| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Feminist Strategies in Qur'ān Translations: A Comparative Study of *the Sublime Quran* and *Saheeh International*

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| **ABSTRACT**

For almost thirteen centuries, the Qur'ān had been interpreted by men before it was first translated by a woman. In 1995, Umm Muhammad, Amina Assami, translated the Qur'ān into English under the pseudonym *Saheeh International*. Extensive research indicates that Umm Muhammad's translation reproduces patriarchal gender hierarchies (Al-Sowaidi et al., 2021), while Laleh Bakhtiar's *the Sublime Quran* comprises feminist elements (Kidwai, 2018). Comparing these two translations to determine whether the translators employ feminist translation strategies to increase their visibility has not been previously addressed. I aim to investigate how these women translators transfer feminine nouns and pronouns and generic masculine nouns from Arabic, a highly gendered language, to English. In this paper, I apply an eclectic approach: the feminist theory by Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood and Luise von Flotow and the basic linguistic theory for the grammatical description of language by Roman Jakobson. The results reveal that Bakhtiar's translation published in the USA demonstrates feminist perspectives through utilising prefacing, supplementing, and neutralisation, whereas Umm Muhammad's version published in Saudi Arabia depends on exegetical books and maintains a softer tone between the dominant male and diluted feminist voice. Future researchers should broaden the scope of the comparison and cover more Qur'ān translations in different countries to examine the impact of women translators' socio-cultural contexts on their translations.

1. Introduction

Translation studies is an interdisciplinary field in which several studies, such as language, culture, ideology, and gender, intersect. The intersection of these disciplines has resulted in a move in translation from the linguistic to cultural and, then, ideological approach. Therefore, the translation focus has shifted from the text as an isolated entity to the text in its cultural environment. This shift gives the reason for the impact of the women's movement in the twentieth century on gender and language. According to Luise Von Flotow (1997), "gender issues have become entangled with issues of language" (p. 1) and translation. In recent years, feminist translators have attempted to reclaim gender equality by undermining patriarchal language; consequently, they applied feminist translation strategies to overcome the challenge of transferring patriarchal linguistic elements.

Feminist translation strategies have been applied in all types of texts, including the Bible and the Qur'ān, which for almost thirteen centuries was interpreted entirely by men, who applied literal translation. With the advent of the feminist movement in the late twentieth century, in 1995, the first English translation of the Qur'ān by a woman was published under the pseudonym of *Saheeh International*. This translation was by Umm Muhammad, Aminah Assami, an American atheist who converted to Islam. It appeared about four centuries after Alexander Ross produced the first English translation of the Qur'ān, an indirect translation from French into English, published in 1649. Nowadays, the most well-known women translators of the Qur'ān are Umm Muhammad and Laleh

Bakhtiar, an Iranian-American Christian who converted to Islam. These two American converts construct new hybrid identities, which affect their Qur'ān translations.

Several studies have explored how these two women translators of the Qurān have dealt with the patriarchal linguistic elements in the source text. However, comparing the translation strategies that they applied to the techniques used by feminist scholars such as Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood and Louis von Flotow has not been previously addressed. Rim Hassen (2012) compares four translations by women, including Umm Muhammad and Bakhtiar, to determine whether these women translators are defying or reproducing patriarchal gender hierarchies in their interpretation of the Qur'ān. She finds that while Bakhtiar reflects the feminist mindset, Umm Muhammad does not. Also, Al-Sowaidi et al. (2021) compare Qurān translations (QTs) by Yusuf Ali and Bakhtiar to investigate the translation of 105 metaphorical expressions. They find that applying literal translation fails to maintain the same metaphorical mapping of the ST and copy the patriarchal language. These two studies raise the question of the impact of the translation strategies applied in Qur'ān translation on the final product.

