

## **Assessing the Translation of Euphemistic Age terms in the Holy Quran from Arabic to English**

**By**

**Tasneem Hasan Ahmed**

Al-imam Al-adham University College, Islamic Studies in English language Departments,  
IRAQ

Email: [tasnemhasanahmed@gmail.com](mailto:tasnemhasanahmed@gmail.com)

**Lubna Riyadh Abduljabbar**

Al-imam Al-adham University College, Islamic Studies in English language Departments,  
IRAQ

Email: [drlubna831963@gmail.com](mailto:drlubna831963@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

Euphemism is one of the most significant phenomenon that translators must take into consideration when translating the holy Quran . Arabic and English are essentially different languages and do not express or use euphemism in the same manner; therefore, employing a literal translation to transfer euphemism from Arabic to English may result in meaning loss. The purpose of this study is to investigate, explain, interpret, and evaluate various elements of Two euphemistic age terms in the Holy Quran with the hypotheses that

1. Different translators render euphemistic phrases differently.
2. The three translators' approaches for translating euphemistic phrases are inconsistent, resulting in semantic loss of the intended meaning.

The assessing of translation is performed on three translated versions of the Glorious Quran: Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1999) Arthur John Arberry(1982) Khan, Muhammad Muhsin and Muhammad Taqui-ud-Din Al-Hilali(1987) .Furthermore, the accuracy of translation in the analysis process basically relies on Tafsir Ibn-Kathir. Furthermore, The analysis is a qualitative one Two models have been chosen for the purpose of analysis: The distributional and the relational models. The former focuses on the immediate context, i.e, the relation of the term with the adjacent ones in the utterance and how this relation affect the meaning of the term in general. The latter gives the meaning of the word and its relations to other words for example whether they are synonyms or antonyms ,etc.

### **1.1 Theoretical Background**

#### ***1.1.1 Euphemism's Etymology and Definitions***

The word euphemism is derived from the Greek word euphemos, which means ' lucky speech'. " Originally, a eupheme is a term or phrase intended to replace a religious word or phrase that should not be spoken aloud Sari ( 2007 : 18 ). As a result, the use of euphemism is common, it Means to give a nice speech or to speak in a fair manner. To put it another way, a euphemistic term is a word or phrase that is used to disguise the meaning of another word or phrase. A term that is used to replace a prohibited word or to escape a frightening or uncomfortable situation (Fromkin, Rodman et al. 1990: 479) .

Wardaugh (1986 : 237 ) adds that euphemism refers to the omission of specific things not because people don't talk about them, or because they're only talked about in very oblique

ways when they do .But because they want to make an effect on the hearers of them .

Allan and Burrige in Rusman (2000: 17) share the view and refer to Euphemisms as words (or phrases) substituted for other words perceived to be offensive to avoiding the loss of face; Either one's own face or, through offending the audience, or that of a third party. The offensive or unpleasant expressions may be taboo, terrifying, disagreeable, or contain too many negative connotations to carry out a speaker's communicative aim on a specific occasion or context (ibid.) The modern definition of euphemism is the substitution of a moderate or inoffensive expression for one that might offend or imply anything unpleasant i.e euphemisms are employed to mask unpleasant ideas (Friedman in Sari;2004: 9). Friedman also refers to the process of coining euphemism as taboo deformation (Sari ;2007.:10).The term euphemism is coined by Steven Pinker, and it is related to Gresham's law in that it accumulates all of the negative connotation of its referent and must be replaced by a substitute.(ibid.) The process manifest itself in a variety of ways in extreme circumstances, and it may still make Taboo distortion. In addition, there are some debates about whether or not particular terminologies are euphemisms. For example, the term " visually impaired " is occasionally used as a politically correct euphemism for " blind." Visual impairment, on the other hand, can be a broader term that includes persons who have partial vision in one eye in, a population that exclude the label blind. (ibid.). Because meanings easily alter throughout time, a great deal of subjectivity is required. (ibid.)

Euphemisms are employed to cover up unpleasant concepts, even if the phrases for them aren't particularly offensive. In the disciplines of public relations and politics, euphemisms like this are frequently used. For instance, civil consequence are referred to as collateral damage, while homosexuals are referred to as gays.

