Proceedings Borneo Islamic International Conference; Vol. 13. 2022; 148-152
Published by Majmuah Enterprise
eISSN: 2948-5045

Translation of Islamic Terminology in the Malay Archipelago: A Review

DR. MUHAMADUL BAKIR HJ. YAAKUB
Faculty of Arabic Language, University Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA), BruneiDarussalam

bakir.yaakub@unissa.edu.bn,

DR. MUHAMAD ALIF HJ. SASMAT
Faculty of Arabic Language, University Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA), BruneiDarussalam

alif.sismat@unissa.edu.bn,

DR. KHATIJAH OTHMAN
Faculty of Leadership and Management, Universiti Sain Islam Malaysia (USIM),Malaysia
[c]khatijah@usim.edu.my

Abstract.
This paper is an attempt to illustrate the importance of translation practices during the spreadof Islam in the Malay Archipelago region. This study affirms that differences between cultures may cause serious complications in translation than those arising due to the differences in language structures. Thesample of the study is concerned with some examples of Islamic terms commonly translated from Arabic language to Malay. The analysis of those terms starts with identifying its extensive lexical description definition and then followed by its terminological conceptual usage. The study prove that it is difficult to translate those concepts into **TL** simply due to the lack of optimal or even near optimal spiritual conceptual equivalents known to Malay culture. The skill and the intervention of the translator are most crucial in this respect because, at the end, translation is an act of language communication. It is hoped that this study will provide a step forward in observing translation needs and action in achieving more precise equivalent of this significant concepts that it may better reflect the innate peaceful nature of Islam through an absolute truth of its religious terminological representation.
Keywords: Translation, Islamic, terminology, Arabic, Malay Archipelago

1.Introduction

Most of the Islamic terms found in the glorious Quran and the Nobel prophetic tradition (Al-Hadith) have been preserved by Malay translators in their original form (i.e. through borrowing strategies from Arabic as their original language source). This preservation can be observed within the various literatures written by Muslim scholars throughout the centuries. However, non-Arab's readers may face some challenges in obtaining the same understanding of its native users. Consequently, some of them may not always certain of what are the intended meaning of those translated terms? This situation also observed in the cases of translated texts from Arabic to other languages such as Malay and English. Pointing to this challenge does not make the non-Arabic Islamic term religiously not appropriate; but sometimes it makes them not fully reliable in their religious practices. Users usually persuaded to use the original Arabic terms in addressing their religious needs and respond to spiritual contexts; otherwise, their conclusion may very well be wrong or misleading. The reason for such challenge stems from the cultural differences between the non-Arabic languages compared to the Arabic language. This can be observed through their specific linguistics features and structures.

Another reason for such challenge is that some Arabic terms were taken out of their intended contexts; something that led to distortion and corruption of the intended meaning, in which it easily leads non-Arab readers toward a wrong conceptual understanding. The common justification reasoning given to the difficulty of finding the corresponding words in the target language is the main constraint among translators of terms in religious texts. The same findings shown by various study both qualitatively and quantitatively shows its significant. Although the studiesof terms have generally well established, yet studies related to reviewing translated terms in religious

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text need more researches and observation. Nowadays, it is an independent discipline, risks being absorbed into specialized lexicography or knowledge engineering [1].

2.Background of the Study

Terminology is a central theme of debate about any specific field of discussion and clarification. Consequently, language authorities of a particular field will create numbers of terms to equip their needs to express their justification and argumentation. Therefore, comprehensive terminological construct is crucial to enable communication flow effectively among users.

In other words, Terms are regarded as a specialized lexicography. Its conceptual dimension prevails within a very specific contextual usage. In many cases, its terminological principles remain at the core of traditional parameters that raises some issues, especially in epistemological perspective of knowledge construct [1].

Therefore, this question not supposed to be regarded as non-issue. In fact, to some users it is regarded as a straight forward case especially in the context of understanding the borrowed terminologies. In this perspective, studying the issue of supporting elements that continuously adding values to human communication strategies and knowledge consciousness always needed and appreciated, especially with regard to language usage, words recognition and the identical references of any "terminological usage". As a matter of fact the terms and terminology is something that is constructed and patterned by a specific group of a society. So how can those terms be understood by another group of users brought in from another circle of their scientific nature? For that reason, terminological usage needs to be examined, so it abounding with evidence as a means for conceptual clarity [2].

3.The Nature of Religious Terms

General opinion in regard terminology especially for religious constructs in research differs because different people place different meanings and emphasis different values about certain concept of religiosity. Consequently, the true meaning of a conceptual term become ambiguous and this has been regarded true for the construct of spirituality, especially in older cohorts where they deal with religion and spirituality in various way of elaboration and justification.

For instance, Yinger (1970) defines religion as 'a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with these ultimate problems of human life'. Therefore, religion should not be thought of in a logical and consistent way, having 'sharp boundaries', but as 'a somewhat imprecise bundle of rites, beliefs, knowledge, and experiences. For primitive societies the unitary way of looking at religion is more nearly adequate' [3].

