

Muslim Scholars as Self-Translators

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Self-translating is commonly practised by Muslim imams in their sermons, including those delivered at weekly Friday congregations. Self-translation in this context is an unrecognised phenomenon, insofar as analysis of it is conspicuously absent from the translation literature. It is, therefore, significant from both pedagogical and academic points of view to conduct research into how this long-standing practice is carried out in this context. To do this, four Friday sermons delivered in mosques across the UK are recorded, transcribed and examined. Furthermore, the respective imams are interviewed in order to corroborate the results of the descriptive part of the research.

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1. Introduction

As required by the Islamic faith, Muslims pray five times a day, and on Fridays, there is a congregational prayer preceded by a *khutba*, a sermon or short talk, delivered by the *imam* (prayer leader) (Hashem 2010: 49). Given the multicultural and multilingual context in the UK, these *khutbas* are delivered in English either solely or in combination with Arabic (and occasionally with a South Asian language). In a dual (or multi-)lingual *khutba*, the first part of the talk is usually delivered in Arabic, and the second (and/or the third) offer a self-translation of that part in English (or the other language/s) either by the same *imam* or by a different person, depending on the linguistic abilities, or lack thereof, of the *imam*. For the purpose of this research, English *khutbas*, which are always punctuated with Arabic utterances, and bilingual (Arabic-English) split *khutbas* delivered by the same *imam*, will be examined.

Like Rabacov (2013: 66), I see self-translation as synonymous with bilingual and bicultural translation rather than with bilingualism or code-switching, where alternating between two languages, or language varieties, is unconscious. Along the same lines, Beaujour (1989: 39 in Grutman 1998: 18) draws a distinction between bilingual speakers who shift languages unconsciously and bilingual writers who deliberately choose which language to use at any given time. According to the *imams* interviewed in this article, they are, consciously, translating, rather than code-switching, in the English *khutbas*, which, they say, they prepare from Arabic material. In addition, one can see a relationship of similarity between the two parts of the split *khutbas* which qualifies them for being a source text and a corresponding translation of it, see under data analysis.

The use of (self-)translation in this context has not been studied before. The *imams'* role as self-translators seems to be invisible to academia, leaving this as an untapped area of research. According to the *imams* interviewed for this research, this is a collective phenomenon in the sense that it is not confined to speakers with specific language backgrounds, but all *imams*, regardless of their language background, seem to practise it to a greater or lesser extent. Therefore, this article attempts to go beyond the traditional perspective of self-translation which sees a bilingual author translate his or her work into their other language(s), traditionally within the shadow of Samuel Beckett's works, to explore how self-translation is practiced by Muslim *imams* in Friday congregations and identify the similarities and differences between the two contexts.

In order to do this, section II below reviews the literature on self-translation, discussing its categories, reasons and motivations. Section III examines the characteristics of self-translation, whilst section IV explains the research methodology and how the speakers were selected and how data were gathered. Section V on data analysis provides illustrative examples of micro- and macro-level translation strategies used by the *imams* and of how they deal with external quotes from the Qur'an and *hadith* (Prophetic traditions), in particular. Section VI is dedicated to the discussion of results, focusing on the similarities and differences between self-translation in literature and in the context under discussion. Finally, the conclusion in section VII emphasises the interesting role *imams* play as self-translators of their own *khutbas*.

2. Literature Review

Self-translation involves the rendering of a source text into a target text by the original author of the ST (Al-Omar 2012: 212 and Rabacov 2013: 66). As such, self-translators do not only master two languages but also decide to create their work in one language and then render it into the other (see Grutman 1998: 18). Looking at the two parts of the split *khutbas* discussed below, one can see this ST-TT relationship clearly. The relationship between the Arabic ST and English TT in the English *khutba* falls under the concept of “mental translation” (Bassnett 2013: 18-9). To elaborate, the imams confirmed that they prepare their talks from Arabic material and that they translate them into English themselves mentally, see under data analysis.

Literary self-translation has often been viewed as a minority practice, although it “reveals something about the nature of all translation and that it is theoretically productive precisely because of its problematic status in relation to the ... author/translator; source text/target text [dichotomies]” (Shread 2009: 51). Indeed, self-translators are often viewed as “privileged” due to assumed self-knowledge on behalf of the author/translator (Shread 2009: 61). To explicate the forms that self-translation takes, Grutman (2013: 201-2) identifies the following three categories:

- (1) writers belonging to long established linguistic minorities.
- (2) Colonial and postcolonial writers who alternate between their native tongue(s) and the European language of their (former) overlords [e.g. Tagore].
- (3) Immigrant writers who expand on work originally begun in their native country while staking out new ground for themselves in the language of their adoptive country.