In this paper, I apply an eclectic approach in which language, gender, and translation studies intersect. I assume that gender is a cultural construct, and translation is not a linguistic substitution, yet it is a cultural transfer, and the medium of transmission is language. Therefore, I use a combination of the feminist theory in translation studies and the basic linguistic theory for the grammatical description of language as a theoretical framework. I focus on three gender-related verses from *Surat An-Nisāʾ*: Q 4:1, Q 4: 24, and Q 4: 34, as these verses explore debatable topics such as the creation, temporary marriage, and wife beating. Thus, I analytically compare Umm Muhammad's and Bakhtiar's translations of selected verses to the original Qurān and, occasionally, to other English translations by men to explore whether the translators apply feminist strategies to display their perspectives.

2. General Background
2.1 A Brief History of Qur'ān Translation by Men
Qur'ān translation began from the time of Prophet Mohammad. In 615, Jaʿfar Ibn Abī Taleb interpreted the first four verses from *Sūrat Maryam* to Negus, the king of Abyssinia, now known as Ethiopia, to persuade Negus to accept and protect Muslim immigrants in his country (Safieddine, 2011). Another partial translation was in 884 when Salman Al-Farsī "translated *Sūrat Al-Fatihah* into Persian to be used in prayers" (Aṭ-Ṭabarī, 1963, p. 447). The first fully attested complete versions of QT were translated between the tenth and twelfth centuries by priests to know Islam, the religion of the Ottomans (Al-Jarf, 2014).

From the twelfth century to the last decade of the twentieth century, Qur'ān translations were also produced by male translators. These translations followed four itineraries: from Arabic into Latin, from Latin into other European languages, from Arabic into European languages by orientalists, and from Arabic into European languages by Muslims. First, in 1143, the French Priest Peter the Venerable, Head of the Cluny Abbey, proposed the translation of the Qur'ān into Latin to know about Islam and to convert Muslims to Christianity. The task was accomplished by the English Priest Robert of Ketton and the German Priest Hermann of Carinthia (Al-Bundaq, 1980). In 1453, John of Segovia produced a trilingual translation of the Qur'ān (Arabic-Spanish-Latin) (Roth, 2014). Then, in 1543 the Italian Pope Alexander VII allowed the church to translate Robert and Hermann's Latin translation of the Qur'ān into Italian, German, Dutch, and Hebrew (Glei & Reichmuth, 2012).

From the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century, the Qur'ān was translated for political reasons due to the Ottoman conquests, and these translations were by men. In 1649, Alexander Ross, chaplain to Charles I of England, produced the first English translation of the Qur'ān, an indirect translation from the French version created in 1647 by André du Ryer because Ross was unacquainted with the Arabic language (Kidwai, 2008). In 1698, Father Louis Maracci, the confessor of Pope Innocent XI, created a QT from Arabic into Latin after he had learned Arabic from a Turkish person (Zwemer, 1939). In 1734, George Sale, a British Orientalist and practising solicitor, rendered the second English translation of the Qur'ān, based on Maracci's Latin version (Bevilacqua, 2013), Sale's translation was dominant for two further centuries (Kidwai, 1978). In 1861, Medows Rodwell, an English oriental clergyman of the Church of England, published a version including cross-referencing to biblical texts. In 1880, Edward Henry Palmer, a Cambridge scholar and translator, produced an erudite, relatively un-polemical translation (Rafiabadi, 2003, p. 287).

In the first half of the twentieth century, Qur'ān translation was dominant among male Muslims. The most well-known Muslim translators of this period were Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Marmaduke Pickthall, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, and Mohammad Asad. These translators displayed their religious/theological beliefs in their translations; Ali, an *Ahmadī* Indian scholar, demonstrated his denial of the miracles of the prophets, and Pickthall, a former Christian, used archaic Biblical language (Hussain, 2020; Lawrence, 2017). Ali, Yusuf Ali, and Asad were influenced by the beliefs of the schools of Islamic theology that they followed, while Pickthall was impacted by his former religion.

