



Problems in Translating Gender-Related Terms in *The Holy Quran*

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Abstract:

The current research aims to investigate the effect of Bakhtiar's feminine gender on her translation of gender-related terms in *The Holy Quran*. It also attempts to reveal the extent to which her translation is faithful. For achieving the aims of the research, a sample analysis of Bakhtiar's translation of some selected gender-related verses that serve the purposes of the study is conducted based on a selected integrated model of analysis. This model draws mainly on Newmark's plan of translation criticism and suggested translation methods (1988), Von



Flotow's feminist translation strategies (1991), and Baker's model of translation strategies (2011). Besides, Al-Hilali and Khan's translation of *The Holy Quran* (1983) is used as a benchmark against which Bakhtiar's translation is compared and judged. Study findings demonstrate that the translator's feminine gender project a huge influence on her lexical choices and adopted translation methods and strategies. This leads her to manipulate the source text and produce an inaccurate and unfaithful translation of it.

Keywords: Bakhtiar, Quran translation, gender-related terms, translator's faithfulness.



Research Problem

The main problem the current research is trying to investigate is whether the translation of gender-related terms in *The Holy Quran* may be affected by the translator's feminine gender or not.

Questions of the Research

The current research aims to provide a convincing answer to the following questions:

- 1.To which extent is Bakhtiar's translation of *Quranic* gender-related terms affected by her gender as a woman?
- 2.How accurate is her translation?

An Overview of the Selected Translation

(a) Laleh Bakhtiar

Bakhtiar (1938- 2020) is an Iranian-American Muslim author and translator who was born in America for an Iranian Muslim father and an American Christian mother. She grew in America as a Catholic with her single mother (Kidwai, 2011, p.3). At the age of 24, Bakhtiar travelled to Iran with her Iranian Muslim husband and their three children. During her stay in Iran she converted to Islam while taking classes on Islamic culture and civilization at Tehran University under the well-known Muslim scholar and mentor Sayed Hossein Nasr (Bakhtiar, 2012, p. xx). Bakhtiar holds a BA in History, MA in Philosophy and Counseling



Psychology, and a PhD in Educational Foundations. She translated many books about Islam into English. She also authored many books on Islamic unity, architecture, and moral healing (Al-Maliki, 2015, p. 26). She is a well-known author of Sufism. A lot of her works were devoted to the history of Muslim women. Her translation of *The Holy Quran* was published for the first time in 2007.

(b) Translation Approach

Based on opinions of critics, there is a considerable gap between Bakhtiar's claims concerning the approach she adopts in translating *The Holy Quran* and her ability to actually apply such claims. She argues that she adopts formal equivalence to produce a faithful translation that is close to the original. She claims that translating words rather than ideas or thoughts of the ST results in an objective rather than a subjective translation (2012, p. xiv). In addition, she alleges that producing a translation of *The Holy Quran* without any commentary or parenthetical phrases leads her translation to be free of any political or doctrinal bias (2012, p. xvi). She also claims that she uses a universal and inclusive language to broaden the perspective of *The Holy Quran* in order not to be exclusive to any group of people.

In fact, her use of formal equivalence "results in a literalist morass" (Lawrence, 2017, p. 100). Kidwai also holds the same point of view as



he maintains that "Bakhtiar's translation is too literal" (2011, p. 147). Her rejection to use commentary or parenthetical phrases causes her to present a vague translation of many Quranic verses. Kidwai maintains that "in the absence of any explanatory notes, readers may not make out much of her translation" (2011, p. 147). Her claim that her translation is free of any doctrinal bias is "baseless and misleading" (Kidwai, 2011, p. 144). Her translation is labeled by many scholars as a feminist one. This is asserted by Bakhtiar herself in her preface where she states:

Let it also be said that this translation was undertaken by a woman to bring both men and women to equity so that the message of fairness and justice between the sexes can be accepted in truth by both genders. God knows best. (2012, p. xxi)

The selected Data

In order for the aims and purposes of the current research to be achieved, a sample analysis of Bakhtiar's translation of the verses that discuss women or gender-related issues is carried out. Undoubtedly, women occupy a great and a special position in Islam. Thereupon, it is not surprising that *The Holy Quran* has a chapter called An-Nisa' (The Women). *The Holy Quran* includes about (177) verses that refer to women. These verses come in a number of Quranic chapters including *Al-Baqarah* (The Cow), *An-Nisa'* (The Women), *Al-Ma'idah* (The Table



Spread with Food), *An-Nur* (The Light), *Al-Ahzab* (The Confederates), and *At-Talaq* (The Divorce). The chapter of *An-Nisa'* (The Women), in particular, discusses more women issues than any other Quranic chapter. Among its (176) verses, there are about (24) verses that address and deal with women issues. For the purpose of the current study, the analysis will include only (5) gender-related verses which are (*Quran, An-Nisa', The Women: 3*), (*Quran, An-Nisa', The Women: 127*), (*Quran, An-Nisa', the Women: 34*), (*Quran, An-Nisa', The Women: 1*), and (*Quran, An-Nisa', The Women: 20*).