I argue, however, that these categories are incomplete and propose to add a further category, namely, self-translation in *khutbas*. All *imams* addressing non-Arabic speaking audiences, whether in the UK or elsewhere, seem to engage in this practice, albeit for slightly different reasons compared to self-translation in literature, where it is an uncommon practice (Shread 2009: 51).

According to the literature, the reasons for self-translation are numerous. Firstly, bilingualism seems to be both a motivation and a requirement for self-translation (see Schleiermacher 2013: 298 and Grutman 2013). Self-translators are bilingual authors “who can function in two speech communities and grasp references from more than one cultural universe. Qua writers, they tend to be well-read in more than one literary tradition, so much so that they can often fine-tune their writing accordingly” (Grutman 2013: 193). For example,

Grutman (2013: 197) argues that Beckett consciously became bilingual; his need for French was driven by aesthetic and psychological needs.

Secondly, some writers decide to self-translate, especially if the target language enjoys a high status amongst the world's languages, which will, in turn, achieve self-fame to the author. Similarly, Al-Omar (2012: 213) argues that “[s]elf-translation is practiced to increase the number of readers or to escape the confines of one language (or its censorship) to another ... [or] for recognition in another language and culture”. Beckett realised an exceptional place on the world stage of literature “by deciding to write ... the world's most widely read languages [i.e. English and French]” (Grutman 2013: 197).

Thirdly, according to Grutman (2013: 193), many authors are prompted to self-translate their own works “either because they are utterly dissatisfied with existing translations of their work, or because they cannot find a publisher for the first version, or because it was poorly received (even censored) in the initial language” (see also Whyte 2002). Fourthly, some authors decide to self-translate because of the poetic licence and the language and cultural knowledge they have. In other words, they are motivated by “the possibility of gain, rather than loss, in the TT” (Al-Omar 2012: 212). For instance, Federman writes that

self-translation often augments, enriches, and even embellishes the original text – enriches it, not only in terms of meaning, but in its music, its rhythm, its metaphoric thickness, and even in its syntactical complexity. This is so because the self-translator can take liberties with his own work since it belongs to him.ⁱ

Fifthly, exile -forced or voluntary- seems to be another motivation. For instance, forced exile compelled Vladimir Nabokov to write and self-translate his own works (Al-Omar 2012: 213). Sixthly, Whyte (2002:69) explains that another reason for self-translation is “to dispense with the original, to render it superfluous”. This seems to be the case with two of the *khutbas* discussed below. Finally, financial reasons can motivate authors to self-translate. Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, a Palestinian writer who was forced into exile after the 1948 occupation of Palestine, is a case in point (Al-Omar 2012: 215).

3. The Characteristics of Self-Translation

Some theorists argue that “there is no model self-translator, only trends and exceptions” (Cordingley 2013: 9) whilst others argue that self-translation can be practised in two different formats. The first is when the original author renders his work into a target text. The second is when the original author “imports” one language into another: the author may have perfected a style which allows him or her “to avoid the filter and distortions of translation, without betraying their linguistic and/or national origin” (Schleiermacher 2013: 298). Another characteristic of self-translation, according to Shread (2009: 59), is its “ability to take liberties that would be unacceptable to anyone but the ‘author’ of the work. These so-called ‘infidelities’ are allowed so long as they are carefully delimited by the authorizations of self-translators.”

However, Al-Omar (2012: 211) argues that the shifts or changes made in the target text cannot be attributed to the authors’ [or translators’] poetic licence, but “should be seen in the light of bicultural competence of the self-translator as a cultural mediator.” Concurring with this opinion, Jung (2004) stresses that the changes that can be seen in the TT may be

attributed to the bicultural status of the self-translator who is expected to account for the knowledge gap that exists between the ST and TT readers. In a similar vein, Carré (2015: 108) explains that “the translator’s task is to try to convey enough information to make the original context ‘readable’ for the foreign audience.” He discusses a Senegalese writer, Boubacar Boris Diop, who decided to switch from French to his mother tongue, Wolof. In his self-translation, Diop “considers that Wolof words are easily understandable and do not need translation” (Carré 2015: 109). In other words, “[self-]translators can bet on the original words themselves, considering that they are powerful enough to break through the cultural barriers” (Carré 2015: 110). However, the genre in question may influence how much liberty a self-translator has. In the corpus under discussion here, the *imams* seem to have more liberty in self-translating their own words but less liberty in translating quotes from the Qur’an and the *hadith*, for instance.

