



Strategy for the Translation of the Verses of Qur'an that are Related to Sexual Intercourse

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ABSTRACT

Sexual intercourse is considered as a taboo which is usually mentioned in non-literal speech acts. This also applies to some of the verses of Qur'an, where sexual intercourse is cited in non-literal speech acts in *kināyah* stylistics, hence the absence of the impression of taboo. *Kināyah* presents denotative and connotative meanings, both of which are usually related. Although *kināyah* tries to deliver the connotative meaning to the readers, *kināyah* can still be understood denotatively. This is what distinguishes *kināyah* from *majāz*, where the latter can only be understood connotatively. The allowance for readers to understand *kināyah* both denotatively and connotatively has caused its translation becomes complicated. A descriptive-evaluative research design with an embedded case study research design is used in this research. The data are selected purposively in the form of Qur'anic verses which contain *kināyah* regarding sexual intercourse from *Al-Quranul Karim Tarjamah Tafsiiriyah* by Ustad Muhammad Thalib. These verses are elaborated by focusing on the diction used. This research finds that the *kināyah* regarding sexual intercourse in Qur'an tend to use various dictions, such as *al-ityān* 'to come to', *al-qurb* 'to approach', *al-rafās* 'to seduce' and *al-massu* 'to touch'. In general, these verses are translated connotatively in the UMT translation. In this case, the Quran translation in question uses a lot of modulation techniques to deliver the connotative meaning in the target text.

Keywords: *Indirect speech act, Kināyah, Non-literal speech act, Sexual intercourse, Taboo.*

1. INTRODUCTION

A taboo, one of which is sexual intercourse, exist in various languages and cultures (Hashamdar & Rafi, 2018). Sexual intercourse is also a taboo; therefore, it must not be mentioned directly and literally. This is certainly related to the consideration of politeness in language. Qur'an, which is the holy book of Muslims, also discusses about sexual intercourse (for example in chapter al-Mujadalah verse 3). However, the discussion is indirect and non-literal in the construction of *kināyah* (metonymy). Language practice, especially the ones regarding a taboo, is related to society's social and cultural aspects (Mardikantoro, 2016). Yayuk's research (2019) reveals that the people of Banjar use euphemism, abbreviations and metaphors when talking about topics which are considered taboo.

In translation, a taboo is an issue. It is confusing since the target language (TL) is different from the source language (SL); not only in the lingual level (such as phonology, lexicon, word structure, sentence structure),

but also in the cultural level. In Arabic, sexual intercourse is sometimes delivered in *kināyah* stylistics. The goal is to 'soften' the discussion, so as not to emphasize the impression of taboo. This kind of stylistics cannot necessarily be done in the same way in Indonesian. Conceptually, *kināyah* presents two meanings at once, which are denotative and connotative. These two usually share a relationship. It is the connotative meaning which is mainly sought in *kināyah*. The problem is, interpreting it denotatively is also allowed (see al-Athir, n.d.). This makes the translator tend to get confused since they will face a dilemma between using transference or transparency strategy in translating the *kināyah* regarding sexual intercourse.

The former strategy, transference strategy, requires the translator to be loyal and faithful to the SL. This will force the translator to present a denotative meaning of that particular *kināyah*. Meanwhile, the latter, transparency strategy, will force the translator to present the connotative meaning. In this case, the translator must use modulation technique to present the essential

meaning. As a result, the target text will have a high degree of readability. Readers will be able to understand it easily. There is a shift from an indirect speech act in the SL to a direct speech act in the TL. The problem is; the discussion of sexual intercourse will become too taboo if expressed directly. There will be an impression that the target text does not meet the politeness aspect. This is stated in Nasery and Pishkar's research (2015) which mentions that sometimes there has to be a shift in the original meaning of a taboo speech act in the target text in order to meet the politeness aspect.