2.2 Qur'ān Translations by Women

As the religious and political changes between the twelfth and mid-twentieth centuries resulted in different Qur'ān translations by males, the socio-cultural changes in the late twentieth century brought about translations by females. The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed the advent of women Muslim writers who created a considerable body of liberal thought about Islamic understanding and practice; this body of thought is characterized as 'progressive Islam'[1] (Duderija, 2020). The most well-known of these writers is Amina Wadud, an African-American Muslim theologian who converted to Islam in 1972. Like Wadud, Riffat Hassan, a Pakistani-American Muslim theologian and a leading Islamic feminist scholar, believes that Qur'ān does not reveal gender bias. They both support a non-rigid interpretation of the Qur'ān. Supporting this line of thought, Fatma Osman Ibnouf (2015) states, "there is nothing inherent in Islam to prevent the equality of women and men and that Muslim woman's degraded position today is a result of the rigid and ill-interpretations of Islam" (p. 13). Hence, Islamic feminists have the same goals and arguments, mainly gender equality.

These Muslim writers and theologians have inspired other women to interpret the Qur'ān. For example, Umm Muhammad, Camille Adams Helminiski, Taheereh Saffarzadeh, and Laleh Bakhtiar published their Qur'ān translations in 1995, 1999, 2001, and 2007 respectively. These women might be impacted by their religious and socio-cultural contexts. Umm Muhammad, an American who converted to Islam and lived in Syria and Saudi Arabia, and Saffarzadeh, an Iranian poetess, followed the same stream of patriarchal traditions in QT (Hassen, 2012). Nonetheless, Helminiski, an American, and Bakhtiar, an Iranian-American, who both converted to Islam, were influenced by western viewpoints (Hassen, 2011). These female American converts reconstruct new feminine identities in their new contexts, which in turn results in applying different translation strategies to reflect the women's gender roles in their new societies (Braude, 2004).

Hassan AL-Shafie (2004) states that the cultural and intellectual movement prevailing in the contemporary Islamic world adopts the western Christian Hermeneutic approach in interpreting the Qur'ān. He assumes that scholars who apply this approach ignore *al-tafāsīr* [the exegetical books], *Sunnah* [the sayings and deeds of Prophet Mohammad], and principles of *ta'wīl* [interpretation of the meanings of the Qur'ān]. AL-Shafie argues that these Western scholars have a preconceived view that the Islamic legacy is patriarchal and biased against women; therefore, they believe it needs reinterpretation. He concludes that western Christian Hermeneutics has resulted in interpreting the Qur'ān from a feminist perspective.

In the following section, I compare Bakhtiar's translation of three verses from the Qur'ān to Umm Muhammad's version, the original Qur'ān, and, sporadically, translations by men. In the process of the analytical comparison, I explore the practice of feminist translators, such as de Lotbinière-Harwood and von Flotow, to determine whether Bakhtiar and Umm Muhammad apply the feminist translation strategies suggested by these scholars to make their gender as women visible.

3. Feminist Translation Strategies in *the Sublime Quran* and *Saheeh International*

Translation strategies serve to overcome translation obstacles detected consciously in the source text; they also help reveal the translators' perspectives. According to Khudaybergenova (2021), translation strategies reflect translators' approaches "to solving particular problems within the framework of a general task" (p. 1369). Concerning the problems faced by female translators, Hassen (2011) states that women translators of the Qur'ān deal with "the patriarchal linguistic elements in the source text by focusing on two main challenges of translation" (p. 211). These challenges are the invisibility of the feminine nouns, pronouns, and verbs in the target text (TT) and the use of masculine nouns and pronouns in the generic sense.

In this section, I compare the translations of three verses from *Surat An-Nisa'*, translated by Umm Muhammad and Bakhtiar. I aim to determine whether the two female Qur'ān translators use the strategies applied by the feminist scholars de Lotbinière-Harwood and von Flotow to produce a reading from a woman's perspective and to make the feminine visible in the target text. Since translators' voicing and positions are influenced by the ideologies in their contexts, it is of paramount importance to start with a succinct overview of *Saheeh International* (2013) and *the Sublime Quran* (2012) to contemplate the socio-cultural contexts in which the translators' perspectives were formed:

Saheeh International was produced by **Umm Muhammad, Aminah Assami (1940-),** born in southern California, USA. She was an atheist, and her name, before she converted to Islam in 1974, was Emily Assami. Umm Muhammad moved with her Arab