The views on the reasons for the self-translation discussed above are not necessarily mutually exclusive. If bilingualism and biculturalism are requirements for self-translation, the level of confidence they instil in the author would be enough to allow him or her to take liberties, which can alternatively be called “infidelities” whilst self-translating in order to fulfil target readers’ expectations. In short, the self-translator’s mediation could be minimal, maximal or somewhere in between, depending on how much of the ST he or she intends to preserve (see Pym 2010, Al-Omar 2012: 213).

4. Research Aims and Methodology

This article aims to closely examine the practice of self-translation by Muslim *imams* in the context of the weekly Friday *khutbas*, not only in light of what the relevant literature states about self-translation but also in terms of how *imams* actually engage with this phenomenon. As such, two methodologies for data collection and results triangulation are used. The first methodology, which adopts a product-oriented approach, aims to provide a descriptive examination of how self-translation is carried out in Friday *khutbas* based on authentic data. This involves attending and recording a *khutba* by each of the speakers selected through “convenience sampling” (Saldanha and O’Brien 2013/2014: 115). A preliminary list of potential participant UK-based *imams* was made, taking into account a) the mother tongue of the speakers, either English or Arabic and b) their profile, established *imams* who have been giving Friday *khutbas* regularly in mosques in the UK. After contacting many *imams* via email and/or phone calls, four, who are based in Cardiff, Edinburgh, London and Manchester, agreed to participate in this research in 2017. The *imams* were informed that their talk, as well as the interview afterwards, would be recorded for the purpose of examining how translation between Arabic and English is used in their *khutbas*. They were further informed that confidentiality would be maintained and that their participation was free, voluntary and recoverable at any time during the course of the study. Considering the limited number of participants in this research, piloting was deemed unnecessary (Saldanha and O’Brien 2013/2014: 178).

The second methodology is participant-oriented, in line with the increasing attention paid to the role of translators and interpreters in the translation process since the publication of *The Translator’s Turn* (1991). As such, semi-structured interviews with the *imams* were conducted in order to have access to their thoughts on the issues under discussion. Further, the use of semi-structured interviews allows for the selection of topics to be discussed whilst offering participants the chance to speak more freely, as opposed to structured interviews.

This is an important issue since in a research of this nature, the human element is of paramount importance and their participation allows for the co-construction of knowledge in a more realistic manner. As such, each *imam* was interviewed after his respective *khutba* was delivered. I then transcribed and examined the recordings of the *khutbas* to identify the general translation trends the *imams* engaged in. The results of the investigation were then juxtaposed with the interviews which I also transcribed to corroborate the results.

5. Data Analysis

Initially, some background information on the four *imams* is necessary. In London, the *imam*, a 42-year-old PhD student in Islamic studies, has 17 years of experience as an *imam* and is a native speaker of Arabic. He is also a well-established translator of Islamic books into English. In Edinburgh, the speaker was a 33-year-old PhD student in Islamic studies and a native speaker of English, with 4 years of experience as an *imam*. In Manchester, the speaker was a 60-year-old MA holder in engineering, a self-taught *imam* and a native speaker of Arabic. In Cardiff, the speaker, a 37-year-old PhD holder in Islamic studies and a native speaker of English, has been an *imam* since 2000 and is also an established translator of Islamic literature into English. All four *imams* consider themselves voluntarily bilingual in Arabic and English: the Cardiff- and Edinburgh-based *imams* learnt Arabic whilst the London and Manchester-based *imams* learnt English. In London and Edinburgh the *khutba* was split into two parts, the first in Arabic and the second in English, of almost equal length in London but not in Edinburgh where the English was relatively longer than the Arabic, see below. In Manchester and Cardiff, the *khutba* was delivered mainly in English, and each lasted for about 25-30 minutes, which is the average *khutba* length. This distribution of the *imams'* native language and *khutba* format has created a balance in the data collected here as can be seen in the table below:

Place	<i>Imam's</i> language	<i>Khutba</i> format
London	Native speaker of Arabic	Arabic-English split <i>khutba</i>
Edinburgh	Native speaker of English	Arabic-English split <i>khutba</i>
Manchester	Native speaker of Arabic	English <i>khutba</i>
Cardiff	Native speaker of English	English <i>khutba</i>

Table 1: *khutba* format and *imams'* native language and location

1. The London Split *Khutba*

Although the *khutba* was read out from notes pre-prepared by the *imam*, macro and micro differences can be seen between its two parts. For example, the Arabic ST was divided into an introduction followed by six sections, five of them preceded by (أيها المسلمون الكرام), lit. “oh honourable Muslims” and one preceded by (أيها الإخوة وأيتها الأخوات), lit. “oh brothers and sisters”, and a conclusion. The corresponding English TT was divided into an introduction followed by five sections; four preceded by “dear brothers and sisters” and one preceded by

“dear Muslims”, both are more target-oriented expressions than the close translation mentioned above, and, finally, a conclusion.

