse and evaluate the quality of the translations. Below, the analysis is divided into two sections: (1) the analysis of translations that pose linguistic problems, (2) the analysis of translations that pose cultural problems.

TRANSLATION SAMPLES THAT POSE LINGUISTIC PROBLEMS

Baker’s (1992) taxonomy of equivalence is adopted in our evaluation of linguistic problems. Equivalence refers to “cases where languages describe the same situation by different stylistic or structural means” (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995:38). In this study, linguistic problems include equivalence, as divided by Baker (1992), at three levels: equivalence at word level, equivalence above word level, and grammatical equivalence.

Sample (1): The Terms ‘أهدى \ gifted’ and ‘ساذجين \ clear (hairless)’:

In the following example, a linguistic problem is caused by the translation of the terms ‘أهدى’ and ‘ساذجين’:

Table 1. The Terms ‘أهدى \ gifted’ and ‘ساذجين \ clear (hairless)’

Najjar’s Translation	Source text
Ibn Burayda, on the authority of his father, he said: “AlNajashi <i>gave</i> the prophet of Allah (PBUH) two <i>simple</i> black <i>slippers</i> that he (PBUH) wore, then he performed ablution and wiped upon them”. [74]	عَنْ ابْنِ بَرِيْدَةَ عَنْ اَبِيهِ اَنَّ النَّجَاشِيَّ اَهْدَى لِلنَّبِيِّ ﷺ خُفَيْنِ اسْوَدَيْنِ سَاذَجَيْنِ فَلَبَسَهُمَا ثُمَّ تَوَضَّأَ وَمَسَحَ عَلَيْهِمَا. [74]

Here the term ‘أهدى’ is translated as ‘gave’ and the term ‘ساذجين’ is translated as ‘simple’; both translations fail to render the semantic denotations of the two terms into English. Moreover, a cultural material, ‘خُفَيْنِ’, is translated into ‘slippers.’ These translations lack accuracy and don’t communicate the exact contextual meaning of the source text.

Linguistically, the verb ‘أهدى’ refers to “something that is thoughtfully given to someone without expectation of return” (Merriam Webster dictionary 2003). In the example above, the term ‘أهدى’ is translated as ‘gave’ which would indicate a general meaning of ‘giving’ whether as a gift or not. The translation needs to take into consideration the context of the hadith so the target readers understand the hadith properly. Clearly, the meaning of the hadith is that Alnajashi gifted the Prophet ﷺ a pair of leather socks. As a result, translating the term ‘أهدى’ as ‘gifted’ would be more accurate and would clearly communicate the meaning of the hadith.

Furthermore, the translation of the term ‘ساذجين’ as ‘simple’ doesn’t communicate the exact meaning of the term ‘ساذجين’. Grammatically, ‘ساذجين’ is used to describe two slippers therefore it is derived from the term ‘ساذج’ which describes one slipper. The term ‘ساذج’ means “something clear (without impurities), pure unblemished, and unfluffy” (Al-Maany website, accessed:19/05/2023). Consequently, using ‘simple’ as a translation of the term ‘ساذج’ may not communicate the meaning of the hadith.

Accordingly, Ghazala (2014) suggests that if there is no equivalent for a word in the target language, the translator should use the closest word for the adjective and provide a short explanation for it. So, translating the term ‘ساذج’ as ‘clear’ with a short explanation would be better.

Najjar also faced difficulties with a cultural material term, the term ‘خُفَيْنِ’, which he translated into ‘slippers’. The Arabic terms ‘خَف’ refers to a type of footwear that is essentially a pair of leather socks, which is different from what is typically understood as slippers in English. ‘خَف’ are commonly worn in the Middle East and North Africa. This kind of footwear can be made from a variety of materials, including sheepskin, goat skin, or camel hide. ‘slippers’ is a possible translation for ‘خَف’, but it is not an entirely accurate one, as it does not capture the specific design and material of the leather socks.