The production of euphemism is stimulated by the presence of taboo words or taboo ideas ( Fromkin et.al. ; 1999 : 427 ) Euphemistic terms and expressions allow us to discuss about terrible topics while neutralizing the unpleasantness, such as death, unemployment, and criminality; They also allow us to identify difficult chores and jobs in an attempt to make their sounds nearly appealing (Sari ;2004: 12). The glorifying of the commonplace and the elevation of the insignificant are endemic in our society. It is the renaming of reality to fit a new order of society (Wardaugh ;1986 : 231 ) .

According to Burrige, (1991: 02), euphemism refers to terms used by" politicians and news reporters dealing with political affairs (politics, social, economics, health, and education) in relation to Bureaucrat, Human Rights, General Election Campaign, Military force, Religion, Government administration, and Diplomacy". In other words, politicians are euphemism masters Euphemism.

Saville, Troike M. (1982 : 200 ) believes that Language is influenced by culture and is part of it. Similarly, to English euphemisms, it represents and embodies cultural reality. English euphemisms reflect the attitude, facts, views, thoughts, values, and knowledge of the English speaker in communication. Speakers use language to identify themselves and others, they see it as a representation of their social identity and culture, i.e., euphemism is a sign of the social identity and culture of the English people. Wang (2013 : 15) shares the view and asserts that " euphemism is not only a widespread tactic in people's language use, but also a kind of cultural phenomena .",i.e., having a great effect on people's daily communication, " Wang (ibid :156 ) adds that Euphemism may make a difficult topic, softer and an embarrassing dialogue ,pleasant while sticking to social communicative rules .

## 1.2 Analysis of the Data

IN this analysis, the translation of the Glorious Quran is evaluated using three translated versions: Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1999), Arthur John Arberry (1982), Khan, Muhammad Muhsin, and Muhammad Taqui-ud-Din Al-Hilali (1978). Furthermore, Tafsir Ibn-Kathir is largely responsible for the correctness of translation in the analytical process. Furthermore, this is a qualitative analysis. For the sake of analysis, two models have been chosen: The distributional and relationshipal models. The former focuses on the immediate context, i.e., the relationship of the term with the adjacent ones in the utterance and how this relationship affects the broader meaning of the phrase. The latter provides the definition of the term as well as its relationships to other words, such as whether they are synonyms or antonyms, and so on.

### 1.2.1 Euphemism of Age in Ayah One

#### 1.2.1.1 The Translation of Euphemism of Age in Ayah Two

*Sahih International: He will speak to the people in the cradle and in maturity and will be of the righteous.*" (Surat Al-Imran 46)

The Ayah has been translated by the three translators as follows:

Yusuf's	Arberry's	Hilali and Khan's
"He shall speak to the people in <i>childhood</i> and in <i>maturity</i> and he shall be (of the company) of the righteous." (Yusuf. A.A.2:46)	"He shall speak to men in the <i>cradle</i> , and of <i>age</i> , and righteous he shall be". (Arberry.2:46)	"He will speak to the people in the <i>cradle</i> and in <i>manhood</i> , and he will be one of the righteous." (Hilali and Khan.2:46).

The word "cradle" and the word "maturity" in this verse have different translations. As for Yusuf, he translates the phrase "cradle" as childhood, But there is a big difference between childhood and infancy. i.e, an infant includes the first year after birth ,and may use the cradle. Early childhood begins at the age of two, when a child may be referred to as a toddler.

Childhood continues until adolescence, which generally coincides with the teen years. Adolescence is the period of transition into adulthood. (Leaver & Nansen; 2017:2). Yusuf further translates the word "maturity" as maturity. Again there is a big difference between mature and being old, a person may get mature while he is still young; many old people are not mature in their behavior. while Hilali and Khan translate the word "cradle" as a cradle and "maturity", on the other hand. is translated as manhood.

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines 'manhood' as "the state or time of being an adult man rather than a boy". in this case a person who is sixteen years old may be added to the category of man hood. So manhood does not coincide with 'age' for the term "maturity". The closest interpretation of the two terms is found in Arberry's translation of the word "cradle" as a cradle and the word "maturity" as the age. The terms have other synonym meanings in the holy Quran as in

[It is but] a small enjoyment; then their [final] refuge is Hell, and wretched is the resting place. ( Sahih International Translation)

The two single word " cradle and thalamus" share the meanings of bed and the low ground in ease and levelness. In this ayah (cradle) refers to hell, the worst place to rest in.