Further, the Arabic introduction included formulaic Arabic statements, praising God and testifying that there is only one God and that Muhammad is His Prophet (testimony of faith). It also included two non-formulaic statements and two Qur’anic verses which, together, introduce the topic of the *khutba*, namely the position of the orphan in Islam. On the other hand, the English part started with an abridged version of the same Arabic formulaic statements mentioned in the Arabic introduction. These were read out in Arabic and followed by a periphrastic rendering into English as follows: (إن الحمد لله نحمده ونستعينه ونستغفره، (وأشهد ألا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له وأشهد أن محمدا عبده ورسوله), which can be closely translated as “All praise is due to God. We thank Him, and we seek His guidance and forgiveness. I bear witness that there is only one God, with no associates, and that Muhammad is His servant and messenger”. These statements were paraphrastically translated by the *imam* as “All praise is due to God, the Lord of all the universe. I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except one God and that Muhammad is his messenger, may the peace and blessing of God be upon him, his family, his companions and all those who followed them in righteousness”. As such, the English introduction is semantically and structurally different from the corresponding ST.

Looking specifically at external quotes, the Arabic ST mentions six Qur’anic verses and three *hadiths* in total, all relating to how Islam emphasises the need to look after the orphans, and the virtue of doing so, but the English TT only mentions the translation of two verses and one *hadith*. For example, a verse mentioned in the Arabic introduction (واعبد الله) (Qur’an 4: 36) is rendered almost “literally” by the *imam* in the fifth English section as (worship him, and associate nothing with him, to parents do God, and to relatives and orphans). Furthermore, the fourth Arabic section mentions a *hadith* in which the Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said that (من) (يكفل يتيما يكون معه يوم القيامة) while the English translation reproduces a close rendering of the *hadith* in the fifth section as follows: “the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم (Peace be upon Him) also mentioned that the person who cares for an orphan child will be in paradise with him.” Comparing how the Qur’anic verses and the *hadiths*, in particular, are translated, it seems that the *imam* renders them very closely compared to the rest of the text.

In terms of translation resources, the *imam* confirms drawing on published translations of the Qur’an, *The Qur’an: Saheeh International* by Umm Muhammed (1997) and *The Qur’an* by Abdel-Haleem (2004) for the translation of Qur’anic verses and on *Sahih Bukhari* translated by M. Khan (1996) or produces his own translation of *hadith*. This is prompted by the need to produce “perfect translations of the word of God and of the Prophet,” respectively. This is interesting, considering that he is an established translator of Islamic material from Arabic into English, who has translated and published nineteen books on Islam so far. In other words, he seems to realise and voluntarily restrict the liberty he allows himself in self-translating as far as rendering Qur’anic verses, as opposed to his own words, is concerned.ⁱⁱ The *imam* explains that he focuses on “communicating the meaning, not word for word” [sic], which does not seem to be the case in dealing with (Qur’an 4: 36) discussed above. He also adds that he sometimes changes the translation method, producing different translations. When asked about the reasons, the *imam* explained that “the culture of the audience makes me change my translation. I bear the culture of the audience in mind”. Achieving this aim involved restructuring the division of the ST sections at macro-level and, more importantly, unpacking some textual elements. This liberty remarkably almost

disappeared when rendering quotes from the Qur'an, believed to be the word of God, and the *hadith* reported to be the word of the Prophet Muhammad, which were rendered closely into English. This is interesting considering that the translations of the Qur'an, whether close or free, are not considered a substitute for the Holy book itself but rather as an interpretation of the meaning of the text. This is because the Qur'an is believed to be the word of God whilst the translation is the word of man (see Elimam 2013).

2. The Edinburgh Split Khutba

As opposed to the London *khutba*, this one was delivered based on bullet points only, rather than pre-prepared notes. It seems, however, that whether the *khutba* is spontaneous or based on pre-prepared notes, the TT is always self-translated with liberty. A close look at the two parts of the *khutba* also reveals that the Arabic ST, which was comparatively shorter than the English part, consisted of an introduction, four short sections and a short conclusion. The English part, on the other hand, was divided into an introduction, a significantly large first section followed by two short sections and a conclusion.