Therefore, to foreignise the translation in the example above, the following translation is suggested:

Table 2. The Terms ‘أهدى \ gifted’ and ‘ساذجين \ clear (hairless)

Alternative Translation	Source text
Ibn Burayda reported that: “Alnajashi <i>gifted</i> the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) a <i>pair of clear</i> (hairless) black leather socks that he (ﷺ) wore, then he performed ablution and wiped upon them”.	عَنْ ابْنِ بَرِيْدَةَ عَنْ اَبِيهِ اَنَّ النَّجَاشِيَّ اَهْدَى لِلنَّبِيِّ ﷺ خُفَيْنِ اسْوَدَيْنِ سَاذَجَيْنِ فَلَبَسَهُمَا ثُمَّ تَوَضَّأَ وَمَسَحَ عَلَيْهِمَا. [74]

The following two pictures show how different is ‘خَف’ from ‘slippers’:



Figure 1. Slippers



Figure 2. leather socks \ خَف

Sample (2): The Phrase ‘يتمثل الشعر’ quote (recite):

The following hadith was taken from Najjar (2012:171) from the chapter that describes how Prophet Muhammad ﷺ dealt with poetry. Let us shed light on how Najjar (ibid) translated such challenging hadith.

Table 3. The Phrase ‘يتمثل الشعر’ quote (recite) ’

Najjar’s Translation	Source text
Aisha (May Allah be pleased with her), she said that she was asked: Did the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) give something of a poem as an example ? She answered: “He gave the poem of Ibn Rawaha as an example when he said: “News are been brought to you from whom you didn’t assign”. (242).	عَنْ عَائِشَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا قَالَتْ قِيلَ لَهَا هَلْ كَانَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ يَتَمَثَّلُ بِشَيْءٍ مِنَ الشِّعْرِ قَالَتْ كَانَ يَتَمَثَّلُ بِشِعْرِ ابْنِ رَوَاحَةَ وَيَتَمَثَّلُ وَيَقُولُ: ((وَيَأْتِيكَ بِالْأَخْبَارِ مَنْ لَمْ تَرَوْدْ)) [242]

In the hadith above, the Arabic verb ‘يتمثل الشعر’ is translated as ‘give something of a poem’ which lacks accuracy, clarity and stylistic features, and doesn’t render the exact contextual meaning of the hadith. Let us see how Najjar (2012:171) fails to bring such text into English.

From the outset, it should be noted that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was not a poet. Allah (ﷻ) sent His words to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The Prophet’s enemies accused Muhammad ﷺ of being a poet because of the eloquence of the Quran he recited. Yet, Allah (ﷻ) absolved this accusation in the Quran:

قال الله تعالى: ﴿ وَمَا عَلَّمْنَاهُ الشِّعْرَ وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لَهُ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ وَقُرْآنٌ مُبِينٌ ﴾ [يس:69]

“And we have not instructed the (Prophet) in poetry, nor is it meet for him: This is no less than a Message and a Quran making things clear.” [S:36, A:69].

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was not only unable to compose poetry, but he also was unable to read and write. That is to say, Allah ﷻ made him illiterate unlike poets. However, the Prophet ﷺ enjoyed some of the popular Arabic poems especially, those which praise Allah ﷻ. “Ubai bin Ka’b narrated: Allah’s Prophet said, some poetry contains wisdom. (Khan 1997:98). This hadith emphasises that the Prophet ﷺ enjoyed quoting and reciting certain types of poetry.

Regarding the Arabic verb ‘يتمثل الشعر’, Ibn Hajar (1998) explained the verb ‘تمثل’ in his book (*Ashraf al-Wasā’il ilā Fahm al-Shamā’il* 1998:369), stating that “it is used to indicate a person who recites poetry, or quotes poetry as an example”. The English phrase ‘giving something of poem’ does not indicate the same meaning of the ST and may convey a misunderstood conception that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ gave poetry as a poet. The true meaning of the hadith elaborates that the Prophet ﷺ wasn’t a poet but rather enjoyed reciting and quoting verses from specific kinds of poems. It can be seen from this example that translators of prophetic hadiths should have both cultural and religious knowledge.

Additionally, Najjar made a grammatical mistake while translating the Arabic phrase 'ويأتيك بالأخبار' into 'news are'. In the English language, "news" is considered an uncountable noun and is generally treated as singular. Najjar treated "news" as a plural noun, which might not accurately convey the original meaning in the target text. To achieve a more accurate translation, it would be preferable to replace the auxiliary verb 'are' with the auxiliary verb 'is'.