Table 3.1

The Selected Women or Gender-Related Terms

"طَبَّ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ" (Quran, An-Nisa', The Women: 3)	"نَشُوزَهُنَّ" (Quran, An- Nisa', the Women: 34)
"مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ" Quran, An-Nisa', The Women: 3	"اضْرِبُوهُنَّ" (Quran, An- Nisa', the Women: 34)
"يَتَامَى النِّسَاءِ" Quran, An-Nisa', The Women: 127	"نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ" (Quran, An- Nisa', the Women: 34)
"قَوَّامُونَ" (Quran, An- Nisa', the Women: 34)	"زَوْجَهَا" (Quran, An-Nisa', The Women: 1)
"فُضِّلَ" (Quran, An- Nisa', the Women: 34)	"زَوْجٍ مَّكَانَ زَوْجٍ" Quran, An-Nisa', The Women: 20
"قَاتِلَاتٍ" (Quran, An- Nisa', the Women: 34)	

Methodology of the Research

The suggested analysis follows the following steps:

1.A number of Quranic verses that serve the purpose of the current research are selected.



1. The second step is represented in ST understanding. In this step, the ST is read thoroughly, and its meaning is defined throughout the entire context.
2. Then, the denotative meaning of the selected terms is defined using a number of dictionaries such as Ibn Mndhur's *Lisan Al-Arab* (1999) and Lane's *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (1968).
3. In order to understand the ST's intended meaning, its function, and how the TT will be like, a macro-level analysis of the ST is done. This step involves examining the context of revelation and exegetical meaning of the ST. A number of exegeses of some Muslim scholars such as Ibn Kathir, Al-Qurtubi, and Al-Tabari, are referred to.
4. Lexical analysis of the TT is conducted based on a set of selected translation methods and strategies. In addition, *Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary* (2008) is used to evaluate the translator's lexical choices.
5. A comprehensive comparison between the ST and TT is made to reach authoritative and reliable results. Such a comparison between the ST and the TT helps to reveal the level of equivalence between the selected terms and their translation.



6. Finally, Al-Hilali and Khan's translation of the selected verses is added and used as a yardstick against which Bakhtiar's translation may be compared and judged.

Analysis and Discussion of the Selected Data

Example One

"وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ مَنِّي وَثَلَاثَ وَرُبَاعَ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ذَٰلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَلَّا تَعُولُوا"

(Quran, An-Nisa', The Women: 3)

Bakhtiar's Translation of the Verse

And if you feared that you will not act justly with the orphans, then, marry **who seems good to you of the women who have orphans**, by twos, in threes or four. But if you feared you will not be just, then, one or **what your right hands possessed**. That is likelier that you not commit injustice. (2012, p. 70)

ST Analysis

The verse under discussion talks about a very important women-related issue which is polygamy. In any serious discussion about women's rights and gender equality in Islam, the question of polygamy is always raised and a special attention is often paid to this issue. The following discussion reveals how Bakhtiar deals with this verse in the light of the ongoing debate around it. In this verse, the analysis is focused on two



key terms which are "طَابَ لَكُمْ" and "مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ". The dictionary meaning of the word "طَابَ" refers to something that was or became good, delicious, pleasant, or delightful. In addition, when someone says "طَابَ لِي كَذَا", this means that this thing has become lawful for him (Lane, 1968, vol. 5, p. 1900). For Ibn Mandhur, when it is said that "طَابَتْ نَفْسَهُ بِالشَّيْءِ", this means that the person allowed that thing without any hatred or anger (1999, vol. 8, p. 235). As for the dictionary meaning of the term "مَلِكِ الْيَمِينِ", it refers to what the person possesses (Ibn Mandhur, 1999, vol. 13, p. 183).

Exegetically, Aishah said, as recorded by Al-Bukhari, that there was a man who was taking care of an orphan girl. The man did not desire to marry her, but he was tempted by her money. Then, he married her and their money was mixed. He prevented her the portion she deserved. Afterwards, Allah revealed this Quranic verse to teach men what to do in such a case (Ibn Kathir, 1999, vol. 2, pp. 208- 209). The exegetical meaning of the word "طَابَ", is "**of your choice, other than the orphan girls**" (Ibn Kathir, 1999, vol. 2, p. 209). For Al-Qurtubi (2006, vol. 6, p. 42) and Al-Tabari (1994, vol. 2, p. 390), it means "**of the women you are allowed to marry**". The intended meaning of the word "مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ" in the verse is slave girls (Al-Qurtubi, 2006, vol. 6, p. 38; Ibn Kathir, 1999, vol. 2, p. 212). According to opinions of Muslim exegetes, the verse describes the state of any man who takes care of a female orphan



and fears that in case he marries her, he cannot treat her justly. The verse asks this man to marry any other woman or women (two, three, or four) of his choice or of the women he is allowed to marry other than orphans. If he fears that he cannot treat them gently, he can marry only one or any of the female captives he possesses.

