

BI-GENDER TRANSLATION OF QURANIC VERSE REGARDING HUMAN CREATION: LINGUISTIC & TRANSLATIONAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The study deals with the bi-gender translation of a verse in which the creation of human is mentioned. The verse contains grammatical gender, pronominal gender, and semantic gender. The study carries an analysis that how the transfer of these gender in the translations has been applied. The research study applies descriptive analytical method to study deeply the grammatical aspects of the verse along with studying the exegetical literature of the Quran to find out the translation that conveys the gender meanings of the verse. The study will be beneficial for the students and researchers of medical sciences and for the students and teachers of translation studies and linguistic circles.

1-Introduction:

Creation of all the beings has remained a biological mystery for the biologists and other scientists through the history. There are philosophical commentaries and logical arguments but none can satisfy human intellectual. The most accurate and powerful source of knowledge is the divine revelation which is the only source of satisfaction for the seeking souls. This divine construe can satisfy the minds of the seekers. God in His last book mentioned the human

creation, matter of creation, the structure of the body and the way of birth and the place from which the birth of a human (male and female) took place.

The birth of a baby from the womb of a mother; another human being, is no doubt a universal fact and among the biological mysteries. Quran is the word of God which cannot be converted into any other human language without using clusters of words and series of sentences. A single deviation, from any one of the linguistic sciences, can change the rendered meanings.

The research is limited to Quranic verse No 19, chapter 80 that describes the creation of human from seminal fluid. The research problems are which translation rendered the medical nature of the verse? And how various translators rendered the divine message in the target language dealing with various linguistic and translational problems in the verse?

God mentioned the birth of human from sperm without distinguishing its nature either male sperm or of female sperm. Just after the creation, God mentioned the structure of the human body by a single word, denoting to coming out from the womb of the mother. All these three processes are mentioned in two continuous verses of Quran. Here is a list of translations that shows how the meaning has been rendered to the target language: (من نطفة خلقه) :

2-Research Questions:

The study aims at finding out the answer of the following questions:

- How do the exegetes interpret the word “Nutfa”?
- To what extent the English translators rendered the intended meanings in their translations?
- Did the translators keep in consideration the Genders: Grammatical and Biological during translating the verse?
- Which translator has translated the verse in a bi-gender nature?

The verse contains two problematic word one is the word “nutfa” and the second is the pronoun “هو” the antecedent of a singular male mentioned before that is human being.

3-Research Methodology:

The research is analytical in nature aiming at to analyze the translations of the selected verse keeping in view the gender elements; grammatical, semantic into English translations. The researcher finds out the bi-gender translation of the verse that contains the biological elements of human creation. The research as well focuses on to reveal the translational strategies applied by many Quran Translators in their translations at the level of the words contain the substance of human creation and at the level of sentence.

4-Gender and Translation:

Gender translation is now a vast area of research among the emerging trends of translation studies. The concept ‘gender translation’ first emerged in the 70s as emotional affinities in Canadian writings.¹ Later on, it was deeply studied in the context of an inevitable elements of language as grammatical gender as linguistic nativism shaping the biological shape and linguistic

¹ - Sherry Simon 1996; viii

functionalism for emerging relationship.² Furthermore, reaching to the verification of social gender. The scholars discussed the issues of Grammatical, social and biological genders and the problems during their translation where target language shows no grammatical signs of gender or any gender distinction.³ The problems occurred due to grammatical gender, semantic gender, social gender and gender-stereotypes are discussed in detailed by the scholars.⁴

Grammatical Gender and Pronominal Gender: Languages mostly specify agreement forwards to denote the grammatical gender either male or female, whereas some of them show pronominal gender. Scholars such as Pauwels (2003:557) explain that the languages having “grammatical gender system” divide the nouns in gender classes based upon their morphological and phonological features. Along with these features it contains semantic basis in assigning gender meaning to human agent noun where most of the nouns refer to woman as feminine and men as masculine.⁵

Due to difference in semantic gender and social gender among languages many problems occur which distort the meaning of gender in the target language.

Social Gender: the property of the word due to which the public assign ‘generally male’ or ‘generally female’ based on the societal and pragmatic considerations.⁶

5-Verse Linguistics Decoding : (من نطفة خلقه)

The verse contains four linguistic elements: the word (من) is four grounded preposition, the noun (نطفة) contains a feminine gender sign (ة) which is agrammatical gender. The word (خلق) is a verb in past tense containing a hidden masculine gender subject. The attached singular masculine pronoun (هو) is an objective but is a pronominal gender.