The following foreignised translation is suggested as an alternative:

Table 4. The Phrase ‘يتمثل الشعر’ quote (recite) ’

Alternative Translation	Source text
Aisha was asked: Did the Prophet (ﷺ) quote (recite) some poem ? She answered: “He quoted (recited) a poem of Ibn Rawaha when he said: “News has been brought to you from whom you didn’t assign”.	عَنْ عَائِشَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا قَالَتْ قِيلَ لَهَا هَلْ كَانَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ يَتَمَثَّلُ بِشَيْءٍ مِنَ الشِّعْرِ قَالَتْ كَانَ يَتَمَثَّلُ بِشِعْرِ ابْنِ رَوَاحَةَ وَيَتَمَثَّلُ وَيَقُولُ: ((وَيَأْتِيكَ بِالْأَخْبَارِ مَنْ لَمْ تَرَوْدْ)) [242]

Sample (3): The Idiom ‘ورقة مصحف’

The following example also tackles an above word level problem (translating an Arabic idiom). Let us see how Najjar (2012) translated the idiom in this hadith.

Table 5. The Idiom ‘ورقة مصحف’

Najjar’s Translation	Source text
Anas Ibn Malik said: the last look I had at the messenger of Allah was when the curtains were disclosed on Monday, I looked at his face as if it is a leaf (page) of Qura’n ,” [386].	عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ، قَالَ: أَجْرُ نَظْرَةٍ نَظَرْتُهَا إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، كَشَفَ الْمِثْرَةَ يَوْمَ الْاِثْنَيْنِ، فَنَظَرْتُ إِلَى وَجْهِهِ كَأَنَّهُ وَرَقَةٌ مَصْحَفٍ [386]

In the example above, the Arabic idiom ‘ورقة مصحف’ is translated as ‘leaf (page) of Quran’. This translation is inaccurate, unclear and

doesn't render the exact contextual meaning of the source text.

Initially, the phrase 'وَجْهَهُ كَأَنَّهُ وَرَقَةٌ مُصْحَفٌ' in the above example uses simile to describe the brightness of the Prophet's ﷺ face as the brightness of a page of Quran. In the above hadith, Anas Ibn Malik narrates his last seeing of the Prophet's ﷺ face and describes the Prophet's ﷺ face as being as bright as a page of Quran. Religiously, Muslims consider the Holy Quran a sacred book that includes the words of Allah that were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ by the Archangel Gabriel (عليه السلام). As a result, Muslims respect and appreciate the Holy Quran greatly and use the Quran's pages as a symbol of light and brightness. Therefore, when Muslims want to describe someone's bright face, they refer to it as 'ورقة مصحف' (a page of Quran).

Accordingly, Najjar (2012:277) tried to render the idiom 'ورقة مصحف' literally into 'leaf (page) of Quran' to help the target reader to understand the source text. Unfortunately, while Najjar's rendition might be understood literally by target readers, it creates an awkward and possibly confusing reading. The translation 'leaf (page) of Quran' also fails to communicate the figurative meaning of the idiom 'ورقة مصحف' due to the lack of any indication of the brightness of a Quranic page.

Therefore, to foreignise the translation in the example above, the following translation is suggested:

Table 6. The Idiom 'ورقة مصحف'

Alternative Translation	Source text
Anas Ibn Malik said: the last look I had at the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was when the curtains were opened on Monday, I looked at his face and it was as bright as a page of the Quran	عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ: أَخِرُ نَظْرَةٍ نَظَرْتُهَا إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَشَفِ السِّتَارَةِ يَوْمَ الْإِثْنَيْنِ فَظَهَرَتْ إِلَيَّ وَجْهَهُ كَأَنَّهُ وَرَقَةٌ مُصْحَفٌ (...). [386]

Sample (4): Translation of Tenses I

The lack of knowledge of the Arabic syntax tends to produce inaccurate translations in English due to the differences between the languages' linguistic systems. The following example shows how Najjar failed in dealing with the grammar of a hadith:

Table 7. Translation of Tenses I

Najjar's Translation	Source text
On the authority of Thabet of Anas who said: "The Messenger of Allah licked his three fingers after eating". [139]	عَنْ ثَابِتٍ عَنْ أَنَسٍ قَالَ كَانَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ إِذَا أَكَلَ طَعَامًا لَعَقَ أَصَابِعَهُ الثَّلَاثِ. [139]

In the example above, the term 'النبي' is translated as 'the Messenger' and the simple past tense of the verb 'licked' implies that the Prophet ﷺ licked his three fingers as a one-time action. These two terms are both inaccurate and don't render the exact contextual meaning of the source text.