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[1] Progressive Islam involves cosmopolitan viewpoints, embraces constitutional democracy, and encompasses contemporary ideas on human rights, gender equality as a foundation of human rights, along with vibrant civil society promoting religious and ethnic pluralism. See Safi, o. (December 13, 2003). What is progressive Islam? *Islam Newsletter*. **https://www.academia.edu/35266662/What_is_Progressive_Islam**

husband to Syria and studied Arabic at Damascus University, and in 1981, she moved to Saudi Arabia. "She has taught classes in tafseer and basic fiqh [at the Islamic Cultural Center] in Jeddah since 1988" (*Saheeh International,* 2013, p. 975). Umm Muhammad authored and edited about 70 English-language Islamic books. The editor of *Saheeh International* is Mary M. Kennedy, and the director is Amatullah J. Bantley. These three women founded a private institution for editing Islamic books under the same name.

The Sublime Quran was published by **Laleh Bakhtiar (1938-2020),** born to an American mother and an Iranian father. She was a Christian, and her name, before she converted to Islam at the age of 24, was Mary Nell Bakhtiar. She grew up with her mother in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. Bakhtiar held a BA in history from Chatham College in Pennsylvania, an MA in philosophy, an MA in counselling psychology, and a PhD in educational foundations. She married an Iranian-Muslim architect and moved to Iran, where she studied Qur'ānic Arabic, Persian, and *Sufism* at Tehran University (Bakhtiar, 2012). Bakhtiar was the translator and publisher of *The Sublime Quran*, which might facilitate the display of her perspectives in this translation.

The biographies of the two female translators reveal that these women translators are American converts who lived in different cultures; therefore, their translations were produced in contexts featured by the hybridization of language, culture, and religious systems. The hybrid identities of Umm Muhammad and Bakhtiar might result in shaping their perspectives. They might apply the feminist translation strategies promoted by Western translators to solve the problem of the invisibility of women translators in the TT. Feminist translators deal with the challenges of transferring feminine nouns and pronouns and masculine generic nouns from highly-gendered languages such as French to the English language.

Therefore, feminist translation strategies can be applied in Qur'ān translation because, like the French language, the Arabic language, the language of the Qur'ān, has grammatical gender since the nouns agree with adjectives, articles and pronouns, which is not the case in the English language. In an attempt to make the English language more inclusive of women, de Lotbinière-Harwood, a Canadian feminist translator, introduces two feminist translation processes: neutralisation and feminisation of language to void the text of its patriarchal elements. According to De Lotbinière-Harwood (1991), neutralisation of language "is the process of creating synonyms for sex-definite" (p. 113), while feminisation of language is avoiding pejorative words that designate women and coining new words (pp. 117-19). Gabriel et al. (2018) confirm that neutralisation and feminisation are feminist translation procedures employed to enhance women's visibility.

Bakhtiar uses neutralisation when transferring the words النَّاسُ in Q 4: 1. Table 1 below shows the different choices by Um Muhammad and Bakhtiar:

Table 1
The Different Lexis in Q 4: 1 & Q 4: 28

Q	ST	*Saheeh International*	*the Sublime Quran*
Q 4: 1	يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَة	O **mankind**, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul (p. 102)	O **humanity**! Be Godfearing of your Lord Who created you from a single soul (p. 70)

Table 1 shows the translators' choices for the words النَّاسُ in Q 4: 1. This word refers to people in general, not a specific gender. Q 4: 1 is considered by feminist writers as a "mutuality" verse, which confirms that human beings are created from the same soul; it is not a "hierarchy" verse[2] since it does not assume hierarchical relations between men and women. In rendering this verse, Umm Muhammad uses the conventional term "mankind," while Bakhtiar chooses "humanity," an unmarked noun. Umm Muhammad's choice is similar to that of Hilali and Khan's. Unlike Umm Muhammad, Bakhtiar de-genders the term and keeps the context gender-neutral in order to include women. Applying this feminist translation procedure helps Bakhtiar avoid any reference to gender when describing people, so she overcomes masculine-centrism. According to Dale Spender (1980), when translators use the term "man" in a generic sense, the reader visualises and forms a "mental image" of a "male," which makes women invisible (1980, p.147). Similarly, Casey Miller and Kate Swift (1977) strongly criticise the use of a word such as "mankind" because this term defines both men and women as male and presumes the generic human to be male (pp. 16-20).