The word “نطفة” itself is a grammatical gender because the annexing circled (ة) is a sign of ‘feminine’ noun. Whereas the object pronoun annexed to the verb is a singular masculine that denotes the human being and human being include both male and female. It is a pronominal gender. In the general social perception of Arabic, the masculine gender includes both male and female.

² - Jose J.A. van Berkum. 2013 The psycholinguistics of Grammatical Gender. P. 20. Neither land

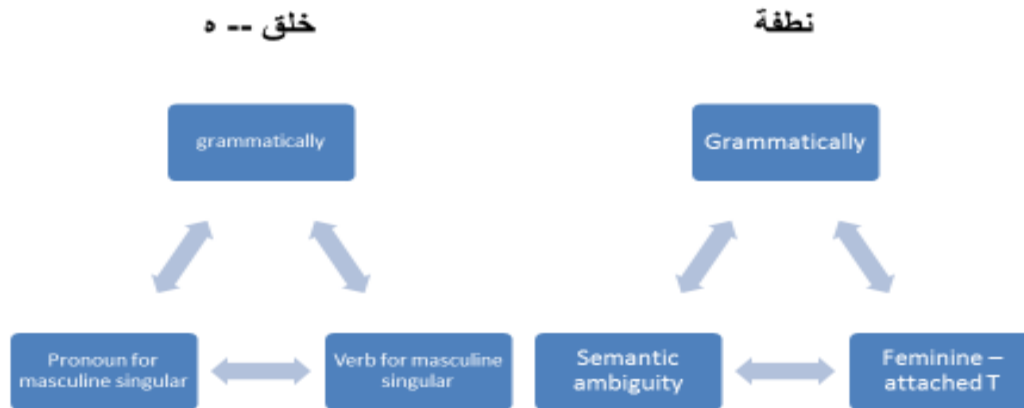
³ - The Handbook of Language and Gender. Edited by Jane Holmes and Miriam Meyerhoff. 2003. Blackwell Publishing p.550-70

⁴ - Behrouz Karoubi. Gender and Translation. <http://www.translationdirectory.com/article528.htm>

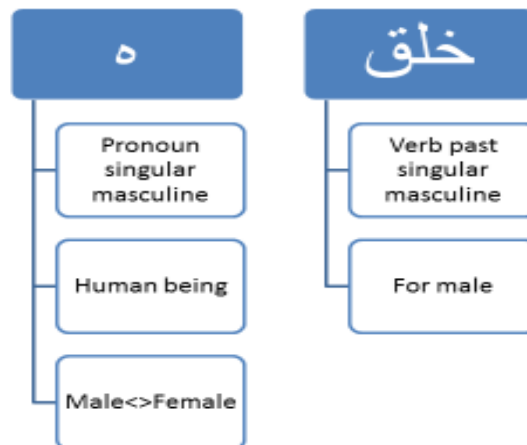
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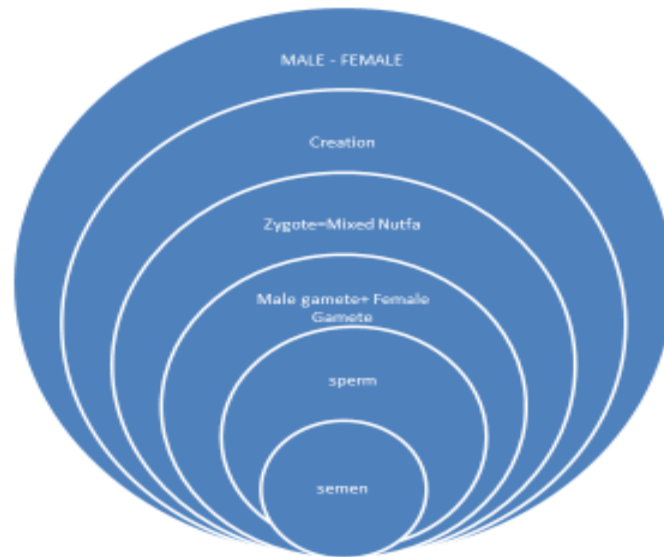
Linguistic decoding



خلق - هـ



Semantic Ambiguity of “Nutfa”



7-Lexical meaning:

Lexically the term “nutfua” means pure water and it means semen as well.