2. METHOD

This descriptive-evaluative research design uses an embedded case study research design; therefore, the conclusion of this research will only apply to the analyzed data. Based on the objectives, the selection of the data of this research is done purposively based on the encyclopedic knowledge of the researcher. Only the verses related to sexual intercourse are selected. The unit of analysis focuses on the translation of sexual intercourse in *Al-Quranul Karim Tarjamah Tafsiriyah* by Ustaz Muhammad Thalib (2016) (hereinafter referred to as the UMT translation). This UMT translation is chosen because the translation tends to be interpretive. The unit of analysis focuses on the diction used by Qur'an in making the *kināyah* regarding sexual intercourse while examining the aspects of speech act, translation techniques, politeness and context of sexual intercourse. *Kināyah* usually has two meanings, which are connotative and denotative. The explanation of these two meanings contained in the verses related to sexual intercourse refers to the dictionary of *al-Munawwir*, *Tafsīr al-Munīr*, and *Tafsīr al-Qurān al-'Azīm*.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

When talking about sexual intercourse, the use of indirect and non-literal speech acts is certainly an option. In this case, Qur'an uses *kināyah* to mention something about sexual intercourse (see Al Farisi, 2013). In Qur'an, there are several dictions which are used to make the *kināyah* regarding sexual intercourse. These dictions include *al-ityān* 'to come to', *al-qurb* 'to approach', *al-rafas* 'to seduce' and *al-massu* 'to touch'. The results of this research indicate that the UMT translation uses modulation technique in translating something related to sexual intercourse. As a result, the target text becomes transparent, yet it seems a bit vulgar, whereas vulgar language must have been avoided, let alone when the source text is Qur'an.

Kināyah can be studied in the scope of direct and indirect speech acts, as well as literal and non-literal speech acts. Theoretically, its speech act can present both denotative and connotative meanings (see al-Athir, n.d.). In contrast to *majāz* 'metaphor', *kināyah* can be

understood either denotatively or connotatively. Nevertheless, it is the connotative meaning which is intended to be delivered (see al-Hasyimi, 2014). To understand the connotative meaning of a *kināyah* speech act, the translator must be able to understand several aspects of speech, namely setting, participants, ends, act of sequence, keys, instrumentalities, norms, and genres (see Gumperz & Hymes, 1972). *Kināyah* is used to make a speech sound more polite. Another method suggested by Putranti, Nababan, and Tarjana (2017) is to use euphemism to present the aspects of politeness in the translation of sexual intercourse. Therefore, as a holy book; Qur'an must use *kināyah* when mentioning about taboo acts (such as sexual intercourse). The purpose is certainly to avoid vulgarity. The results of this research indicate that Qur'an uses indirect and non-literal speech acts in the form of *kināyah* when mentioning about sexual intercourse. One of the purposes is to present speeches which meet the politeness aspect. This aspect must also exist in the target text.

3.1. *Al-Itiyān (to come to) in Chapter Al-Baqarah Verse 223*

The use of *al-ityān* is found in the following verse which is related to sexual intercourse: *Nisā-ukum harsun lakum fa'tū harsakum annā syi'tum...* (al-Baqarah:223). In this verse, *i'tū*, the imperative verb of *al-ityān* which exists in the clause *fa'tū*, lexically means 'to come to' (see Munawwir, 1997). UMT translates it as 'to have sex', as shown in the following target text: *Wahai kaum mukmin, istri kalian ibarat ladang bagi kalian. Sanggailah istri kalian pada vaginanya kapan saja kalian menginginkannya....* (O believers, your wife is like a tillage for you. Have sex with your wife in her vagina however you wish...). This kind of translation exists due to the use of modulation technique. Applying the modulation technique means changing the point of view, focus, or cognitive category in relation to the SL (see Molina & Hurtado, 2002). With this technique, UMT is able to change the denotative point of view of *fa'tū harsakum* (literal meaning: come to your tillage) in the SL into the connotative of 'have sex with your wife' in the TL. On the other hand, it is not easy for the target readers to understand the meaning of the phrase 'come to your tillage'. The use of modulation technique can also clarify the intention of the *kināyah*. Because of this technique, the text in the translation of this verse can become transparent. The problem is that the phrase 'have sex' makes it seem vulgar. The vulgarity of the text can somehow disrespect Qur'an. As a holy book, it is inappropriate for Qur'an to use such profanity. It will be different if UMT uses a more common and neutral word, such as *bercampur* 'to mix'. If this is what happened; this will certainly produce a translation which meets the politeness aspect (see Ndhlovu & Botha, 2017).