Predominantly, it is not enough for translators of prophetic hadiths to be Arabic native speakers, they should also have the necessary linguistic knowledge to allow them to understand the denotative meanings of what they translate. The above example shows that Najjar did not deal with the linguistic challenges in this hadith, neither lexically nor grammatically.

Firstly, Najjar did not deal with the propositional meaning which "arises from the relation between the word and what it refers to in the real world" (Baker, 1992:13). Najjar used the word 'Messenger' as a translation of the word 'النبي'. The term 'prophet' refers to "one who utters divinely inspired revelations" whereas 'messenger' refers to "one who bears a message" (Merriam Webster dictionary). According to this interpretation, using 'Messenger' as the translation of 'نبي' is inaccurate and the term 'النبي' should be rendered into 'the Prophet' (Halimah, 2017:17).

Grammatically, translating the verb 'لَعَقَ' into 'licked' is accurate if this action is not considered a habit. The meaning of the hadith, however, is that the Prophet (ﷺ) did this behaviour frequently as a habit. Najjar's use of the past simple tense is thus inappropriate as it does not indicate the repetition of the action.

Finally, Najjar seems to have used the word-for-word method in translating 'قال' as it's translated into 'said'. In the field of prophetic hadiths, it should be considered that the action of saying is not like the action of narrating/reporting. Prophetic hadiths are sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that are reported by his companions (). So, Anas (), the reporter of the above hadith, is not saying his own words, he is reporting on the behaviour of the Prophet (ﷺ).

With these factors in mind, the following foreignised hadith is suggested as an alternative:

Table 8. Translation of Tenses I

Alternative Translation	Source text
Anas () reported that: "The Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) used to lick his three fingers after eating".	عَنْ ثَابِتٍ عَنْ أَنَسٍ قَالَ كَانَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ إِذَا أَكَلَ طَعَامًا لَعَقَ أَصَابِعَهُ الثَّلَاثِ. [139]

TRANSLATION SAMPLES THAT POSE CULTURAL PROBLEMS

With regard to cultural problems, Newmark (1988:94) stated that “when there is a cultural focus, there is a translation problem due to the cultural ‘gap’ or ‘distance’ between the SL and TL”. Hadiths on the Prophet (ﷺ) ’s personal attributes tend to contain many material cultural terms such as those related to food and clothing items. Bringing their cultural connotations into another culture can pose difficulty for a translator. The following examples show whether Najjar failed to adequately translate cultural terms.

Sample (5): The Clothes Term ‘قميص’/qamis:

The following example shows how translating clothing terms as cultural terms can cause problems:

Table 9. The Clothes Term ‘قميص’/qamis

Najjar’s Translation	Source text
On the authority of Um Salama (May Allah be pleased with her), she said that the favorite dress to The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) was the <i>shirt</i> . [45]	عَنْ أُمِّ سَلَمَةَ، قَالَتْ: "بَكَانَ أَحَبَّ الثِّيَابِ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ الْقَمِيصَ" [45]

Najjar endeavored to address the translation of a clothing term, namely 'قميص', which indicates distinct connotations in Arabic compared to English. The result, however, is an inaccurate and unclear translation (Halimah ACNCS criteria 2015:29).

Due to the gap between the Arabic and English culture, translating Arabic cultural terms into English tends to produce poor translations. Here, for example, Najjar (2012:47) did not interpret the Arabic meaning of the word 'قميص' correctly and consequently translated it as 'shirt'. Newmark (1988:97) stated: “it has to be borne in mind that the function of the generic clothes terms is approximately constant, indicating the part of the body that is covered, but the description varies depending on climate and material used”. According to Oxford Wordpower dictionary (2006), shirt means: “a piece of clothing worn, especially by men, on the upper part of the body, made of light cloth like cotton”, while the term 'قميص' has a different cultural meaning in the above hadith. "القميص" means Thobe (ثوب) which is a piece of clothing that covers all the body, from the shoulders down to the feet.