In Biological sciences it means the sex cell which does denote a male but it has three types;⁷

- Male Nutfa: it means the male gamete
- Female Nutfa: it means the female gamete
- Mixed Nutfa: it means the zygote

8-Linguistic Analysis:

The verse is a part of the discourse that explains the answer of a question. We will go back to the previous verses for understanding the actual context of the verse and the gender elements it contains. The verse No 17 narrates about the ungratefulness of human, verse No.18 is a question about the substance of human creation. And verse No.19 narrates about the substance of human creation and its proportionate physique. We quote here the translation of WaheedudDeen Khan:

“Woe to man! How ungrateful he is!

Of what [stuff] has He created him?

Out of a drop of sperm! He creates and proportions him.

Ibni Abbas said that “human is called “Insan” due to forgetting the pledge made in front of the Creator. Endorsing the view of Ibni Abbas, Abu Mansoor said that the origin of the word “insan” from “nisyan” that means ‘forgetting/forgetfulness’. The word “insan” has been used for female as well rather than the word “Insanatun”, whether it is used in some colloquial.⁸

⁷ - Murad Shwabika. 2015. :

<https://mawdoo3.com/%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%86%D9%89%D9%86%D8%B7%D9%81%D8%A9>

⁸ - Ibn-e-Manzoor al-Afriqi. Lisanul Arab: online link: <https://www.almaany.com/ar/dict/ar->

<ar/%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8>

9-Exegetical Analysis:

Here are some exegetes who translated the word in their commentaries:

- 1- Ibn Attia explained: “the word Nutfua denotes (the drop of male and female/the water of male and female)⁹
- 2- Al-Baqai states that Nutfa means a very mean liquid.¹⁰
- 3- IsmaielHaqi: from a “dirty” Nutfa.¹¹
- 4- Ibn Ujaiba: from a putrefied and spoiled Nutfa the base of human creation.¹²
- 5- Tabtabai: the common word shows dispraise that means the despicable sperm.¹³
- 6- Aqam: Fluid of man and women.¹⁴
- 7- Al-Aloosi: an insignificant and worthless thing a spoiled sperm.¹⁵
- 8- Ibn Ashoor: creation of unique species from an insignificant thing i.e. sperm is the sign of Greatness of the Creator.¹⁶
- 9- Tantawi: very little fluid leaking from man to woman’s womb.¹⁷
- 10- Al-Qattan: Vile water.¹⁸
- 11- Dr. Asa’adHawmad: from a abhorrent water.¹⁹

⁹ -Ibn Attiya (d.546 AH). Tafsir al-Muharrir al-Wajeez fi Tafsir al-Kitab al-Aziz:

<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=14&tSoraNo=80&tAyahNo=19&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>

¹⁰ -Al-Baqaa’ee (d.885 AH). TafsirNazmulDurar fi Tanasub al-Ayaatwa al-Suwar:

<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=25&tSoraNo=80&tAyahNo=19&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>

¹¹ -IsmaielHaqqi (d.1127 AH). TafsirRoohul Bayan fi Tafsirul Quran:

<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=36&tSoraNo=80&tAyahNo=19&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>

-Ibn Ujaiba (d. 1224 AH). Tafsir al-Bahr al-Madid fi Tafsirul Quran al-Majeed:¹²

<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=37&tSoraNo=80&tAyahNo=19&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>

¹³ -Tabatabai (d.1401 AH). Tafsir al-Mizeen fi Tafsirul-Quran:

<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=56&tSoraNo=80&tAyahNo=19&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1&LanguageId=1>

¹⁴ -Al-A’qam. Tafsir al-A’qam:

<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=47&tSoraNo=80&tAyahNo=19&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>

¹⁵ -Al-Aloosi (d.1270 AH) TafsirRoohulMaani.