[It is He] who has made for you the earth as a bed [spread out] and inserted therein for you roadways and sent down from the sky, rain and produced thereby categories of various plants. (Sahih International Translation)

" cradle " in this verse means the bed referring to the land on which a person lives and does all the matters of his life on it. It is flat. This diversity in the Holy Qur'an is one of the beautiful euphemism.

### 1.2.1.2 The Contextual Interpretation of Euphemism Of Age in Ayah One

This verse depicts the event of Christ's birth, which begins with the angels delivering the good news to Mary at God's order, telling her that God will give her a son named Christ Jesus. And he will have a prominent place in this world and the hereafter, and he is near to Allah.

The new born baby can talk while he is still in the cradle .The Context of the ayah starts with the prefixed conjunction *wa* connected to the 3rd person masculine singular imperfect verb(Speak)' say' with the implicit pronoun referring to the infant (Jesus) as the doer of the action. The speech is forwarded to all the people (People) in an accusative plural noun form. The preposition (In) denotes to the place where the action of speaking is done. The term "cradle" refers to any location that is set up for a newborn baby, whether it is mobile or fixed. The term(cradle) is preceded by a preposition; therefore, it comes in a genitive masculine noun. Since the action of speech will continue, the prefixed conjunction *wa* is added to the accusative masculine indefinite noun (maturity). The distributional context is seen in the following table

**Table (3.1) The Linguistic Features of Euphemism Of Age in Ayah One**

The Word	Linguistic Features The
And speak	<b>CONJ</b> – prefixed conjunction <i>wa</i> (and) <b>V</b> – 3rd person masculine singular (form II) imperfect verb
People	<b>N</b> – accusative plural noun
In	<b>P</b> – preposition
cradle	<b>N</b> – genitive masculine noun
And maturity	<b>CONJ</b> – prefixed conjunction <i>wa</i> (and) <b>N</b> – accusative masculine indefinite noun

### 1.2.2 Euphemism of Age in Ayah Two

#### 1.2.2.1 The Translation of Euphemism of Age in Ayah Two

"Sahih International: And Allah created you; then He will take you in death. And among you is he who is reversed to the most decrepit [old] age"(Surah An-Nahl 70).

*The Ayah has been translated by the three translators as follows*

Yusuf's	Arberry's	Hilali and Khan's
"It is Allah Who creates you and takes your souls at death; and of you there are some who are sent back to a feeble age, ". (Yusuf, 14: 70).	"God created you; then He will gather you to Him; and some of you will be kept back unto the vilest state of life, ".(Arberry, 14: 70).	"And Allah has created you and then he will cause you to die; and of you there are some who are sent back to senility, ".(Hilali and Khan, 14: 70).

The translators differ in their translation of this kind, each one expresses it in a different form from the other, or each one follows a pattern in translating this euphemism. Yusuf translates it as “back to a feeble age,” while Arberry translates it as “You will be kept back until the vilest state of life,” and Hilali translates it as “sent back to senility.” Nevertheless, none of them can give one word to replace the translation of the word (decrepit). The closest translation and up to the exact meaning intended for the verse is the translation of Hilali, where he describes the word “decrepit” with feeble age. Other instances of the term “decrepit” are found in the holy Quran as follows

So the eminent among those who disbelieved from his people said, “We do not see you but as a man like ourselves, and we do not see you followed except by those who are the lowest of us [and] at first suggestion. And we do not see in you over us any merit; rather, we think you are liars.” Sahih International Translation

By the “eminent” is meant the nobles and the chiefs who believe that Noah is a human being just like them and he does not have the privilege to become prophet. For they believe a prophet should have inhuman, superordinate traits that no one else has. Therefore, they believe since they are the higher level of society and can comprehend everything around them, they should not obey Noah except those who are “disgraced us” meaning those who are inferior to them (Al-Baghawi, 1989: 171), and the plural is the most despicable, meaning the lowest of people. (Al-Baghawi, 1989: 171)

In this verse, the word “decrepit” means the bottom and the end of something. In this verse, he spoke of a group where God describes them as the most despicable, and they are the most vile people and the worst of people, and this expression differs in its meaning from the previous verse, as it indicates the end of life and old age. And this is one of the euphemisms of the Qur’an. The diversity of style in it is one of God’s creativity in formulating the expressions of the Holy Qur’an. The same holds true with the following verse