To illustrate how both parts of the *khutba* are structurally and semantically different from each other, the Arabic introduction consisted of three *hadith*, praising God and the Prophet and producing the testimony of faith, as well as three Qur'anic verses. The English introduction, on the other hand, consisted of four formulaic statements, one delivered in Arabic without translation, and three in English, two of which reproduce the testimony of faith and the third reproduces a translation of a formulaic statement different from the ones quoted in the Arabic introduction.

At a micro-level, the English *khutba* was, as in the previous case, rendered with liberty. For example, whilst all four Arabic sections were preceded by (معاشر المؤمنين) "Oh believing folks", two sections of the English *khutba* was preceded by "brothers and sisters in Islam", a more target-oriented statement compared to the literal rendering of the Arabic connecting counterpart. In addition, the TT unpacks and elaborates further on some of the themes discussed in the Arabic part so much so that it is three times as long as the ST. For example, the theme of the Prophet Muhammad's migration from Makkah to Madinah, which was briefly covered in Arabic, is rendered paraphrastically in the English section, covering elements of the story not mentioned in the Arabic part.

Looking specifically at the verses and *hadiths* quoted, with the exclusion of the verses mentioned in the Arabic introduction (which were not translated into English), the Arabic part featured one *hadith* and three Qur'anic verses, all of which are rendered in the English part. The verses were rendered "differently". Two verses were rendered closely while the third verse was rendered closely but with an added explanation: (وألف بين قلوبهم لو انفقتم ما في) "it is He who united their hearts, if you were to spend the whole of the earth you will not have united their hearts, **no amount of wealth, no amount of status, no amount of ideology, no amount of indoctrination would have ever united the hearts** except through Allah. He is the one who united their hearts. It is He who is the Almighty and the praiseworthy". Note that the section in bold is an elaboration which does not exist in the Arabic verse, but was added as an explanation by the *imam*.

In the interview, the *imam* explains that he does not read any published translations of the Qur'an or *hadith*, and produces his own. He further adds that he uses different translation approaches based on how he feels captures the ST meaning better and does not feel obliged to remain close to the ST structure if this does not lead to meaningful translations. Similar to the

London *imam*, the speaker is aware that he may adopt different procedures and produce different translations of the same items: “I focus on the meaning rather than adopt a word for word approach. He is aware of the level of liberty he is allowing himself in rendering the Arabic part into English. The reason for this is that “my translation is attuned to the audience and the moment. I would give a translation that I think makes sense to the audience”. The *imam*, who confirmed that he self-translates his own *khutbas* and all the quotes in it, stated that he delivers the *khutba* in two languages “because we have a strong Arabic presence in the mosque... They demand the *khutba* be in Arabic. The English part is because the majority of the audience are English speakers.”

The second (English) *khutba* format sees the ST superseded by, but also simultaneously embedded within, the self-translated TT. In Cardiff and Manchester, the *imams* who adopted this format confirm that they prepare the *khutbas* solely from Arabic material. This means that a mental translation process takes place from the Arabic source language into the English target language, and only the target text is delivered. This is not an uncommon practice in the area of self-translation (cf. Krause 2013). In addition, like in other areas of self-translation, here too the TT features the use of Arabic terms and expressions and, more importantly, Qur’anic verses, *hadith* and scholarly quotes in Arabic and their respective translations (see below). Along these lines, Federman writes that “the possibility that certain words or expressions in the other language may have the advantage of metaphorical richness not present in the first language”ⁱⁱⁱ encourages authors/self-translators to use ST words in the translation. In terms of how the ST is embedded in the TT in the English *khutba* format, the Arabic quotes were divided up into phrases and sentences and rendered into English one at a time.

3. The Manchester Khutba

The *imam* started off with the same Arabic formulaic statements and one of the verses used by the Edinburgh *imam* discussed above. These were followed by an English introduction, consisting of the testimony of faith and praising God for His bounties. Within the *khutba* itself, several Arabic items, including proper names, verses, *hadiths* and Islamic expressions, were used. For example, proper names of the prophets Muhammed and Jesus (*‘Isa* in Arabic) were pronounced in Arabic, preceded by a title, “prophet” or “messenger”, in English and followed by an Arabic honorific, “عليه السلام”, (peace be upon him), without translation. Islamic expressions were mentioned in Arabic followed by their translations, “عقيدة” Theology”, and some were mentioned in English first followed by Arabic, “faith إيمان”. Some “inconsistency” can be seen in the manner in which some Arabic items were translated. For example, the word “عبادة” was not translated into English on its first mention but was rendered in its second mention as (worship). The translation of the Islamic expressions was generally close.