TT Analysis

In her translation of "مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ" as "who seems good to you of the women who have orphans", Bakhtiar uses the adaptation method. She adds the italicized clause "*who have orphans*" that has no basis in the ST. In addition, nothing in the opinions of the consulted exegetes supports her translation. This implies that the translator resorts to one of the most controversial strategies adopted by feminist translators which is hijacking. Her translation results in a deliberate manipulation of the ST and a change of its intended meaning as she restricts the legitimacy of polygamy and makes it allowed only in case a man marries a widow. As for her translation of "مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ" into "what your right hands possessed", Bakhtiar uses the literal translation method. Lexical words are translated singly without paying attention to the context. She employs less expressive words that only communicate the denotative meaning while the real meaning stated by Muslim scholars, which is that



"مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ" refers to captives or slave girls, is not elucidated by the translator.

In fact, polygamy is one of the most debated issues and feminist scholars have worked on reinterpreting this verse seeing polygamy as one of the practices that must be modified (Wadud, 1999, p. 9). Wadud argues that this verse talks mainly about the issue of orphans' treatment. She sees that in case male guardians who are responsible for the management of female orphans' wealth are unable to manage this wealth justly, they may marry them to avoid the mismanagement of wealth. She adds that *The Holy Quran* limits the number of female orphans a man can marry to four. She concludes that "most proponents of polygamy seldom discuss it within the context of just treatment of orphans" (1999, p. 83). On her part, Barlas also asserts that polygamy is mentioned in *The Holy Quran* for serving a very specific purpose which is "securing justice for female orphans" (2002, p. 190).

To conclude, through her translation of this verse, Bakhtiar intends to address a main criticism launched against Islam which is the inferiority of women. To that effect, Bakhtiar neglects the contextual and exegetical meanings of the selected terms in the verse under discussion, is affected by opinions of Muslim feminists, and produces a peculiar reading of this verse trying to present a translation that promotes



women's rights and gender equality. She makes use of the methods and strategies which she deems appropriate for serving her goal. The message she wants her readers to get from this verse is that it must not be considered as unconditioned permission for a husband to have more than one wife. Accordingly, she chooses to add words that have no equivalents in the ST out of her desire to intervene in the text to create that difference. She admits that her translation of this verse limits polygamy, a thing which is not provided by any other *Quran* translator (2011, p. lxxv).

Al-Hilali and Khan's Translation of the Verse

And if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphan-girls

then marry (other) women **of your choice**, two or three, or four; but if you

fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one or **(the slaves) that your right hands possess**. That is nearer to prevent you from doing injustice. (1983, p. 106)

Al-Hilali and Khan's translation of this verse is based clearly on opinions of Muslim exegetes, so they could communicate the ST's intended meaning faithfully. As indicated by Abdul-Raof, their use of



parenthetical explanation helps to make the TT accessible to the TRs and reduce misconception among them (2001, p. 40).

Example Two

"وَيَسْتَفْتُونَكَ فِي النِّسَاءِ قُلِ اللَّهُ يُفْتِيكُمْ فِيهِنَّ وَمَا يُنلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ فِي يَتَامَى النِّسَاءِ اللَّاتِي لَا تُؤْتُونَهُنَّ مَا كُتِبَ لَهُنَّ وَتَرْغَبُونَ أَنْ تَنْكِحُوهُنَّ "

(*Quran, An-Nisa'*, The Women: 127)

Bakhtiar's Translation of the Verse

And they ask **you** for advice about women. Say: God pronounces to you about them (f) and what is recounted to you in the Book about **the women who have orphans**, those to whom (f) you give not what was prescribed for them (f) because you prefer that you marry them (f).

(2012, p. 89)

ST Analysis

The term to be analyzed in this verse is "يَتَامَى النِّسَاءِ". Literally, Ibn Mandhur sees that "الْيَتِيم" is the person who lost his father (1999, vol. 15, p. 435). Lane also states that the word "أَيْتَمَهُ" means to make someone fatherless (1968, vol. 8, p. 3063). Concerning reasons of revelation, al-Qurtubi argues that some of the prophet's companions asked him about some women-related issues like the inheritance they deserve. Then, Allah revealed this verse asking his prophet (pbuh) to tell them that Allah will instruct them about all issues related to women and also about what



He has told them in verse (An- Nisa', the Women, 3) that talks about polygamy and orphan girls (2006, vol. 7, pp. 159- 160). According to Al-Tabari, "يَتَامَى النِّسَاءِ" in this verse refers to orphan girls whose masters want to marry them without paying their prescribed dowry or inheritance (1994, vol. 2, p. 570).