Essentially, special care is needed as a clothing term (such as “shirt”) in Arabic may not necessarily correspond to the same concept in English. A more natural, accurate, and stylistic translation of the above hadith would be:

Table 10. The Clothes Term ‘قميص’/qamis

Alternative Translation	Source text
Um Salama () reported that the favourite clothing to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was the <i>Thobe</i> (a gown-like garment).	عَنْ أُمِّ سَلَمَةَ، قَالَتْ: "بَكَانَ أَحَبَّ الثِّيَابِ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ الْقَمِيصَ" [45]

The following two pictures show the differences between the two terms:



Figure 3. ثوب a gown-like garment



Figure 4. Shirt

Sample (6): The Food Term ‘الثفل’/althful/ ‘food remnants’

The following example was taken from Najjar (2012:127) from the chapter that describes the food of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Here we discuss the translation of ‘الثفل’.

Table 11. The Food Term ‘الثفل’/althful/ ‘food remnants’

Najjar’s translation	Source text
Anas Ibn Malik who said that: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) liked bread soaked in soup (Al Tharid) ‘Abdullah said in other words ‘food remnants’ [185]	عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ كَانَ يُعْجِبُهُ الثُّفْلُ " قَالَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يُعْنِي مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ الطَّعَامِ" [185]

In the aforementioned example, Najjar's translation of the term 'الثفل' as 'bread soaked in soup' (Al Tharid) is found to be lacking in terms of accuracy and clarity. It also fails to convey the precise meaning intended in the source text. This particular translation choice for the term 'الثفل' by Najjar (2012) introduces a different interpretation compared to the cultural connotation associated with the Arabic term. This consequently overlooks the term's cultural significance and impacts the comprehension of the exact meaning conveyed in the hadith.

According to Alrazi's Mukhtar Al Sehah (1989:36) the Arabic term 'الثفل' means: "what is still in the bottom of anything". Ibn Hajjar (1998: 262) explained the term 'الثفل' as: "the tastiest, and well-cooked part of the food". The term "الثفل" in the original text could refer to the leftover or remaining food that is at the bottom of the dish. This would imply that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ liked the well-cooked portion of the food that was left at the bottom of the dish, rather than soaked bread in soup as the previous translation implies.

Additionally, the inclusion of the additional comment or explanation by the narrator of the hadith, Abdullah Ibn Abdulrahman, "food remnants," appears to be an attempt to provide a more accurate translation of the term "الثفل" and to clarify its meaning for non-Arabic speakers.

Therefore, to foreignise the translation of the hadith, the following translation is suggested:

Table 12. The Food Term 'الثفل'/althful/ 'food remnants'

Alternative Translation	Source text
Anas Ibn Malik reported that: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) used to like <i>Althuful</i> " 'Abdullah said this means 'food remnants' [185]	عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ كَانَ يُعْجِبُهُ الثُّفْلُ. قَالَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يُعْنِي مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ الطَّعَامِ" [185]

The following two pictures illustrate how the two terms are not the same:



Figure 5. Food remnants\الثفل



Figure 6. Bread soaked in soup\الثريد

Sample (7): The Food Term 'خربز'/khirbiz:

The following hadith was taken from Najjar (2012: 138), from a chapter that describes the fruits that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ liked. 'خربز' is considered a food term however the following hadith shows how Najjar (2012:138) translates it as a cultural term.

Table 13. The Food Term 'خربز' /khirbiz

Najjar's Translation	Source text
Aisha (May Allah be pleased with her), she said: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) ate watermelon with ripped dates". (201)	عَنْ عَائِشَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا: أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ أَكَلَ الْخَرْبِيزَ بِالرَّطْبِ. [201]

In the hadith above, Najjar (2012:138) has translated the food term 'خربز' into watermelon which lacks accuracy. 'Melons' such as 'watermelons, muskmelon, and cantaloupe' belong to the same family of fruit which differ in their shapes and colours. According to Oxford Wordpower dictionary (2006), 'watermelon' refers to "a type of large melon, with hard, dark-green skin, that is red inside and has black seeds". Yet, 'خربز' refers to a different kind of 'melon' with a different colour and taste. 'خربز', as a type of 'melon', has many names in the Arabic language, one of them being 'شمام' which is the equivalent term of 'cantaloupe' in English. Moreover, according to the Oxford dictionary, 'cantaloupe' means: "a melon (= a type of fruit) with a green skin that is orange inside".