The body of the *khutba* itself features four Qur’anic verses, all of which were translated closely by the *imam*, for example, “اهدنا الصراط المستقيم” “Grant us the guidance to the straight path”, “صراط الذين انعمت عليهم”, “The path of those whom you are pleased with, and “غير المغضوب عليهم ولا الضالين” “And not those who gained your anger or those Who went astray.” The conclusion, which was delivered in Arabic only, also consisted of the verse invoking God’s blessings on the Prophet Muhammad, which was also used by the Edinburgh *imam*, in addition to another verse (إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ) (وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ)^{iv}, none of which were translated into English.

According to the interview, the *imam* is aware that he did not translate some verses, especially those mentioned in the introduction and conclusion, arguing that “they are understood and recognised by the congregation whether they speak Arabic or not”. The *imam* enumerates his reasons for using Arabic utterances within the *khutba* as follows: 1) “there is a religious argument about whether the whole *khutba* or part of it needs to be in Arabic,” 2) “scholars agreed that a *khutba* needs to include some verses from the Qur’an and some *hadiths*... We tend to do these bits in Arabic”, and 3) “Arabic adds flavour and helps the congregation recognise certain Arabic/Islamic terminology. It is a way of keeping the Arabic language alive with the audience”. On the other hand, no *hadith* was used as part of the *khutba* on this occasion.

Speaking of the resources he uses to translate, the Manchester *imam* explains that “If I am not confident about translating a certain [non-Qur’anic] text, I would look it up in a dictionary or on the internet and see how it is translated but adapt the translation myself.” He admits to reading Abdallah Y. Ali’s translation of the Qur’an, but he adapts it to sound more meaningful. The *imam* is also aware of the bi-directionality of presenting the Arabic utterances and their English translations. He confirms that he tries to “render the meaning” and avoids “word for word” translation. Like other imams interviewed here, he is also aware that he renders items differently depending on the audience. Finally, he explains that the translation “approach and quantity [of it] depend on [the] context”, meaning that more translation can be needed if the topic of the *khutba*, the audience etc. so require.

4. The Cardiff Khutba

The sermon was, similarly, punctuated by the use of Arabic proper names and honorifics, Islamic expressions, verses, but also *hadiths* and some scholarly quotes. To elaborate, most Arabic nouns were rendered into English on their first mention: “مسجد mosque”, then used in either Arabic or English afterwards. Similarly, the Islamic expressions were dealt with in the same manner: “جمعة Friday prayer”, “بركة blessing”.

The *khutba* features five Qur’anic verses rendered differently. One verse was rendered closely: “ان اول بيت وضع للناس للذي ببكة” (Qur’an 3:96), “the very first masjid that was made for people was in Makkah”. Two verses with a close meaning in Arabic were given one close translation: “ياأيها المزمل” (Qur’an 73: 1) “ياأيها المدثر” (Qur’an 74: 1) (Oh the clocked one). One verse was rendered closely then followed by an explanation: “فليدع ناديه” (Qur’an 95: 17, lit. “call your club”) “Call your club, call your people of your tribe, and let us see how they will be able to help you”. And, finally, one verse was not translated at all “اقرأ” (Qur’an 96: 1), lit. (Read).

Five *hadiths* were used in total. One translated closely as: The Prophet said “خير الناس خير الناس” “The best people are those who benefit other people”, one by close and communicative translations: “زملوني زملوني” (lit. ‘cover me, cover me’) “Cover me cover me, cover me with a blanket” and three long *hadiths*, which were divided up into individual phrases delivered in Arabic followed mostly by paraphrastic translation or by both literal as well as communicative translations: “The Prophet ... said: لقد خشيت على نفسي, I fear for myself, I think something is happening to me”.

The reason for using Arabic quotes in general, according to the *imam*, is the fact that “The Qur’an is in Arabic and is infused with spirituality and I want to impart this spirituality to people. But because the majority of the people are not Arabs and need to understand the meaning, I translate.” The *imam* further explains that “the point I am making, if infused with

religious diction in Arabic, is seen as an authority.” Finally, he uses Arabic because “people expect *imams* to know Arabic. They feel if the *imam* does not know Arabic, or cannot understand the Qur’an in Arabic, he cannot be a scholar” and that is why he also quoted two classical Arabic poetic verses although he did not translate them. Similar to the Manchester *imam*, the Cardiff *imam* is also aware of the bi-directionality in which the ST and TT items are presented. He also argues that he uses “idiomatic [i.e. communicative] translation” unless he is “making a point relating to a particular word, I try to be specific [i.e. literal].” He also argues that “the context, the place and the mosque-goers, definitely influence how I translate”.