TT Analysis

Bakhtiar translates "يَتَامَى النِّسَاءِ" as **"the women who have orphans"** although the intended meaning, as argued by Muslim exegetes, is orphan girls. Similar to her translation of "مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ" as **"who seems good to you of the women who have orphans"**, Bakhtiar also uses the adaptation method as well as the hijacking strategy. The meaning she introduces through this verse is completely manipulated and against the ST's intended meaning. She wants to assure the meaning she introduced in the previous example that polygamy is limited to women who have orphans only. Her translation of this verse is also a response to the orientalist discourse that regards the Muslim woman as an oppressed creature and a clear adoption of feminist scholars' opinions.

Al-Hilali and Khan's Translation of the Verse

They ask your legal instruction concerning women, say: Allah instructs you about them, and about what is recited unto you in the Book concerning **the orphan girls** whom you give not the prescribed portions



(as regards *Mahr* and inheritance) and yet whom you desire to marry.
(1983, p. 131)

Al-Hilali and Khan's translation of this verse is very faithful. The exact contextual meaning of the selected term is communicated. Through their translation of this verse, it becomes evident that they refer to opinions of Muslim exegetes.

Example Three

"الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ وَاللَّاتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُورَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ فَإِنِ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا"

(*Quran, An-Nisa'*, The Women: 34)

Bakhtiar's Translation of the Verse

Men are **supporters** of wives because God gave some of them an **advantage** over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality are the females, **ones who are morally obligated** and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose **resistance** you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and **go away from them (f)**. Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great. (2012, p. 76)

ST Analysis



The verse under discussion is quoted from the Quranic chapter of *an-Nisaa*. It is one of the most controversial and debated verses as it deals with a key gender-related issue. The verse deals mainly with gender roles in Islam i.e. the idea of men's superiority to women. It also provides for forms of behaviors that a husband is allowed to carry out in case he has a rebellious wife to avoid disharmony or divorce. The analysis will include five key terms which are "قَوَامُونَ", "فَضْلٌ", "قَانِنَاتٌ", "نَشُورَهُنَّ", and "وَاصْرِبُوهُنَّ". The dictionary meaning of the word "قَوَامٌ" is companion, maintainer, or determiner. (Ibn Mandhur, 1999, vol.11, pp. 354- 355). Lane sees that "قَامَ عَلَى الْمَرْأَةِ" means he maintained her or managed her affairs. He also argues that "الرِّجَالُ يَقُومُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ" means that men govern women, men are mindful of women, men act well to women, or men take care of women (1968, vol. 8, p. 2995). Concerning the second term which is "فَضْلٌ", Ibn Mandhur argues that "الْفَضْلُ" is the antonym of abasement or degradation (1999, vol. 10, p. 280). The word "يَفْضُلُ" means to excel. When it is said that "فَضَّلْتُهُ عَلَى غَيْرِهِ", it denotes that someone is judged to be more excellent than others or he is attributed an excellence that distinguishes him above others (Lane, 1968, vol. 6, p. 2411).

The third term to be analyzed in the verse under discussion is "قَانِنَاتٌ". According to Ibn Mandhur, "الْقُنُوتُ" means to stop talking, to pray humbly



to Allah, or to be obedient. In the context of a husband-wife relationship, "فَنَتَّتِ الْمَرْأَةُ لِرَوْجِهَا" suggests that she keeps silent and is guided by her husband (1999, vol. 11, p. 313). As for Lane, "فَنَتَّتِ" designates that someone is obedient, and "فَنَتَّتِ لِلَّهِ" means he was obedient to Allah (1968, vol. 7, p. 2566). With regard to the term "نَشُوزٌ", the dictionary meaning of the word "نَاشِزٌ" is raised. Between a husband and his wife, "نَشُوزٌ" implies that every one of them hates the other. When it is said that "نَشَزَتْ الْمَرْأَةُ بِرَوْجِهَا", this means that she disobeyed and hated him (Ibn Mandhur, 1999, vol. 14, p. 143). Similarly, for Lane, "نَشَزَ" refers to someone who raised himself or stood up after sitting. "نَشَزَتْ الْمَرْأَةُ عَلَى رَوْجِهَا" means that the woman became disobedient to, exalted herself against, resisted, hated, deserted, or was a bad companion to her husband (1968, vol. 8, p. 2795). The most controversial term in this verse is "ضَرَبَ". Linguistically, Lane says that the word "ضَرَبَ" gives many different meanings. For instance, it gives the meaning of causing something to fall upon another. It also means to beat, struck, or smote (1968, vol. 5, p. 1777).