As discussed above, 'watermelon' (البطيخ الأحمر) and 'muskmelon/cantaloupe' (شمام\البطيخ الأصفر) belong to the same family of fruit (Baalbaki's Alkawrid Dictionary, 2004), yet differ in taste. Watermelons are sweet, juicy and tender while cantaloupes are also sweet and juicy, but have a rough flesh. Both of them have an oval or round shape but while watermelons have a smooth green outer, cantaloupes are characterised by their coarse rind.

Based on the above discussion, the following translation is suggested to achieve accuracy and the ideal communicative effect.

Table 14. The Food Term 'خربز'/khirbiz

Alternative Translation	Source text
Aisha (), reported: "The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) ate cantaloupe with ripe dates".	عَنْ عَائِشَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا: أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ أَكَلَ الْخَرْبِيزَ بِالرَّطْبِ. [201]

The following two pictures clarify the differences between 'watermelon', and 'cantaloupe\خربز':



Figure 7. Watermelon



Figure 8. Cantaloupe/خربز/ **khirbiz**

Sample 8: The Term ‘فَنُو’

The following example was taken from Najjar (2012:264) and shows how the cultural term ‘فَنُو’ is not rendered correctly.

Table 15. The Term ‘فَنُو’

Najjar’s translation	Source text
(... Then he accompanied them to his orchard where he spread a rug for them. Then he went for a palm tree to pick dates and came back with a vessel of ripped dates and put it in front of them.) [373]	(...ثُمَّ انْطَلَقَ بِهِمْ إِلَى حَدِيقَتِهِ، فَبَسَطَ لَهُمْ بِسَاطًا ثُمَّ انْطَلَقَ إِلَى نَخْلَةٍ فَجَاءَ بِفَنُوٍ فَوَضَعَهُ... [372])

In the English translation of the above, the Arabic term ‘فَنُو’ is translated as ‘vessel of ripped dates’ which fails to render the exact contextual meaning of the hadith. Najjar also doesn’t pay enough attention to the faithfulness of the translation and adds something that is not included in the source text.

In Najjar’s (2012) translation, ‘vessel of ripped dates’ refers to the traditional picture of how Arabs present dates to their guests. Yet, when it comes to the Arabic term ‘فَنُو’, in addition to its different meanings the term has a direct and clear English equivalent. According to Alrazi’s (1989:231), ‘فَنُو’ is the singular form of the term ‘فَنُوَانٌ’ which is “a bunch of dates”. Consequently, when comparing the definition of the Arabic term ‘فَنُو’ with the meaning of ‘vessel of ripped dates’, a huge gap can be seen **in the meaning**. Najjar also does not convey the cultural connotations of the Arabic term ‘فَنُو’ and adds details in the remainder of the translation that are not in the source text. This negatively affects the faithfulness of the translation. The above hadith narrates the situation of a companion who went to a palm tree in his garden and brought a bunch of dates to present to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his companions. The source text does not mention whether the dates were ‘ripped’, it merely says ‘dates’.

Therefore, we suggest the following alternative translation to achieve accuracy and clarity and to render the exact meaning of the hadith:

Table 16. The Term ‘فَنُو’

Alternative Translation	Source text
(... Then he accompanied them to his orchard where he spread a rug for them. Then he went to a palm tree to pick dates and came back with a ‘bunch of dates’ and put it in front of them.) [372]	(...ثُمَّ انْطَلَقَ بِهِمْ إِلَى حَدِيقَتِهِ، فَبَسَطَ لَهُمْ بِسَاطًا ثُمَّ انْطَلَقَ إِلَى نَخْلَةٍ فَجَاءَ بِفَنُوٍ فَوَضَعَهُ... [372])

The following pictures illustrate the huge gap between the two translations ‘vessel of ripped dates’ and ‘bunch of dates’:



Figure 9. Vessel of dates



Figure 10. Bunch of dates|فَنُوَانٌ

In this study, a total of 8 translated hadiths were carefully chosen as samples, 4 of which presented linguistic problems, and 4 which posed cultural problems. Two tables have been made to showcase each term, Najjar’s translation and our alternative foreignised translation.