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[2] The terms "mutuality" and "hierarchy" verses are coined by Aysha A. Hidayatullah. The former refers to verses that show equality of human individuals, while the latter indicates verses that contemporary feminists think that these verses presume hierarchical male-female relations. See Hidayatullah, A. A. (2014). Feminist interpretation of the Qur'an in a comparative feminist setting. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion,* 30(2), 115-129. https://doi.org/10.2979/jfemistudreli.30.2.115

and الْإِنْسَانُ in Q 4: 28

In order to confirm Bakhtiar's utilisation of neutralisation, I compare the two translators' choices for the word الْإِنْسَانُ in Q 4: 28: وَخُلِقَ **الْإِنْسَانُ** ضَعِيفًا as it also implies the inclusion of males and females. Bakhtiar (2012) neutralises the word by using "human being" (p. 75), a more neutral linguistic form; nonetheless, Um Muhammad in *Sahih International* (2013) sticks to the use of "mankind" (p. 109). Spender (1980) states that the terms "humankind" and "human being" are more inclusive, unlike mankind. Therefore, the phrase "human being" is also comprehensive as it implies the inclusion of men and women. These two examples highlight Bakhtiar's consistent rejection of exclusive and male-centered words. Nevertheless, Umm Muhammad reproduces a patriarchal language, a reflection of her cultural, social, and religious environment in Saudi Arabia.

Although Bakhtiar's use of neutralisation is consistent in rendering generic nouns, it is not applied when she transfers generic pronouns. She reverts to patriarchal language and uses a masculine generic pronoun to refer to both genders. Table 2 below shows the translators' choices for Q 45: 15 to highlight Umm Muhamad's and akhtiar's choices for generic pronouns:

Table 2
The Different Lexis in Q 45: 15

Q	ST	*Saheeh International*	*the Sublime Quran*
Q 45: 15	*مَّنْ عَمِلَ صَٰلِحًا* *(1)* فَلِنَفْسِهِ	Whoever does a good deed – it is for **himself** (p. 730)	Whoever did as one in accord with morality, *it is* for **himself** (p. 481)

Table 2 shows that Um Muhammad and Bakhtiar use masculine generic pronouns. They both utilise "himself", although the contextual meaning indicates that an inclusive pronoun is required since the verse refers to people in general. I compare these choices to others by a male to emphasise the differences. Although Hilali and Khan (2020) adjust the patriarchal tone and use "his ownself" (p. 868), Khattab (2019) satisfies the contemporary target readers, who expect inclusive language, and he uses "their own" (p. 525) to reduce the excessive use of male-centred language. According to Hassen (2011), translators focusing on the target reader "adjust the language of religious text to address modern readers' concerns," these translators adopt the inclusive language and "replace singular masculine pronouns with plural ones" (p. 224). Bakhtiar use of "humankind" in Q 4: 1 and "himself in Q 45: 15 confirms that she is swinging in her utilisation of neutralisation as a feminist translation strategy.

In addition to de Lotbinière-Harwood's neutralisation and feminisation, von Flotow's prefacing, supplementing, and hijacking are innovative techniques to respond to the problem of transferring patriarchal language in translation. Prefacing is adding feminist meanings in the preface of the translated text; supplementing is considered over-translation to add feminist meanings (e.g. adding "e" in a French language translation). Nevertheless, hijacking is the process of applying corrective measures to work at hand to appropriate the text in order to construct feminist meanings. Speculating these translation strategies raises the question of whether they could be applied to Qur'ān translation. To answer this question, I attempt to detect these translation techniques in the two selected versions.