Exegetically, it was narrated that a woman came to prophet Muhammed (pbuh) to complain against her husband (a man from Al-Ansar) who slapped her. The prophet (pbuh) told the woman that her husband had no right to do this. Then, the verse "الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ" was revealed



and the prophet (pbuh) said: "I wanted one thing, and Allah wanted another" (Ibn Kathir, 1999, vol. 2, p. 293). The word "قَوَّامُونَ" means that men are protectors and maintainers of women. They also have the right to discipline them and to be responsible for them if they go astray (Al-Tabari, 1994, vol. 2, p. 451; Ibn Kathir, 1999, vol. 2, p. 292). Al-Qurtubi sees that the intended meaning is that men are entitled to spend money on women, discipline them and to keep them in their homes (2006, vol. 6, p. 278). The term "فَضَّلَ" is interpreted as men are better than women. Muslim scholars attribute this to many reasons including that prophecy was limited to men only (Ibn Kathir, 1999, vol. 2, p. 292), men give dowry to their wives and spend money on them (Al-Tabari, 1994, vol. 2, p. 451), men have better intellectual abilities and are stronger in *Jihad* (Al-Qurtubi, 2006, vol. 6, p. 278).

The term قَائِنَاتٌ refers to women who obey their husbands (Al-Qurtubi, 2006, vol. 6, p. 281; Ibn Kathir, 1999, vol. 2, p. 293). Al-Tabari sees that it refers to women who obey Allah and their husbands as well (1994, vol. 2, p. 452). As for the word "نُشُوزٌ", it describes women who disobey or ignore their husbands (Al-Qurtubi, 2006, vol. 6, p. 282; Al-Tabari, 1994, vol. 2, p. 452; Ibn Kathir, 1999, vol. 2, p. 294). The word "ضَرَبَ" means to beat women gently or slightly without causing any harm or pain (Al-



Qurtubi, 2006, vol. 6, p. 285; Al-Tabari, 1994, vol. 2, p. 453; Ibn Kathir, 1999, vol. 2, p. 295).

TT Analysis

As this verse discusses gender issues, it may be used to assess and measure any translator's feminist inclinations. In fact, Bakhtiar's translation of this verse represents her main feminist contribution. In her translation of this verse, she adopts a number of different translation methods and textual and paratextual strategies. First of all, the paratextual prefacing strategy is employed by the translator as she devoted a part of her preface to express her point of view on her interpretation of this verse (2012, p. xix). Bakhtiar translates the word "قَوَّامُونَ" as supporters using the literal translation method. The word "**supporters**" is less expressive than the word "قَوَّامُونَ" as its meaning is restricted only to the financial, emotional, or moral support (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2008). All other meanings mentioned by exegetes are neglected by the translator.

Bakhtiar also opts to translate "بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ" as "because God gave some of them an **advantage** over others". She uses the literal translation method and employs the less expressive word "**advantage**" which denotes providing a greater chance of success (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2008). Another significant point to be



considered here is that from a linguistic point of view, the ST includes some ambiguities because the pronoun "هَمَّ" in the Arabic language may be used to refer to both males and females. Thus, the reader may ask: for whom has Allah given the advantage? In her translation, Bakhtiar keeps the same linguistic ambiguity of the ST. Throughout her translation of *The Holy Quran*, when a pronoun is used to refer to women, she used to place the letter (f) after that pronoun to affirm that it refers to the feminine gender. In this verse, she does not use the letter (f) after the pronoun "others". This gives an impression that the meaning she wants her readers to obtain is that Allah has given some men and women an advantage over some other men and women.

Translating the word "فَانْتَاتُ" as "ones who are morally obligated" is an adoption of the adaptation translation method. Bakhtiar paraphrases the source term through using unrelated words. She does not refer to obedience either to husbands or to Allah. Similarly, instead of using the word hatred, ignorance, or disobedience, she translates the word "نَشُوْزٌ" as "resistance" which gives the meaning of opposition (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2008). She translates this word literally using a more general word that does not refer to the exact intended meaning of the source term. Finally, Bakhtiar uses the adaptation translation method in her translation of the word "وَاصْرِبُوْهُنَّ" as "go away



from them". She hijacks the original meaning of the word and introduces her personal point of view. She also makes use of the supplementing strategy here through adding the letter (f) after the pronoun "them" to refer to the feminine identity. According to Hassen and Bassnett, her unfamiliar use of the letter (f) has a strong effect on the TRs on the level of both meaning communication and visual impact. As for meaning communication, her TRs can understand that she talks about the feminine gender thanks to the letter (f). Concerning visual impact, the letter (f) easily stresses the feminine visibility and affects the reader strongly; a fact which feminist translators have unceasingly tried to achieve (2008, p. 30).

While the interpretations of Muslim exegetes of this verse are an obvious declaration of men's superiority to women, Bakhtiar's translation of it is a plain rejection of these classical interpretations. Her translation is also an explicit adoption of the Muslim feminists' views on this verse. Bakhtiar's interpretation of this verse reflects, to a great extent, how she is affected by opinions of Wadud and Barlas who have a very strange contribution in their interpretation of this verse. They believe that the interpretations of classical exegetes of this verse are misleading and against the norms of modernity and civilization (Barlas, 2002, pp. 186-188). Wadud argues that (قوامون على) does not mean that men are



preferred to women because the use of the word "بعض" denotes that in some manners, some men are given preference to some women. Similarly, some women are given preference to some men in some other manners (1999, p. 71).