They said, “Should we believe you while you are followed by the lowest [class of people]?” Sahih International Translation

The expression “decrepit” indicates the same meaning in the two previous verses, which is the lowest. Despite the different contexts of the two sentences and their different position in the sentence, they lead to one meaning. As for the first verse, “decrepit” means below us, while the second verse “decrepit” means the lowest, and thus came to be synonyms

#### ***1.2.2.2 The Contextual Interpretation of Euphemism Of Age in Ayah Two***

Allah Almighty tells a human's life journey starting from creation to death. The whole sequence is done by Allah the doer of all actions shown first by the two verbs 'created' 'Takes your souls'. The first one is in the past tense since it is already done but the last one is in the present for the human is still alive. Both verbs have second person masculine plural object pronoun. But, Allah says that there is something done throughout this journey in which a person may get too old shown by the term “decrepit”, which denotes old age, appears in this Ayah by the letter 'Wa' meaning in addition with the third person masculine singular passive imperfect verb. The meaning of “decrepit” is to send back to the stage of being very old “Decrepit Old”. Both terms are in genitive masculine singular noun in a prepositional phrase. The linguistic context is shown in the following table

**Table (2)** *The Linguistic Features of Euphemism Of Age in Ayah Two*

The Word	The Linguistic Features
And Among you	<b>CONJ</b> – prefixed conjunction <i>wa</i> (and) <b>P</b> – preposition/ <b>PRON</b> – 2nd person masculine plural object pronoun
Who is	<b>REL</b> – relative pronoun
Reversed	<b>V</b> – 3rd person masculine singular passive imperfect verb
To	<b>P</b> – preposition
decrepit	<b>N</b> – genitive masculine singular noun
Old	<b>N</b> – genitive masculine noun

### 1.3 Findings and Conclusions

In an attempt to answer the question proposed by the researcher " How euphemistic terms have been translated by different scholars ?" and as revealed through the analysis of the translation of these terms, it becomes clear that euphemistic terms have been translated differently by different translators causing semantic loss as seen in the following tables :

**Table (3)** *The different translations of age terms*

NO.	The term	Yusuf's	Arberry's	Hilali and Khan's
1.	Cradle/maturity	Childhood/ maturity	Cradle/ age	Cradle/ manhood
2.	decrepit old	a feeble age	vilest state of life	sent back to senility

**Table (4)** *The Semantic loss of the Interpreted Meaning in Translation*

The term	The interpreted Meaning	Y's loss of meaning	A's loss of meaning	H&K's loss of meaning
cradle	Cradle /	Loss	No loss	No loss
maturity	age	Loss	No loss	Loss
decrepit old	a feeble age	No loss	loss	Loss

It may be concluded that translating the holy Quran is a difficult task that requires more than just a bilingual translator who understands the functions of the linguistic systems of the source and target languages; the translator must also be able to convey the same meaning, create the same impact, and maintain the same context within the translated text.

Since meaning across languages is slippery, particularly in translating Euphemistic terms in the Quran. Euphemism indicates that a term has numerous meanings in language, not simply linguistic denotative meaning but also connotative meaning resulting alternations in the three translations done by Yusuf, Arberry, and, Hillali and Khan and this validate the first Hypothesis which reads" Euphemistic terms are translated differently by different translators

Euphemism in the holy Quran cannot be comprehended without consulting exegesis books, which is why the three translators Yusuf, Arberry ,and, Hillali and Khan have mostly proposed literal translation as an approach for preserving the same purpose of this rhetorical device. Arberry occasionally utilizes literal translation, which diminishes the role of euphemism and causes semantic loss of the meaning. In other words, He is unconcerned about the context in which a word appears. Nevertheless, he may sometimes correctly convey the intended meaning of the terms.

Yusuf Ali does not always use literal translation and instead employs a broader phrase that replaces the euphemized terms. Whereas, Khan and Mushin's translation suffers less loss in meaning for they preserve the same context, communicate the same meaning, and produce

the same effect within the translated text. But they couldn't reach the perfection in their translation and causes many semantic loss in their translation.

The three translators are inconsistent in their use of language or their interpretation of meaning, i.e., they fail to transmit the implicit meaning of the euphemistic terms and consequently suffer from a semantic loss. This validates the second hypothesis which reads "Translation of euphemistic terms by the three translators is inconsistent in their methods causing semantic loss of the intended meaning."

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