Religious language is a "field" which may be broken up into what Crystal and Davy (1969) have called as "religious language of scripture" and "religious language of prayers". The first one does not operate like the second one. According to them, the language of sermons, for instance, constitutes a register in its own respect, in as much as it clearly qualifies as religious language, but also has a rhetorical structure of its own, and features many markers (notably at the prosodic level) of public speaking.

They also underline the fact that "as a source of linguistic effect, religious language is very evident within literature, where a deliberate, evocative use may be made of its terminology and phraseology; or in straight formality construct, where one may not easily find any things that cause a laughter by saying any tone of voice, or stylistic grammar, and vocabulary associated with religious language use" [4]. Because of its reference to transcendent, supernatural categories, religious language has been said to be situated at the "edges" of human language, and this is what makes it undebatable - and clearly marked - as a register. But on the other hand, one might say that within the natural language as a whole, religious language holds a place, which is far from peripheral, and conversely, that linguistic expression plays a central role in human daily religious prayer, communication, expression and practice.

4.Methodology of the Study

Obviously, studying religious terminology required to understand comprehensively the background of the show case issue, than followed by the identification of suitable methodology in describing its religious functional usage based on its linguistic aspects and features. The detail methodological framework shown in the following figure 1.

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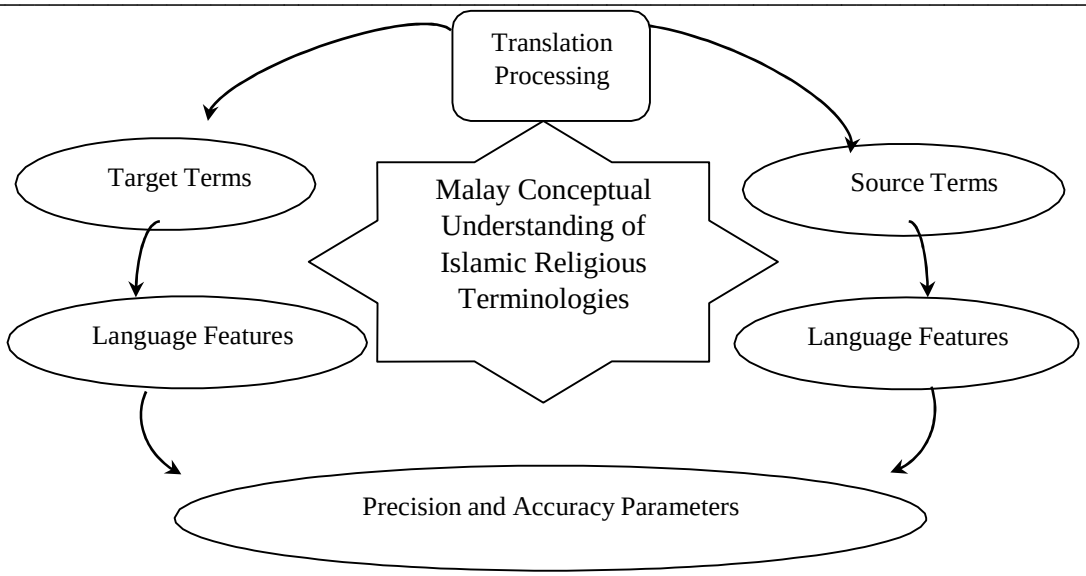

Fig. 1: Framework for Translation Accuracy Revision

5.An Analysis of Malay Archipelago Islamic Translated Term

The name Malay Archipelago of Islamic Translated Term is reffered to a Western Austronesian language with approximately 300 million speakers. It is spoken in parts of Maritime Southeast Asia (called also Nusantara), primarily in Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Indonesia and in Southern Thailand. Malay served as the *lingua franca* of commerce in this archipelago, not only for the inhabitants of the many islands, but also for foreign traders [5]

As have been described above that Malay conceptual understanding of a translated Islamic terminological term need to complied with its linguistic features. In other word, an effective terminological usage does not only depending on simple definition and elaboration of its functional meaning, but rather equivalent precision and accuracy parameters of its usage need comprehensive analysis as shown in the following table:

Table 1. Comparison of Terminologies Language Features

No.	Source Term	Language Features	Malay Translated Term	Lang. Features
1.	التوحيد	ال + وحـد + ت + ي	Agama Tauhid	Agama+Borrowed Term
2.	الله	ال + إله	Allah	Borrowed Term
3.	عبادة	عبد - يعبد - عبادة	Ibadah	Borrowed Term
4.	الصالة	ال + صالة	Sembahyang	Borrowed Term
5.	الذكر	ال + ذكر	Zikir	Borrowed Term

First: The term (توحيد) is a noun form for the verb (وحّد - يوحّد) to indicate “making the only one with no equivalent” and usually translated to English as “Monotheism” in which literally composed of three words, (More+ no+the+ism] to indicate "theism should be one and not multiple" [6]. This is the missing value of Malay terminological usage.

