THE CONCEPTUAL SEMANTIC STRUCTURE OF RELIGIOUS-LEGAL TERMS AND THEIR RENDERING IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION (A CASE STUDY OF *OCHIQ XAT* AND *OPEN LETTER*)

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Abstract. This paper offers a comparative analysis of the conceptual semantic structure of three religious-legal terms, *fiqh*, *munkar*, and *ummah*, as they appear in Sheikh Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf's *Ochiq xat* and its English translation, *Open Letter*. Alongside the dictionary meaning of each term, the study considers its semantic components within the religious and cultural context and the features of its re-expression in translation. The analysis uses the following criteria: the core seme, additional semes, the evaluative component, and the religious-legal scope of the concept. The observations indicate that transliteration may preserve the outer form of a concept without fully revealing its content.

Keywords: religious-legal term, conceptual seme, semantic structure, translation, *fiqh*, *munkar*, *ummah*, transliteration, semantic shift.

Introduction

In translating religious texts, religious-legal units express a particular concept and also carry such components of meaning as religious knowledge, moral evaluation, and communal belonging. When such units are rendered into another language, preserving their formal appearance is important, but the layers of meaning within their conceptual structure must be taken into account as well.

The aim of this paper is to determine the conceptual semantic structure of the terms *fiqh*, *munkar*, and *ummah* in *Ochiq xat* and *Open Letter*, and to establish whether their semantic components are preserved or altered in translation. The study uses descriptive, comparative-semantic, and contextual methods of analysis.

Main Part

1. The conceptual semantic structure of the term *fiqh*

The term *fiqh* denotes a concept formed within the sphere of religious knowledge. Reducing its meaning to ordinary understanding, or to mastering something well, may fail to convey the term's specialized religious content.

In the source-target comparison, *fiqh* is glossed in English as "mastering of something deeply." This expression foregrounds the idea of acquiring thorough command of a subject or grasping it with care. However, the component *mastering* strengthens the sense of acquiring knowledge and skill, whereas it is insufficient to confine the term's meaning in its religious context to that component alone.

From a conceptual-semantic perspective, the case can be assessed on three criteria:

Core seme	Deep comprehension and understanding
Additional seme	Thorough acquisition of knowledge
Contextual component	Specialized content tied to understanding religious knowledge

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	and concepts

2. Semantic and evaluative components in the term *munkar*

In a religious-moral context, *munkar* appears as a unit denoting conduct or a state regarded as unacceptable. What matters in its meaning is not only that it names an action but also that it carries a negative evaluation of that action.

The English translation glosses the term as "the blameworthy action" and expands its meaning as "the bad, filthy action which is condemned by the religion and Shari'ah." In this expression, the units *blameworthy*, *bad*, and *filthy* bring out the negative evaluative component, while the phrase *condemned by the religion and Shari'ah* indicates the religious-legal basis of that judgment.

The following semantic components can be distinguished in this example:

Core seme	Unacceptable or condemned conduct
Evaluative seme	The conduct's being unacceptable and condemned
Religious-legal component	Condemnation of the conduct on the basis of religious and Shari'ah criteria
Expressive component	A stronger negative coloring conveyed by the word *filthy*

The translation seeks to reveal both the negative evaluation of the term and its religious-legal scope. At the same time, the use of a strongly evaluative unit such as *filthy* may raise the emotional intensity of the expression. Yet to judge this as a definite intensification relative to the source, it would be necessary to compare it directly with the relevant context in the original and its evaluative tone.

3. Re-expression of conceptual content in the term *ummah*

In the religious and cultural context, *ummah* denotes not an individual but a community bound by a particular faith. The conceptual content of the term therefore includes components related to communal belonging and religious unity.

Retaining the form *Ummah* in translation helps the reader recognize the term's distinct designation and its religious and cultural affiliation. Transliteration, however, does not by itself reveal all the semantic layers of the concept; its meaning becomes clear through explanation and context.

The source expression, which may be rendered as "a moderate, just, and superior *ummah* in belief and conception," appears in the translation as "the median, fair and the best *Ummah* in terms of discipline and the order." In this expression, the units median, fair, and the best serve to convey the notions of moderation, justice, and superiority. There is, however, a difference in meaning between *belief* and *conception* and *discipline* and *the order*: the former emphasizes outlook and doctrinal orientation, while the latter foregrounds the sphere of order and discipline.

The conceptual analysis yields the following features:

Communal seme	Belonging to a religious community
Evaluative seme	Justice and superiority
Component of moderation	Expressed through *median*
Contextual shift	Content related to belief and outlook re-expressed within the sphere of order and discipline

The comparative results are as follows:

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Term	Aspect expressed in translation	Issue observed in the conceptual analysis
Fiqh	Deep understanding or thorough mastery	The extent to which the specialized religious content is revealed
Munkar	Condemnation, negative evaluation, and religious-legal basis	Consistency of the evaluative and expressive components
Ummah	Belonging to a religious community, moderation, and justice	Re-expression of doctrinal content in translation

The comparative analysis showed that each term raises its own problem: with *fiqh*, revealing the specialized religious content; with *munkar*, expressing the evaluative components; and with *ummah*, preserving doctrinal content in translation.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of the terms *fiqh*, *munkar*, and *ummah* in *Ochiq xat* and *Open Letter* has shown that the conceptual semantic structure of religious-legal units must be taken into account when translating them. The study found that for *fiqh*, it is important to reveal the specialized religious content through explanation; for *munkar*, to express the evaluative and expressive components appropriately; and for *ummah*, to preserve the doctrinal content alongside transliteration. Accordingly, in assessing the translation of religious terms, the core seme, additional semes, and contextual components should be analyzed in relation to one another.

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