3.2. *Al-Qurb (to Approach) in Chapter Al-Baqarah Verse 222*

The word *lā taqrabū* found in Chapter al-Baqarah verse 222 comes from the word *al-qurb*, which means ‘to approach’. In Arabic, *lā taqrabū* is a prohibitive verb, which means ‘do not approach’. UMT translates the verse as: ...*Katakanlah: "Haid adalah darah kotor. Karena itu, hendaklah kalian jauhi istri-istri kalian selama dia sedang haid. Janganlah kalian sanggamai mereka sampai mereka bersuci setelah selesai haid..."* (...Say: "Menstruation is a state of impurity. Thus, you should stay away from your wives during their menstruation. Avoid having sex with your wives until they are cleansed..."). It seems clear that UMT translates the clause *lā taqrabūhunna* (literal meaning: ‘do not approach them’) to ‘avoid having sex with your wives’. This is also in accordance with Kathir’s opinion (2010) which explains that the context of this verse is about the prohibition of sexual intercourse with women during their menstruation. The clause *wa lā taqrabūhunna hattā yaṭ-ḥurna*, which means ‘avoid having sex with your wives until they are cleansed’ is *kināyah*’s speech act which is intended to deliver the prohibition of having sexual intercourse with women during their menstruation. The tendency of UMT to present this kind of connotative meaning affects the vulgarity of the translation text. This UMT translation does not meet the ‘politeness’ aspect. Pratama (2016) reports that in presenting ‘politeness’ aspect in the target text, most translators use euphemism to deal with the taboo speech acts.

In the verse above, there is *al-mahīd*, which UMT translates as ‘menstruation’ although morphologically, it represents three syntactic categories which are *masdar*, *ism zamān* and *ism makān*. Therefore, *al-mahīd* means menstruation, time of menstruation and place of menstruation respectively. The prohibition of having sexual relationship with women in this verse relates to these three meanings. Thus, the context of this verse is basically about the prohibition of having sexual relationship with a woman who is in a state of menstruation, during the time of her menstruation and at the place of her menstruation - and it will be allowed again once they have finished that cycle. The existence of this context is very important in understanding the verses of the Qur’an. The importance of context is explained by Mey (2008), who says that context is "the surroundings, in the widest sense, that enable the participants in the communication process to interact, and that make the linguistic expressions of their interaction intelligible." The translation of the clause *lā taqrabūhunna* to ‘*janganlah kalian sanggamai mereka*’ (avoid having sex with your wives) is more vulgar, although it is easier to be understood. It will be different if this clause is translated into ‘*janganlah kalian mendekati mereka*’ (do not approach your wives) - since

it is possible that this literal translation will make the target readers to understand it literally. There could be a target reader who feels reluctant to get close to his wife due to this literal understanding; whereas it is actually not the prohibition given by this verse.

3.3. *Al-Rafaṣ (to Seduce) in Chapter Al-Baqarah 178*

Al-rafaṣ, which lexically means ‘profanity’ (Munawwir, 1997), is found in the verse *Uhillā lakum lailataṣ ṣiyāmi al-rafaṣu ilā nisā-ikum...* (al-Baqarah:187). UMT translates this verse as: *Wahai kaum mukmin, dihalalkan bagi kalian pada malam hari puasa untuk berkumpul dengan istri-istri kalian....* (O believers, you have been permitted on the nights of the fasts to gather with your wives...). In contrast to the previous verses (al-Baqarah:223 and al-Baqarah:222) which are translated connotatively, this time UMT translates the *kināyah* regarding sexual intercourse contained in this verse denotatively. In this verse, *al-rafaṣu* is translated to *berkumpul* ‘to gather’, whereas according to Kathir (2010) the clause *al-rafaṣu ilā nisā-ikum*, which denotatively means *merayu istri kalian* (seduce your wives), is *kināyah*’s speech act regarding sexual intercourse. The diction *berkumpul* used by UMT makes the translation of this verse become less obnoxious. Unfortunately, the main message of the *kināyah* in this verse, which is ‘having sex’, fails to be delivered. In contrast to *bercampur* ‘to mix’; *berkumpul* ‘to gather’ is seldom used to refer to sexual intercourse. As stated in KBBI (2022), the word *berkumpul* means ‘to be together as a unit, to gather, and as a crowd’.