Wadud also believes that the word "قَائِنَاتٌ" refers to good women, but obedience to the husband is not the intended meaning here. She argues that this word is used throughout the whole *Quran* to describe the state of believers (either males or females) towards Allah. She also assures that "the Quran never orders a woman to obey her husband" (1999, pp. 74- 77). As for the word "نَشُوزٌ", Wadud argues that it is used in *The Holy Quran* to refer to both males (like *Quran* 4: 128) and to females (like *Quran* 4: 34). Accordingly, it cannot mean disobedience to a husband. However, it refers to a state of disorder between a husband and his wife (1999, p. 75; Barlas, 2002, p. 188). In *Lisan al-Arab* and Lanes's *Lexicon*, the word "ضَرْبٌ", Wadud maintains, has many meanings other than force or violence. Thus, the verse must be used for "prohibiting unchecked violence against females" (1999, p. 76). Barlas concludes her discussion of the verse by stating that:

If we cannot all agree on the most suitable reading, we should be able to admit that reading this ayah as a license to batter wives, or to compel



obedience upon them, is not acceptable in that it is not the best meaning we can derive from the Quran. (2002, p. 189)

To conclude, Bakhtiar's translation of this verse is a response to the Western Muslim women's consciousness about issues of gender equality produced by their engagement with modernity. She tries to confute the assumption that "Verse 34 (4:34) of the Quran is frequently mobilized in support of attempts to render women subservient to men on the one hand and, on the other, as a major criticism of Islam on the grounds that it is against human rights and is sexist" (Bakhtiar, 2011, 432). Al-Sharafi and Abu Khader maintain that Bakhtiar attempts through her translation of this verse "to express a specific power relation between men and women and to show her attitude and ideological stance towards the issue of women's rights and status in the Qur'an" (2019, p. 179). Consequently, she challenges opinions of Muslim exegetes, introduces a very woman-sensitive reading of this verse trying to enhance the image of the Muslim woman in the Western community, and uses the methods and strategies that allow her to produce a very subjective and manipulated translation of the original.

Al-Hilali and Khan's Translation of the Verse

Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has made one of them to excel the other, and because they spend (to



support them) from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient (to Allah and to their husbands), and guard in the husband's absence what Allah orders them to guard (e.g. their chastity, their husbands property). As to those women on whose part you see ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly, if it is useful); but if they return to obedience seek not against them means (of annoyance). Surely Allah is Ever Most High, Most Great. (1983, p. 113)

In fact, unlike Bakhtiar's subjective translation of this verse, Al-Hilali and Khan provide a very objective and faithful translation of it. It may be said that their translation of this verse is free from any form of bias as it is based clearly on opinions of Muslim exegetes. Their use of exegetical materials like parenthesis is a very effective method for preventing vagueness or misconception on the part of the TRs.

Example Four

"وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ اسْتِبْدَالَ زَوْجٍ مَّكَانَ زَوْجٍ وَآتَيْتُمْ إِحْدَاهُنَّ قِنْطَارًا فَلَا تَأْخُذُوا مِنْهُ شَيْئًا"

(*Quran, An-Nisa'*, The Women: 20)

Bakhtiar's translation of the verse

"And if you wanted to exchange your spouse in place of another spouse and you gave one of them (f) a hundredweight, so take not anything from it" (2012, p. 73).



ST Analysis

This verse is taken from the Quranic chapter of *an-Nisaa*. The term to be discussed in this verse is "زَوْجٌ". According to dictionaries, the word "زَوْجٌ" is used to refer to a man's wife or a woman's husband. The husband is the "زَوْجٌ" of the wife and the wife is the "زَوْجٌ" of the husband (Ibn Mandhur, 1999, vol. 3, p. 108; Lane, 1968, vol. 3, p. 1267). Based on opinion of exegetes, the word "زَوْجٌ" in this verse refers to the wife. Thus, the verse is a command from Allah to Muslim men that in case any of them wants to divorce his wife and marry another woman, he must not take the least bit of the dowry given to his first wife. It is a form of injustice and a clear sin for anyone to do that (Al-Qurtubi, 2006, vol. 6, p. 122; Al-Tabari, 1994, vol. 2, p.423; Ibn Kathir, 1999, vol. 2, p. 243).