<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=52&tSoraNo=80&tAyahNo=19&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>

¹⁶ -Ibn Ashoor (d.1393AH). Tafsir al-Tahrirwa al-Tanwir:

<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=54&tSoraNo=80&tAyahNo=19&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1&LanguageId=1>

¹⁷ -Tantawi (d 1431AH). Tafsir al-Wasit fi Tafsirul Quran al Karim:

<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=57&tSoraNo=80&tAyahNo=19&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>

¹⁸ -Al-Qattan (d.1404AH) TafsirTaiseer al Tafsir:

<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=68&tSoraNo=80&tAyahNo=19&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>

- 12- Ibn JaziGharnati: from semen, a spermatic fluid.²⁰
 13- Sabooni: from abhorrent worthless despicable water started human creation.²¹
 14- Tabrani: from abhorrent worthless despicable water fashioned him.²²
 15- Maturidi: from a lifeless spermatic fluid carrying no listening organs no brain no parts of body.²³
 16- Al-Jailaani: From impure despicable semen.²⁴
 17- Imam Ahmad bin Umer: From semen drop a denominator's point.²⁵

10-Translation Analysis:

Here are the details of the words and terms used by the translators for the word 'nutfa'.

1-Drop- قطرة

Translator	Translation	Variation
Asad	Out of a drop of sperm He creates him;	
Molana Ahmad Raza Khan	He created him by a drop of water	
Amatul Rahman Omar	From a mere sperm-drop! He (at first) creates him,	

¹⁹ -Dr. Asa'adHawmad (d.2011 AH) TafsirAisar al-

Tafisir:<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=71&tSoraNo=80&tAyahNo=19&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>

²⁰ -Ibn Jazzi Al-Gharnaati (d.741 AH):

<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=88&tSoraNo=80&tAyahNo=19&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>

²¹ -Al-Sabooni (d.1930 AD). Tafsirsafwat al Tafasir:

<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=83&tSoraNo=80&tAyahNo=19&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1&LanguageId=1>

²² -Imam Al-Tabrani (d. 360 AH). Al-Tafsir al-Kabir:

<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=91&tSoraNo=80&tAyahNo=19&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>

²³ -Al-Maturid (d.333 AH). TafsirTawilaat Ahli Sunnat:

<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=94&tSoraNo=80&tAyahNo=19&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>

²⁴ -Al-Jailani (d.713 AH). Tafsir al-

Jailani:<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=95&tSoraNo=80&tAyahNo=19&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1&LanguageId=1>

²⁵ -Imam Ahmad bin Umer (d. 618

AH):<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=97&tSoraNo=80&tAyahNo=19&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>

FaridulHaque	From a drop of liquid; He created him	
<u>Abdel Haleem</u>	He creates him from a droplet, He proportions him,	

Analysis:

The word ‘drop’ means a small quantity of liquid or water which falls from above. The translation is literal as all the above translators applied the literal method. This is what the exegetical literature express.

Translation:

This translation shows no general meaning.

2- Semen: مني

Translator	Translation	Variation
DrLalehBakhtiar	He created him from seminal fluid then;	

Analysis:

Lexical meaning of Semen according to Webster dictionary is “a viscid whitish fluid of the male reproductive tract consisting of spermatozoa in secretions of accessory glands”.²⁶ Seminal means ‘relating or consisting of seed or semen’, ‘containing or contributing the seeds of later development’.²⁷ It contains millions of spermatozoa (sperm) in which the majority consists of secretions of the glands coming out from the reproductive organs of male. It is a career of sperms for reproduction purpose into female reproductive tract.²⁸

Translation:

This translation is literal and it does not show any general meaning.

3-Seed- البيضة

Translator	Translation	Variation
Shakir	of a small seed; He created him	

²⁶ -Webster’s new collegiate dictionary. 1977. P.1052. Marriam Co.

²⁷ -Webster’s new collegiate dictionary.p.1053)

²⁸ - Chris Dawson. 2015. Semen and sperm quality. (accessed on 30-09-2018)

<https://www.netdoctor.co.uk/conditions/sexual-health/a12002/semen-and-sperm-quality/>

Pickthal	from a drop of seed. He createth him	
Al-Muntakhab	From a seed in fluid emitted He create him and animate;	

Analysis:

In biological sciences the term seed is defined as a fertilized ovule containing the plant embryo.²⁹It means that the grains or ripened ovule of flowering plant with an embryo having the capability of germination of a new plant; a small egg.³⁰

Translation:

This translation is as well literal and does not show any general meaning.

4. Secretion مُفْرَزَات

Translator	Translation	Variation
Muhammad Ahmed Samira	from a drop/male's or female's secretion He created him	

Analysis:

The dictionary defines it as the physiological process releasing substances from the interior of a cell to its exterior. And it means the secreted substance which the human glands secretory cells produce and release.³¹

Translation:

This translation show bi-gender nature of the word “nutfa”. The type of translation is literal.