Unlike Umm Muhammad, Bakhtiar constructs an identity for herself as a competent woman translator in the preface of her translation. According to von Flotow (1991), "it is becoming almost routine for feminist translators to reflect on their work in a preface" (76). Bakhtiar displays her feminist perspectives in the preface of her translation when she states:

> [T]his 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. (Bakhtiar, 2012, xxi)

This statement makes Bakhtiar visible as a female translator, which gives reason for her use of neutralisations for more inclusive language. The quote also highlights Bakhtiar's aim to make gender equality visible in her Qur'ān translation. Unlike Bakhtiar, Umm Muhammad is totally invisible in the preface of her translation, which is published under a pseudonym.

The announcement of Bakhtiar's gender as a woman is accompanied by another strategy, which is supplementing. According to von Flotow (1991), supplementing makes up for linguistic and semantic losses between the source language and the target language. Similarly, Sinem Sancaktaroğlu Bozkurt (2014) states that this feminist translation strategy makes "the language speak for women" (p. 108). Like von Flotow and Bozkurt, Sherry Simon, a feminist translator, argues that grammatical gender can be used to convey specific meanings. Simon (1996) confirms: "feminist theoreticians follow Jakobson [a linguist and literary theorist] in reinvesting gender-markers with meaning; she clarifies that the meaning which they wish to make manifest is . . . ideological" (p.

18). To investigate Bakhtiar use of supplementing as a tool to convey her feminist perspectives, I compare the translations of Q 4: 24, the verse of temporary marriage. Table 3 below shows the translators' different choices:

Table 3
The Different Lexis in Q 4: 24

Q	ST	*Saheeh International*	*the Sublime Quran*
Q 4: 24	فَمَا اسْتَمْتَعْتُم بِهِ مِنْهُنَّ فَآتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً	So for whatever you enjoy **[of marriage]** from them, give them their due compensation as an obligation. (p. 108)	For what you enjoyed of it from them **(f),** give them **(f)** their bridal due as their dowry portion. (p. 74)

Table 3 illustrates Bakhtiar's use of the letter "f" to make women visible and to overcome the loss between the gender-marked Arabic language and the gender-unmarked English language. In their rendition of فَمَا اسْتَمْتَعْتُم بِهِ مِنْهُنَّ, Umm Muhammad utilises "So for whatever you enjoy [of marriage] from them," whereas Bakhtiar employs "For what you enjoyed of it from them (f)." The unusual addition of the letter "f" emphasises the display of her feminist perspectives. Although the overall meaning of the verse might be relatively clear, the feminine aspect of it is certainly not. Therefore, the sign 'f' that Bakhtiar employs highlights that aspect. This strategy informs the reader which words are meant to be feminine in the source text, which is a high priority for a feminist translator.

de Lotbinière-Harwood (1990) confirms "making the feminine visible in language means making women seen and heard in the real world" (p. 9). She adds the letter "e" "to emphasise the feminine" (Munday, 2016, p. 206) and to make up for the linguistic loss (Simon, 1996). Bakhtiar's addition of the letter "f" is an imitation of the letter "e" by de Lotbinière-Harwood to create a strong visual impact on the reader and stress the feminine visibility in the text. Bakhtiar (2012) states that she uses the letter "f" "after the word to indicate that the word refers to the feminine gender specifically" (xix). This addition is a linguistic marker of gender since, according to Roman Jakobson (1959), "when [any language is] translated into another language, [it] cannot always be reproduced identically" (p. 237). Therefore, Bakhtiar uses supplementing, a feminist translation strategy, to compensate for the loss in translation.

Comparing Um Muhammad's choice for فَمَا اسْتَمْتَعْتُم بِهِ in Q 4: 24 to Bakhtiar's and Hilali and Khan's reveals that Um Muhammad's is positioned in a middle place between Hilali and Khan's patriarchy and Bakhtiar's feminism. In Hilali and Khan's translation (2020), funded by the Saudi authority and distributed for free, the translators render this sentence as "so with those of whom you have enjoyed sexual relations" (p. 142). Hilali and Khan add the phrase "sexual relations", which is not in the source text, and they use the relative pronoun "whom," which is used for people, unlike Um Muhammad and Bakhtiar, who use "whatever" and "what", respectively, for enjoyment. Hilali and Khan's translation implies the meaning that women are possessions that men enjoy, which reflects the thoughts of the patriarchy represented in Simon de beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. Um, Muhammad lessens the patriarchal tone in Hilali and Khan's by adding the word "marriage" to give legitimacy to the enjoyment. However, Bakhtiar dilutes the tone more by using the pronoun "it", referring to "wedlock", along with the addition of the letter "f". These choices show the different degrees of the tones in Um Muhammad's and Bakhtiar's translation; however, they emphasise the translators' perspectives as women.