TT Analysis

The word "زَوْجٌ" is translated by Bakhtiar as "**spouse**". She translates it literally using a more general word. As the Arabic word "زَوْجٌ" is used to refer to either a husband or a wife, the word "spouse" employed by the translator holds the same meaning (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2008). The translator tends to keep the same generality of the original term alleging that this is a form of objectivity (Bakhtiar, 2012, p. xiv). Like her translation of many other verses, she works on producing a translation that promotes gender equality and women's



rights. Her translation does not clarify that it is the man who is allowed to replace his wife with another. Her translation gives the impression that it is allowed for the wife as well to replace her husband with another. As evidence, she does not stress the feminine gender of the word "spouse" as she used to do throughout her translation of *The Holy Quran*. In fact, Bakhtiar's translation of this verse is a clear manipulation of the ST, a great challenge to the idea of fidelity and faithfulness to the ST, and an obvious adoption of the Western modern calls for gender equality.

Al-Hilali and Khan's Translation of the Verse

"But if you intend to replace **a wife by another** and you have given one of them a *Qintar* (of gold i.e. a great amount as *Mahr*) take not the least bit of it back" (1983, p. 110).

The word "wife" used by Al-Hilali and Khan reflects the intended meaning. Their translation means that it is the husband who is allowed to replace his wife with another.

Example Five

"يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا"

(*Quran, An-Nisa'*, The Women:1)

Bakhtiar's Translation of the Verse



"O humanity! Be Godfearing of your Lord Who created you from a single **soul** and, from it, created **its spouse**" (2012, p. 70).

ST Analysis

This verse talks about the story of creation and is known as "the creation verse". It is a key gender-related verse as it contains an obvious description of the order of creation. The words "**نَفْسٍ**" and "**زَوْجٍ**" are the two main words to be considered in this verse. As for the dictionary meaning, the word "**نَفْسٍ**" means soul or spirit (Lane, 1968, vol. 8, p. 2827). Ibn Mandhur also sees that "**النَّفْسِ**" means the soul (1999, vol. 14, p. 233). The word "**زَوْجٍ**" is used to refer to a man's wife or a woman's husband. The husband is the "**زَوْجٍ**" of the wife and the wife is the "**زَوْجٍ**" of the husband (Ibn Mandhur, 1999, vol. 3, p. 108; Lane, 1968, vol. 3, p. 1267).

Muslim exegetes maintain that the word "**نَفْسٍ**" means "Adam" and the word "**زَوْجٍ**" means "Hawaa (Eve)" (Al-Qurtubi, 2006, vol. 6, p. 6; Al-Tabari, 1994, vol. 2, p.388; Ibn Kathir, 1999, vol. 2, p. 206). According to them, the verse's intended meaning is that Allah asks people to fear Him reminding them that He created them all from a single person who is Adam, and from Adam's left rib, He created Hawwa.



TT Analysis

The two key words under discussion in this verse which are "نَفْسٍ" and "زَوْجٍ" are translated by Bakhtiar as "soul" and "spouse" respectively. The literal translation is the method adopted by the translator in this verse. The dictionary meaning is communicated. However, the exegetical meaning is dismissed and ignored as Bakhtiar does not clarify who was created first i.e. Adam or Eve. In addition, the word "soul" is more general than the meaning of the word "نَفْسٍ" as it means the spiritual part of the person (*Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary*, 2008). The word "spouse" is more general than the exegetical meaning of the word "زَوْجٍ". It holds the same ambiguity and generality of the denotative meaning of the word "زَوْجٍ" as it is used, according to *Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary* (2008), to refer to a person's wife or husband. Vagueness is deliberate by the translator as she wants her readers to get the idea that *The Holy Quran* does not clarify who was created first i.e. Adam or Eve. As evidence, she does not stress the feminine gender of the word "زَوْجٍ" through adding the letter (f) after the word "spouse" which means that she communicates a kind of gender egalitarian meaning. In verse (*Quran, Al-Ahzab, The Confederates: 59*), she translates "يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّأَزْوَاجِكَ" into "O prophet! Say to your spouses (f)" adding the letter (f) after the word "spouses" to stress the feminine



gender as it refers to the prophet's wives. However, her desire not to affirm the feminine gender here means that she has a different reading of the verse.

In her translation of this verse, Bakhtiar tries to promote gender equality. She is influenced by Muslim feminists who argue that the verse is a declaration of the equal creation of both men and women. For instance, Hassan argues that the story of Eve's creation from Adam's rib is the main cause of women's inferior status and has a negative impact on the life of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim women. She holds the opinion that God's first creation is undifferentiated, *The Holy Quran* does not decide whether the first creature is a man or a woman, and it is not logical to believe that Eve was created from Adam's rib. She declares that Muslims got this story from *Ahadith* which she had examined and proven them to be weak in terms of both *isnad* (list of transmitters) and *matn* (content) (2001, pp. 61- 62). Wadud also follows the same perspective as she argues that the word "نَفْسٍ" refers to the common origin of all humankind, and the word "زَوْجٍ" is a common term that is used in *The Holy Quran* to refer to a group, mate, or spouse. She states:

In the Qur'anic account of creation, Allah never planned to begin the creation of humankind with a male person; nor does it ever refer to the origins of the human race with Adam. It does not even state that Allah



began the creation of humankind with the nafs of Adam, the man. (1999, p. 20)

Al-Hilali and Khan's Translation of the Verse

"O mankind! Be dutiful to your lord, Who created you from **a single person (Adam)**, and from him (Adam) He created **his wife [Hawwa (Eve)]**" (1983, p. 106).