The UMT translation above is different from some of the existing translations, such as the Sundanese translation of Shaleh, Qamaruddin, Dahlan, and Rusamsi (2017, p. 41): *Dihalalkeun ka maranéh sapatemon jeung pamajikan maranéh dina maleman puasa...* (It has been permitted to you to have sex with your wife on the night of the fasts...). UMT translates the clause *al-rafaṣu ilā nisā-ikum* denotatively to *berkumpul dengan istri-istri kalian* (to gather with your wives). Meanwhile, Shaleh et al., (2017) translate it connotatively through modulation technique –therefore the translation becomes, *sapatemon jeung pamajikan maranéh* (to have sex with your wife). This difference will certainly affect the acceptability of the translation of the clause. On the other hand, the UMT translation pays great attention to the politeness aspect, however; the translated text becomes less transparent. Meanwhile, even though the translation of Shaleh et al., (2017) does not meet the politeness aspect; it manages to be more transparent for the target readers.

3.4. *Al-Mass (to Touch) in Chapter Al-Baqarah Verse 236*

Wahai para suami, kalian tidak berdosa menceraikan istri-istri kalian yang belum pernah kalian sanggamai... (O husbands, it is not a sin for you to divorce your wives whom you have never had sex with...) that is the UMT translation for the verse, *Lā junāha 'alaikum in ṭallaqtumun nisā-a mā lam tamassūhunn....* The literal translation of this verse is, 'There will be no blame upon you if you divorce your wives that you have never touched...' (al-Baqarah:236). These two translations are different. The UMT translation begins with the phrase *wahai para suami* (o husbands), while this phrase does not exist in the literal translation. This phrase is not in the source text as well. This phrase only exists since UMT uses the linguistic amplification technique, where it is applied by providing additional linguistic elements in the TL, which do not exist in the SL. Moreover, UMT also uses modulation technique in dealing with the clause *mā lam tamassūhunn* (literal meaning: 'that you have never touched'), therefore the translation becomes, *yang belum pernah kalian sanggamai* (that you have never had sex with). In contrast to this, Kemenag (2017) translates the clause as, *sebelum kamu bercampur dengan mereka* (before you mix with them). The use of the diction *bercampur* (mix) seems to meet the politeness aspect if compared to when using *bersanggama* 'have sex'. However, lexically, *bercampur* also means 'to sleep with', although it is true that this diction is still slightly more neutral than 'to have sex' or 'to copulate' (see KBBI, 2022).

If one takes a closer look, *tamassū* (gerund: *al-mass*), which is contained in the verse above, actually means 'to touch' (see Munawwir, 1997). According to al-Zuhaili (2009), the clause *mā lam tamassūhunn* is *kināyah*'s speech act used to refer to sexual intercourse. This means that the clause has two meanings, namely denotative and connotative, which are related to each other (see al-Athir, n.d.). The denotative meaning is 'that you have never touched' while the connotative meaning is 'that you have never had sex with'. 'To touch' and 'have sex' are two different (but related) actions –where touching is always a part of having sex.

4. CONCLUSION

In the Qur'an, the taboo speech act of intercourse is expressed in the form of a nonliteral speech act. In this case, it uses *kināyah* stylistics to express intercourse. In contrast to *majāz* 'metaphor' which can only be understood connotatively, *kināyah* speech act can be understood, either denotatively or connotatively. The ability to translate *kināyah* denotatively and connotatively can lead to differences of opinion among Muslims, including in its translation.

The use of *kināyah* is intended to present speech acts that meet the politeness aspect. That way, the speech about sexual intercourse in the Qur'an does not feel vulgar. In general, in the UMT translation, the acts of intercourse are translated connotatively by using the modulation technique. In this case, UMT uses the word *sanggama* 'copulation' in translating the *kināyah* of intercourse. On the one hand, the use of the word *sanggama* which is used in the translation of the words *al-ityān*, *al-qurb*, and *al-massu* results in a clear and easy-to-understand translation text. However, on the other hand, the use of the word *sanggama* causes the translated text to be vulgar.

It may be that the Qur'anic verses related to the taboo speech act of intercourse are numerous. The more there is, the realization of course will also be more diverse. Therefore, the taboo speech acts of intercourse contained in the Qur'an need to be explored further, both in terms of the use of diction and stylistics as well. In addition, the implications of the politeness aspect contained in these verses also need to be studied more deeply.

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