The *imam* confirms that he produces his own translation of the *khutba*, but would only read English commentaries of the Qur’an if he cannot access the Arabic meaning. He draws on and is critical of, Abdel-Haleem’s translation of the Qur’an (2004) which he adapts for his purposes, as he does not always agree with the translation in terms of its exegetical approach to interpreting some verses.

6. Discussion

In the interview, all four *imams* clearly describe their practice as conscious self-translation, rather than unconscious code-switching,^v in order to appeal to their audiences’ linguistic knowledge, although similar to literary self-translators, they do not know much about the relevant literature (cf. Flusser as discussed by Guldin 2013 105-6). Looking closely at how they translate in the *khutbas* examined here, one can clearly see how their practice shares some of the common features of literary self-translation discussed in sections II and III. The *imams* self-translate with the customary liberty that literary self-translation is known for. Macro and micro translation strategies were clearly identified between the two parts of the split *khutbas*, and the oscillation between English and Arabic in the English-only *khutba* was a reminder that a translation process has taken place. Interestingly, for both *khutba* formats, the *imams* emphasise the use of Arabic material and published translations of the Qur’an and *hadith* to prepare for the *khutbas* and that they adapt the translation to suit the context. They are aware they sometimes use a different translation for the same ST item and generally attempt to produce the meaning rather than the form of the ST utterances. It is also interesting how they relinquish this approach whilst rendering Qur’anic verses and *hadith*. Even in the two cases where an explanation of a verse was used in Edinburgh and Cardiff, a close rendering was also provided nonetheless. This contradiction cannot be elaborated upon and is, therefore, a limitation of this article. The reason that this issue was not taken up with the *imams* too is that the interviews took place right after the *khutbas* were delivered and I had the opportunity to transcribe them or notice this change of approach in dealing with the Qur’an and *hadith*.

Similar to some literary self-translators, and prompted by the linguistic background of their audiences, the *imams* consider (self-)translation of the *khutba* to be essential in delivering their message. In addition, the translation direction in the *khutbas* examined here is not from a minority to a majority language, as is the case with some literary self-translation, but from a language considered to be the language of Islamic literature, one that is infused with spirituality and eloquence, to another, more commonly used for the purpose of understanding, an almost mundane but pragmatic choice (cf. Cordingley 2013: 4). The Arabic ST alone is deemed not sufficient to appeal to all audiences due to language barriers, but it is

required nonetheless to be embedded in the English *khutba* to give it full sense and legitimacy.

From another perspective, the use of Arabic within the English *khutbas*, or the English half of *khutbas*, serves as a constant reminder that, regardless of the format, the *khutba*/half-*khutba* is a translation and not an original. Furthermore, even though part of the congregation may be ignorant of the exact meaning of some of the Arabic words, they have been exposed to this practice long enough to be able to at least guess the meaning of these words from the context, as *imams* confirm in the interviews (see the use of Wolof discussed above, Carré 2015: 9). The oscillation between Arabic and English in the English *khutbas* features the occasional exchange of their respective roles, especially when the English translation is delivered before the ST utterances, and subverts the essential opposition of independent SL and TL (cf. Guldin 2013: 100), a feature also common in some literary self-translation.

Self-translation in the context under discussion emphasises the “superficial” nature of the TL (English) as a medium for *khutbas* and its inadequacy as a language, insofar as it lacks the same level of authority, and perhaps also precision, as the SL (Arabic). The original Arabic utterances are embedded in the English, which seems to be the SL until it momentarily reverts to being the TL which is used to render the Arabic utterances. Only when it does so, do we realise that a hierarchical relationship exists between Arabic and English, yet again only momentarily, as English ascends to its position of being the SL again. Looking at this oscillation from another angle, neither language seems to be superimposed on the *khutba*; each is seeming to be equally appropriate for the purpose of its usage. In other words, the interdependence of the SL and TL in the English half of the split *khutbas* where the SL is an ever-existing presence in the TT is remarkable. This, however, is not a unique practice to the context under discussion, but rather an aspect of literary self-translation in general (see Guldin’s discussion of Flusser 2013: 99).