Unlike Bakhtiar's literal, biased, and ambiguous translation of this verse, Al-Hilali and Khan provide a very clear, faithful, unbiased, and accurate translation that conforms to opinions of Muslim exegetes. Through their translation, they could communicate the exact meaning of the verse. The TR can easily understand that the word "نَفْسٍ" refers to Adam, and the word "زَوْجٍ" means Eve.

Research Findings

The analysis demonstrates that Bakhtiar's translation of *The Holy Quran* is affected by her gender as a woman. Her translation is based on a certain purpose which is producing a translation that supports women's rights. Bakhtiar's aim is the main determinant of both the form and content of her TT and is clearly reflected within it. She has succeeded, to a large extent, to produce a woman-focused translation of the verses that include key gender or woman-related issues. Through her translation of these verses she can write back to the orientalist discourse



about the Muslim woman, attempts to establish a special ideal image of her, pays attention to the in-between zone her female TRs suffer from, and adopts opinions and perspectives of feminist scholars by whom many Muslims in the West have been largely affected. She presents solutions to the most sensitive problems and debated issues her female TRs suffer from like the idea of men's authority over women, wife beating, polygamy, and first human creation. Through her translation of these verses, Bakhtiar heeds the call of her female TRs via presenting a very innovative reading of these verses in a way that goes completely against the meanings intended by the ST.

Bakhtiar's desire to produce a woman-sensitive translation superimposes her loyalty to the ST, and that is why she could not be neutral in her translation. She ignores intertextual coherence, betrays, and manipulates the ST through her attempt to provide a tailored translation. Instead of communicating the ST's meaning faithfully, she gives herself the chance to intervene in it to produce a different translation that meets the function assigned to it. Bakhtiar's manipulation of the selected Quranic terms takes many forms including:

- **Lexical mismatches:** In many cases, she uses inappropriate equivalents that have no exegetical basis. A good example of this is her translation of "اضْرِبُوهُنَّ" as "go away".



- **Addition:** She sometimes adds textual elements that are not included in the ST and are not referred to by Muslim exegetes. For example, she translates the word "مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ" as "who seems good to you of *the women who have orphans*".
- **Producing a very literal translation of the original:** Her literal translation of many verses is vague and ambiguous for the TRs. It does not communicate the original meaning and open the door for misunderstanding and misinterpretation on the part of the receiver. Her translation of "نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ", and "زَوْجَهَا" as "**a single soul**" and "**its spouse**" respectively is very literal and the intended meaning is not obvious. Her literal translation results in either ambiguity or inaccuracy in transferring the message of the ST to the TRs
- **Producing a general translation that neglects the subtle meaning of Quranic terms:** Her translation of the word "نُشُوزَهُنَّ" as "**resistance**", is very general and does not communicate the accurate intended meaning.



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مشاكل ترجمة المصطلحات المتعلقة بالجنس في القرآن الكريم

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المستخلص:

يهدف البحث الحالي إلى معرفة تأثير الجنس المؤنث بختيار على ترجمتها للمصطلحات المتعلقة بالجنس في القرآن الكريم. كما تحاول الكشف عن مدى وفاء ترجمتها. ولتحقيق أهداف البحث تحليل عينة بختيار تتم ترجمة بعض الآيات المختارة المتعلقة بالجنس والتي تخدم أغراض الدراسة بناءً على نموذج تحليل متكامل مختار. يعتمد هذا النموذج بشكل أساسي على خطة Newmark لـ نقد الترجمة وطرق الترجمة المقترحة (١٩٨٨) ، واستراتيجيات الترجمة النسوية لفون فلوتو (١٩٩١) ، ونموذج بيكر لاستراتيجيات الترجمة (٢٠١١). إلى جانب ذلك ، استخدمت ترجمة الهلالي وخان للقرآن الكريم (١٩٨٣) كمعيار لمقارنة بختيار.

تتم مقارنة الترجمة والحكم عليها. تظهر نتائج الدراسة أن الجنس المؤنث للمترجم له تأثير كبير على اختياراتها المعجمية وأساليب واستراتيجيات الترجمة المعتمدة. هذا يقودها إلى التلاعب بالنص المصدر وإنتاج ترجمة غير دقيقة وغير صادقة له.

الكلمات الافتتاحية: بختيار ، ترجمة القرآن ، مصطلحات متعلقة بالجنس ، إخلاص المترجم.