5- Gametes خَلِيَّةِ اسْتِمْرَارِ النُّمُو؛ خَلِيَّةِ تَنَاسُلِيَّة؛ خَلِيَّةِ جَرْتُومِيَّة

Translator	Translation	Variation
Shabbir Ahmed	from the male and the female gametes	

Analysis:

²⁹ - Biology Online Dictionary: <https://www.biology-online.org/dictionary/Seed>

³⁰ - Webster Dictionary. P.1045

³¹ - Biology Online Dictionary: <https://www.biology-online.org/dictionary/Secretion>

Gamete is a mature haploid reproductive cell as result of gametogenesis production that fuses with another gamete from opposite sex while fertilization, which results in the formation of a zygote to develops into an individual. Gamete is of two types morphologically: one is male gamete which is called a sperm cell and second is female gamete which is called ovum.³²The Webster dictionary defines it as a mature germ cell carrying haploid chromosome set that can create a new individual after fusion with any other gamete.³³

Translation:

This translation show the bi-gender nature and the translation type is medical as the translator used the specific medical term for the word ‘nutfa’.

6-جرثومة-germ

Translator	Translation	Variation
Muhammad Sarwar	He created him from a living germ	جرثومة حيوية
Molana Muhammad Ali	Of a small life-germ, he creates him	جرثومة الحياة

Analysis:

According to the dictionary of Biology the germ is aliving organism produced as a result of the act of generation and the act of development which is after that evolved into a complete organism.³⁴According to the Webster dictionary (p. 482): it is a living substance of emerging new organism, it is the embryo to form a new origin.

Translation:

This translation does not show the bi-gender nature but it show the medical aspect as the terms used are specifically medical terms.

7- البويضة المخصبة-ovum

Translator	Translation	Variation
Safi Kaskas	From a fertilized ovum He created him	البويضة المخصبة

³² - Biology Online Dictionary: <https://www.biology-online.org/dictionary/Gamete>)

³³ - Webster’s new collegiate dictionary. P.472

³⁴ - Biology Online Dictionary: <https://www.biology-online.org/dictionary/Germ>)

Analysis:

Medical online dictionary defines it ‘a mature haploid female germ cell extruded from the ovary at ovulation. Its synonyms is egg or unfertilized egg.’³⁵ According to Medilexicon the term ovum is applied to various stages from oocyte to the implanting blastocyst.³⁶

Translation:

This translation shows female gender translation whereas the nature is purely medical translation.

8- لقحة؛ الخلية الملقحة: خلية تنشأ من اندغام مشيجين 8- zygote

Translator	Translation	Variation
Bilal Muhammad	from a zygote. He has created him;	

Analysis:

Medilexicon defines the term zygote as “diploid cell resulting from union of a sperm and a secondary oocyte; the early embryo that develops from a fertilized oocyte”.³⁷ It can be defined as fertilized ovum as result of fusion of male and female gamete. It is as called the fertilized egg.³⁸ The Biology Dictionary defines it as a cell in diploid state following fertilization or union of haploid male sex cell (sperm) and haploid female sex cell (ovum) when it starts to divide it forms an embryo.³⁹ The Webster’s dictionary defines it as “a cell formed by the union of two gametes which produces the individuals”. (Webster’s Dictionary p.1365)

Translation:

This translation is bi-gender because it shows the full participation of both male and female in the process of human creation. The type of translation is medical.

9- البيضة egg

Translator	Translation	Variation
Ali BakhtiarNejad	He created him from a fertilized egg (Zygote);	البيضة

³⁵ - <https://www.online-medical-dictionary.org/definitions-o/ovum.html>)

³⁶ - Medilexicon: <https://www.medilexicon.com/dictionary/64140>

³⁷ - Medilexicon: <https://www.medilexicon.com/dictionary/100647>

³⁸ - Online Medical Dictionary: <https://www.online-medical-dictionary.org/definitions-z/zygote.html>

³⁹ - Biology Online Dictionary: <https://www.biology-online.org/dictionary/Zygote>

The term “egg” in biology sciences is defined an organic vessel for the development of embryo, it is called an ovum as well”. Where the development of fertilization occurs creating a zygote.⁴⁰ It is the female sexual cell; gamete in other words; which after fertilization and fusion of the pronuclei it is called a zygote as well. According to the dictionary in human the term egg is not used.⁴¹

Translation:

This translation is as well fully bi-gender translation and the type is medical .