Another significant point is how, in literary self-translation, the TT is sometimes published before the ST itself, and in a few cases, the ST is not published at all (Santoyo 2013: 33). However, in the split *khutbas*, the original Arabic ST seems to be always delivered first, confirming its role as the SL, and occasionally sparing the *imams* the need to repeat the verses, *hadith* and scholarly quotes in the English self-translated TT. Notwithstanding micro-level changes, including different sentence structure and use of paraphrase, what is most interesting are the macro-level changes. Compared to the respective ST, the TT’s feature a radical reshuffling of ideas and external quotes, from the Qur’an, *hadith* and Islamic literature, in the TT. In addition, it is evident from the data analysis that *imams* tend to render the Qur’anic verses and *hadiths* very closely as opposed to how they deal with the rest of the talk.

On the other hand, the format of the English *khutbas* can be seen in the light of the rubric “why bother with the ST” (Krause 2013: 133), if the self-translation can do the job of delivering the message, fulfilling the functions of both ST and TT? Whilst the two English *khutbas* examined here seem to feature the collapse of the boundaries between the ST and TT, and all four *khutbas* feature the hybridity of the TT, which is punctuated by the use of SL utterances (cf. Krause 2013: 133). With this hybridity in mind, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (Bassnett 2013: 19) argues that “self-translation involves far more than working from a source text and rendering it into another language; rather it involves rewriting across and between languages, with the notion of an original as a fluid rather than a fixed concept”. The original in this context, as in some literary contexts, is very fluid, in fact, the very need for its independent existence is, as deemed by some *imams* in this case, sometimes superfluous. In short, for

some, the self-translated *khutba* “can somehow be an adequate substitution for the original” (Krause 2013: 133).

7. Conclusion

The discussion above reflects the highly complex nature of self-translation in the context under discussion. The analysis shows how the practice of self-translation by *imams* can be both similar to and different from literary self-translation. The *imams* consciously engage in the act of self-translating their *khutbas* from Arabic into English in order to communicate better with their audiences. Self-translating of *khutbas* in the Islamic context examined in this article is a permanent feature of discourse and is common practice. In other words, neither an author’s/translator’s exile nor his dissatisfaction with others’ translations is a motivation in this context. Here, *imams* self-translate between two languages that enjoy a high status for different reasons: Arabic, the language of Islamic literature, and English, the language that is accessible to most audiences. Furthermore, notwithstanding the *imams*’ desire to communicate their message across linguistic boundaries, the context, and specifically, assumptions about the linguistic profile of the congregation, seem to be the factor that determines the format of the *khutba*: split Arabic-English or English.

Moreover, the use of Arabic utterances in the English *khutbas* and the English part of the split *khutbas* signals that the self-translator *imams* are resorting to the common Islamic knowledge that Muslims are likely to have, regardless of their native tongue. Arabic words convey experiences in their own ways, acting as a unifying language of authority and spirituality. Paradoxically, the use of original Arabic words helps *imams* to escape the confines of the TT. Specifically, it serves as an acknowledgement of the lack of complete equivalents in English, or any other language for that matter, for many Arabic terms, a reminder that translation is an approximation of the original meaning and not a substitute for it.

Similarly, the use of Arabic quotes from the Qur’an, *hadith* and Islamic literature in the English part of the split *khutbas*, and of Arabic terminology in both the split *khutbas* and the English *khutbas*, serves as a constant reminder that a translation process has taken place, albeit mentally only, by the *imams*’ own admission, in the case of the English *khutba*, and that a self-translated TT is being delivered. It also reminds the audiences of the prestigious position of the SL and the inadequate position of the TL. By oscillating between Arabic and English, *imams* are trying to achieve not only better communication and understanding but, similar to literary self-translators, consecration, to legitimise their position since they need to prove that they know Arabic to be considered as qualified *imams*. Finally, although they practise self-translation, *imams* are not motivated to do so because it gives them licence and authority, but they do so in order to convey the message across to their audiences. In short, the practice of self-translation by *imams* is a very common but complex phenomenon, one that shares some common features with literary self-translation but also differs from it in some respects.

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ⁱ <http://federman.com/rfsr2.htm>

ⁱⁱ Speaking of the direction of the translation within the English part, the Edinburgh *imam* acknowledges working “both ways”, presenting the Arabic items first, followed by the English translation, or the other way around.

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://federman.com/rfsr2.htm>

^{iv} “Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded” (Qur’an 16: 90).

^v I asked the speakers if they switch between Arabic and English consciously, or as a matter of habit which they cannot control. They confirmed they are aware that they are switching between the two languages.