Um Muhammad's and Bakhtiar's perspectives are highlighted in their translations of the words قَوَّامُونَ and اضْرِبُوهُنَّ in Q 4: 34. Table 4 below highlights the translators' choices:

Table 4
The Different Lexis in Q 4: 34

Q	ST	*Saheeh International*	*the Sublime Quran*
Q 4: 34	الرّجالُ **قَوّامُونَ** عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ . . . وَاللَّاتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ **وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ** فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا	Men are **in charge of women**[160] by [right of] what Allāh has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth . . . But those [wives] from whom you fear arrogance[162] – [first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed; and [finally], **strike them [lightly].**[163] But if they obey you [once more], seek no means against them. (p. 110-11)	Men are **supporters of wives** because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth . . . 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). (p. 76)

Table 4 reveals that Umm Muhammad relies on the interpretation by Ibn Kathīr[3] (1300-1373) (2002), who interprets the term قَوّامُونَ as men are the guardians of women, and they are in charge of them, so they are their leaders, chiefs, rulers and discipliners. She renders the term قَوّامُونَ as "in charge of women," which implies gender hierarchy with the patriarchy on the top. Table 4 also shows that Bakhtiar uses "supporters of wives" to give gender equality. Unlike Umm Muhammad, who relies on traditional exegetical books, Bakhtiar (2012) states that her method "is called *tafsīr al-qur'ān bi-l-qur'ān*" (xxvii).

Furthermore, table 4 shows that Bakhtiar differs from Umm Muhammad in her rendition of the word اضْرِبُوهُنَّ [beat them]. Bakhtiar comments on her choice, saying:

> The word ḍaraba means 'go away from them' or 'leave them' . . . the Prophet knows that marriage was based on mutual respect and love. The Qur'ān often tells husbands and wives to consult on issues with each other. It would be unfair and unjust to think that God would have revealed a verse that allowed husbands to beat their wives instead of separating for a short period of time and allowing the anger to subside. (xxxiii)

Bakhtiar explains that Prophet Muhamad respected his wives, and the Qur'ān teaches husbands and wives to respect each other. Her use of lexis such as "supporters" for قَوّامُونَ and "go away" for اضْرِبُوهُنَّ asserts that she avoids using pejorative words designating women and that she explores new meanings for the existing words through relying on dictionaries such as *tāj al-Arūs* (Bakhtiar, 2012, xxx). Influenced by Western ideologies, Bakhtiar does not condone wife-beating under any circumstances. Her influence by her context aligns with von Flotow's (1991) suggested feminist translation strategies on the macro and micro levels. von Flotow argues that the macro strategies are concerned with the context level; they encompass the choice of the source text (ST) and the addition of paratextual material, such as prefaces and notes, to make the translator visible. These two strategies are applied by both Umm Muhammad and Bakhtiar. While the former adds footnotes, the latter makes use of the preface of her translation.

Umm Muhammad uses three footnotes to clarify the terms قَوّامُونَ, نُشُوزَهُنَّ, and اضْرِبُوهُنَّ. For the word قَوّامُونَ, she explains that men are "in charge of women" in marriage by adding in footnote 160 that "this applies primarily to the husband-wife relationship." For the word نُشُوزَهُنَّ, she chooses the word "arrogance" and elucidates in footnote 162 saying "i.e., major rebellion or refusal of basic religious obligations." Also, in her rendition of اضْرِبُوهُنَّ, Umm Muhammad adds a long footnote to emphasise that "this final disciplinary measure is more psychological than physical." She gives more information in footnote 163 that Prophet Muhammad "never struck a woman or a servant," and he "stipulated that it must not be severe or damaging and that the face be avoided." These additions in the footnotes reveal Umm Muhammad's defense of women and her perspectives against women beating.