Second: The term (الله) is a noun form derived from the verb (أله-يأله) literally mean “turning toward Him” the Almighty. This name been selected by the Creator of the universe as His absolute name in which it is used to indicate that “everything in the universe is returning to Him” [7] and obviously represent absolute terminological parameters functioning naturally in all context of human usage. Therefore, it’s not just a matter of Arabicization and Islamic self-proclaim identity with no actual impact on its conceptual representation in users real understanding and self-consciousness, it’s not just a

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superficial term with full of exaggeration, with an understanding that all religion and its terminologies are no different and just culturally created. This is not true, because a term supposed to be understood as for one specific conceptual meaning within a specialized scientific field of human communication practices to exchange their exclusive information, and this scientific specialization is distinguished most and primary by its own special terminology. When a term been used without specific terminological parameters, its conceptual meaning become ambiguous [8].

This term usually translated into Malay as (Tuhan) to mean literally as “My Lord” which is derived from (Tuan+Hamba) [9]. In this regard, there are a number of misconceptions in regard to the exclusive treatment of the Malay kings and kingdoms in classical Malay historical texts. For instance, there is a tendency to draw a simple conclusion from the Malay term (Tuan Hamba) or (Tuanku) which mean “The Owner of me” and also (Tengku) which mean “The owner of you and me” that the Malay kings were very much a strong personality among their people. Therefore, they want to record their role functions within their communal history in a glorious manner so that they would be commemorated as a great leader [10].

It usually translated to English as “God”. Unfortunately, the term [God] been defined as “The most respected being or spirit due to its extra ordinary power in controlling the universe”. It’s almost similar to the meaning of the term “Idol” which is usually defined as “a person or an object being loved, admired or respected and worshipped” [10]. However, this term linguistically derived from (Go+on+the direction) in which it is carrying an equivalent concept of (الله) in Arabic.

Third: The term (عبادة) is a noun form for the verb (عبد-يعبد-عبد) literally mean “slave” and “obedient worker”. Usually been translated into English as “Worship” which is derived from the two Old English words (Worth+Scipe/Ship] to mean the state of entitlement of a thing to something, such as the entitlement of “God” to slavery [6]. Unfortunately, Malay usage of the borrowed term have no ideas of its additional conceptual values.

Fourth: The term (الصلاة) derived from the verb (وصل-يصل-صلة) to mean “relationship” or from the verb (صلى-يصلي-صلى) to mean “warming up”. It is an Arabic word that was born together with the revelation of the Quran and usually translated to English as “Prayer” which is a compound word from (Praise+Praise+er) to indicate the attendee’s complete existence in place and terminologically defined as “personal relationship with God” [6]. As for the Malay translators, they choose (Sembahyang), which is a compound word from (Sembah) means “worship” and (+yang) means “special”. In comparison, English translation is more straightforward and identical, while Malay translation very much general and almost similar to (عبادة).

Fifthly: The term (الذكر) represents a state of an inner meaning whenever the pronunciation of a name become an evidence of its existence. Usually, this term was translated into English as “Remember” in which it is composed of three parts, namely (Re+mem+ber), which means (return+member+new) or from two words (Re+memor) which means "full of mind" [6]. Unfortunately, this concept is missing in Malay terminological usage of loanword.

6.Finding and Discussion

Among the finding of this study, a terminological understanding always been influenced by both of its internal linguistic formation and external contextual usage. This understanding can be observed for example, in the used of the term [الله], where it has been transferred to Malay by using borrowing strategy and then been defined as (Yang Maha Agung) in which its semantics representation is to mean “The Most Greatest One”. In this regard, obviously its conceptual meaning understood by the Malay people will not be identical, because it differ from person to person depending to the influence of their personal external factors. Therefore, in principle, two term cannot be used interchangeable. However, many users commonly used the term “religious” and “spiritual” interchangeably. Consequently, both sufferers their terminological specification function.

Obviously, from the analysis sample of this study, Malay translated Islamic terminologies can be characterized as only on the basis of defining its religious concepts and justifying its application and function without full support from its natural linguistic features and characters as part and partial of a

critical adoption of its language convention of usage in achieving concrete theoretical reflection of its terminological understanding.

However, as terminological clarity plays a significant role in the development and profiling of a scientific discipline, the clarification and definition of commonly-used terminology has manifested itself as a considerable objective for the religious terminological usage. Its sole objective is to assist religious followers and researchers in becoming clearer awareness of a terminological roots and origin. Although promoting an increasing consciousness toward the semantics structural features and pragmatics componential values of a terminological terms is not an easy task. While the transparency of its determined definitions and terminological usage supposed to be identical in nature.

7.Conclusion

In conclusion, Malay translated religious terminology should be regarded as a field of specialization. It is imperative that every members of a specialize terminological field gain correct conceptions of core terms used in real practical usage that complied within its doctrines and principles in which enable them to withstand the requirements and challenges of practices in reality. Instructional interventions that effectively promote conceptual change must be readily implemented to help these members overwrite doctrinal misconceptions that leave them vulnerable to confusion and deceit.

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eISSN 2948-5045
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