The following table shows examples that pose linguistic problems at word level, above word level and at a syntactic level:

Table 17. Examples that pose linguistic problems

Najjar’s Translation	The Arabic Term	The Alternative Translation
gave	أهدى	Gifted
simple	ساذجين	Clear (hairless)
Give something of poem as an example	يتمثل الشعر	Quote (recite) some poem
a leaf (page) of Qur’an	كأنه ورقة مصحف	as bright as a page of the Quran
licked	لَعَق	Used to lick

The following table shows examples that pose cultural problems:

Table 18. Examples that pose cultural problems

Najjar’s Translation	The Arabic Term	The Alternative Translation
Shirt	قميص	Thobe (a gown-like garment)
Bread soaked in soup (Altharid)	التفل	Althuful (food remnants)
Watermelon	خربز	Cantaloupe
Vessel of dates	قنو	Bunch of dates

Our analysis and discussion have revealed that translating religious texts, in particular prophetic hadiths, can present two main types of problems: linguistic problems and cultural problems. The samples in our study that posed linguistic problems lacked accuracy, which means that the translated text did not convey the exact contextual meaning of the source text. This could be due to reasons such as mistranslation, grammatical errors, or other linguistic issues. On the other hand, the samples that posed cultural problems were found to lack clarity and communicative effect, which suggests that a translated text may have been grammatically correct and accurate, but it did not convey the intended message to the target audience due to cultural differences between the source and target languages.

To address these problems, a foreignising approach was adopted, which involved creating alternative translations that would preserve the cultural and linguistic differences of the source text. This approach helped to overcome the linguistic and cultural problems in the samples by providing alternative translations that were clear, accurate and communicated the exact contextual meaning of the source text.

5. Conclusion

It is found that there are linguistic and cultural problems in Najjar’s Arabic-English translation of hadiths on the Prophet (ﷺ)’s personal attributes. This is due to both the emphasis on the target language and the failure to achieve accuracy, clarity, naturalness, communicative effective and stylistics features (Halimah’s ACNCS criteria, 2015) in translation. The sacred dimension of the hadiths is also overlooked. A foreignising approach (Venuti, 1995) is thus recommended in order to overcome all the aforementioned issues.

It is crucial for a translator to achieve equivalence not only at the linguistic level of a source text, in terms of the meaning of information and ideas, but also at a cultural level (such as in terms of ecology, food, clothing, historical association references etc.) so that they can produce a high-quality translation.

This study has highlighted the difficulties encountered in the translation of hadiths on the Prophet (ﷺ)’s personal attributes and provided alternative translations to help English speaking Muslims and Islamic Centres in non-Arab countries. It is recommended that the following efforts be made in future translations:

- A) Collaboration with experts in Islamic culture and tradition, as well as experts in Arabic and English language, to ensure the accuracy and effectiveness of a translation. This can help to identify any linguistic or cultural nuances that may be missed by a translator and ensure that a translation is suitable for a wide range of readers.
- B) Use of a foreignising approach to help overcome linguistic and cultural problems. This approach prioritises the preservation of the source text’s linguistic and cultural characteristics in a translation, which can help to maintain the original text’s meaning and nuances.
- C) Consideration of the target audience: the target audience for hadiths on the Prophet (ﷺ)’s personal attributes can be quite diverse. Translators should, therefore, consider the needs and expectations of different groups when translating these texts. This may involve finding ways to make the text more accessible to readers who are not familiar with Islamic culture and tradition.
- D) Continuous improvement: the study recommends that translators continue to review and improve their translations over time. This may involve seeking feedback from readers, consulting with experts, and making revisions as necessary to improve the accuracy and accessibility of their translation.

Based on the findings of this study, it’s encouraged that researchers:

- 1. Investigate rhetorical problems: While the present study focused on linguistic and cultural issues, future studies could look into any rhetorical problems and explore strategies for conveying them effectively in the translation.

2. Expand the study to cover more hadiths: The present study focused on selected hadiths from Najjar's (2012) Prophetic Virtues and Habits, but future studies could expand the scope of the analysis to cover a larger sample of hadiths and investigate the translation challenges that arise in the same.
3. Compare translations from different translators: Future studies could compare and contrast different translations of the same hadiths and explore the effectiveness of different translation strategies.

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Dr. Ahmad Mustafa Halimah and Mr. Anas Abdulrahman Bosehah contributed equally to the study.

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