In addition to footnotes, Umm Muhammad adds details in parentheses. She inserts [right of] for قَوّامُونَ, so it is a right given to women, not a superior position for men. She also supplements the rendition of the word اضْرِبُوهُنَّ, which she transfers as "strike them" by adding "[lightly]" explaining in a footnote because it is a psychological disciplinary measure, not meant to be a real physical beat. Umm Muhammad's choice for اضْرِبُوهُنَّ is more lenient than those by Itan and Maududi, who use "strike them" and

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[3] Ibn Kathīr (1300 – 1373) was a highly influential Arab historian, exegete, and scholar during the Mamluk era in Syria.

"beat them", respectively.[4] These two men translators neither add the word "tightly" nor defend women in footnotes, which highlights Umm Muhammad's in-between place. This place is also emphasised when her translation is compared to the translation by Bakhtiar, whose linguistic choices are conditioned by her social norms due to the inseparable relationship between language and society (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). Bakhtiar's use of "go away" for اضْرِبُوهُنَّ, which is an unusual choice challenging the mainstream, emphasises the fact that "feminist groups focus on seeking new interpretations of the Quran to meet modern demands" (Al-Tarawneh, 2022, p. 73). Thus, these two women translators of the Qur'ān implement several strategies that display their feminist perspectives: Umm Muhammad applies addition through footnotes and information in parentheses, whereas Bakhtiar uses prefacing, supplementing, and neutralisation.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I aim to compare Umm Muhammad's and Bakhtiar's translations of the Qur'ān into English to determine whether the translators utilise feminist translation strategies similar to those applied by feminist scholars such as de Lotbinière-Harwood and von Flotow. I hypothesise that, in their translations, women translators are sensitive to issues related to women and gender. To answer the question of this paper and test the hypothesis, I investigate the translations of three verses raising gender-related issues: Q 4: 1, Q 4: 24, and Q 4: 34 to explore how the two women translators deal with gender agreement differences and the use of masculine pronouns in a generic sense.

The first finding is that Umm Muhammad and Bakhtiar are influenced not only by their gender but also by the society and culture where they live. These two American converts construct new identities, and they reflect their in-between positions in their translations. Bakhtiar's translation mirrors the relationship between the language she uses and the socio-cultural ideologies governed by the norms of her Western society, while Um Muhammad's reveals the socio-cultural ideologies governed by the norms of the Middle Eastern society. The second finding is that, unlike Um Muhammad, Bakhtiar asserts her visibility as a woman translator in the preface of her translation in addition to her use of both neutralisation of generic nouns and supplementing of the letter (f). However, Bakhtiar is inconsistent in her challenge of the patriarchal discourse as she keeps the generic masculine pronoun in Q 45: 15.

The third finding is that Um Muhammad's translation is positioned in a middle space between those male translators who produce the dominant patriarchal discourse and those by women translators who challenge the patriarchy. Although she conceals her feminine gender as a translator from the preface and maintains patriarchal language in some of her choices, she reduces the patriarchal tone of the text by adding more information between brackets and by using footnotes. Um, Muhammad's translation is presented in a religious traditionalist context; therefore, her voice and position are influenced by the ideologies of this context. Her struggle between the ideas in the West calling for gender equality and those in the East considering men superior to women appears in her translation through her addition that defends women.

The scope of this paper is limited to two translations by women and two problems in translation, which are rendering feminine nouns and pronouns and masculine pronouns used to refer to males and females. The findings and limitations of this paper have indicated areas of recommendation for further research. First, it is recommended that future researchers should broaden the scope of the comparison and cover more Qur'ān translations in different countries to examine the impact of women translators' socio-cultural contexts on their translations. A potential future avenue of research could also be exploring the reception of Qur'ān translations. There is a need for a study that investigates the impact of the display of translators' perspectives on shaping the meanings and messages of the Qur'ān from the reader's point of view.

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[4] These translations can be checked on Tanzil Net https://tanzil.net/#trans/en.itani/4:34 and https://tanzil.net/#trans/en.maududi/4:34

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