10-Nutfah

Translator	Translation	Variation
Muhsin Khan & Muhammad al-Hilali	From Nutfah (male and female semen drops) He created him,	

Analysis:

The word ‘nutfah’ is a borrowed word of Arabic that means lexically ‘little water, pure water, liquid of male and female .

Translation:

This is adaptation of the source language word as the translator considers the word containing multilayer semantic elements.

11- clot - دم غليظ جامد -

Translator	Translation	Variation
Edward Henry Palmer	Of a clot. He created him	

The Med lexicon and Biology dictionaries defined the term ‘clot’ as coagulate of blood; and soft, non-rigid insoluble mass formed when a liquid (blood or lymph) gels”.⁴²

Translation:

This translation does not show any bi-gender sign. It shows the shape of the substance from which the human has been created.

The Linguistic and Gender Problems in the Verse:

⁴⁰ -Biology Online Dictionary: <https://www.biology-online.org/dictionary/Egg>

⁴¹ - Medilexicon: <https://www.medilexicon.com/dictionary/28091>

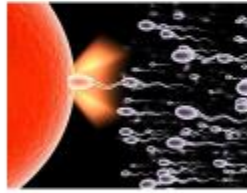
⁴² - <https://www.medilexicon.com/dictionary/18290>; <https://www.biology-online.org/dictionary/Clot>

The gender problems

خلق-ه

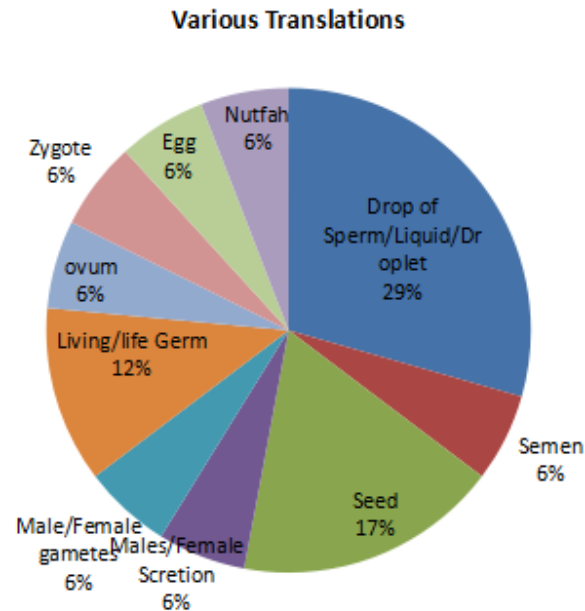


من نطفة



16 Translators

S.No	Translations	Gendered	No of Translators
1	Drop/Droplet-sperm, liquid		5=
2	Germ, living/life		2
3	Semen		1
4	Seed		1
5	Male/Female Secretion	yes	1
6	Male/Female Gametes	yes	1
7	ovum		1
8	Zygote	yes	1
9	egg		1
10	Nutfah		1
11	clot		1



11-Conclusion:

In all these translations most of the translators adopted the literal and source language text structure translations of the Qura'nic term "Nutfa" the biological base for the creation of male and female. From that one drop God created both male baby and female baby. Due to Quran specific text structure the masculine word is used for human both male and female. Some translators while translating kept in mind the same semantic background and tried to render the meanings. The study concludes in the following points:

- There gender problems translating Arabic text into English as the gender varies in both the languages. Arabic is gender language in which the feminine gender has specific signs and symbols.
- The quoted Quranic verse contains three genders; grammatical gender, pronominal gender; social gender.
- The grammatical gender (نطفة) has not been translated in the target language all the words used are in masculine form in the target language.
- The pronominal gender "ه" has been translated literally and socially as it denotes the word "الانسان" mentioned before whereas in Arabic the singular word denotes the human being either male or female. But the singular pronoun is applied in case of both male and female.
- Some translators translated the word "nutfa" as literal applying the literal translation strategy.
- Some translators translated as mono-gender either male gender or female gender.
- Majority of the translators tried bi-gender translation of the verse.

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2. Al-A'qam. Tafsir al-A'qam: <http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=47&tSoraNo=80&tAyahNo=19&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>
3. Al-Aloosi (d.1270 AH) TafsirRoohulMaani. <http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=52&tSoraNo=80&tAyahNo=19&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>
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