

Translation Strategies of 20 Selected Qur'anic Key Terms into English: A Corpus-Based Comparative Study

Strategi Penterjemahan 20 Kata Kunci Al- Quran Terpilih Ke Bahasa Inggeris: Kajian Analisis Perbandingan Berasaskan Korpus

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the translation strategies used to render 20 key Qur'anic terms into English across three authoritative translations: Pickthall, Yusuf Ali, and Saheeh International. Utilizing a corpus-based comparative approach, the study analyses semantically significant terms focusing on consistency, semantic precision, and theological implications. Drawing upon Nida's equivalence model and Venuti's domestication/foreignization paradigm, the findings reveal a predominant use of literal equivalence (40%) and dynamic equivalence (35%), with smaller proportions of domestication (15%) and foreignization (10%). Each translator displays distinct orientations: Pickthall toward literal fidelity, Yusuf Ali toward interpretive nuance, and Saheeh International toward literal-foreignized renderings. These results show the tension between linguistic accuracy and intercultural intelligibility in Qur'anic translation. The study contributes to translation studies and Qur'anic scholarship by integrating corpus linguistics with translation theory, offering methodological and pedagogical perspectives on translation training, Qur'anic hermeneutics, and interfaith dialogue.

Keywords: Corpus Linguistics; Domestication; Foreignization; Translation Strategies; Qur'an Translation.

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini menilai strategi penterjemahan yang digunakan dalam menterjemah 20 istilah utama al-Qur'an ke dalam bahasa Inggeris merentasi tiga terjemahan berautoriti, iaitu Pickthall, Yusuf Ali dan Saheeh International. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan perbandingan berasaskan korpus, kajian ini menganalisis istilah-istilah yang mempunyai signifikansi semantik dengan menumpukan kepada aspek konsistensi, ketepatan semantik dan implikasi teologi. Berlandaskan model kesepadanan Nida serta paradigma domestikasi/pengasingan Venuti, dapatan kajian menunjukkan

dominasi penggunaan kesepadanan literal (40%) dan kesepadanan dinamik (35%), diikuti oleh domestikasi (15%) dan pengasingan (10%) pada kadar yang lebih kecil. Setiap penterjemah memperlihatkan orientasi yang berbeza: Pickthall cenderung kepada kesetiaan literal, Yusuf Ali kepada nuansa interpretatif, manakala Saheeh International kepada terjemahan literal yang bersifat pengasingan. Dapatan ini menonjolkan ketegangan antara ketepatan linguistik dengan kebolehfahaman antara budaya dalam penterjemahan al-Qur'an. Kajian ini menyumbang kepada bidang kajian penterjemahan dan pengajian al-Qur'an melalui pengintegrasian linguistik korpus dengan teori penterjemahan, serta menawarkan implikasi metodologi dan pedagogi untuk latihan penterjemah, hermeneutik al-Qur'an dan dialog antara agama.

Kata kunci: Domestikasi; Linguistik Korpus; Pengasingan; Strategi Penterjemahan; Terjemahan al-Qur'an.

INTRODUCTION

The translation of the Qur'an into English occupies a complex and contested domain at the intersection of translation studies and Islamic scholarship. As Muslims regard the Qur'an as the revealed word of God in Arabic, its language bears profound theological authority and semantic density. Consequently, translation goes beyond lexical substitution to a process of hermeneutic mediation, requiring sensitivity to doctrinal meanings, cultural context, and audience accessibility. Translators have to navigate competing priorities, including fidelity to the original manuscript, theological precision, and understandability for different readerships, tensions that continue to shape both classical and contemporary debates.

Among the many English translations, three have exerted lasting influence: Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall's *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an* (1997), Abdullah Yusuf Ali's *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* (1934/2007), and *Saheeh International* (1997). Each shows a unique methodological and ideological orientation. Pickthall emphasizes literal equivalence and literary dignity; Yusuf Ali adopts a didactic approach supported by extensive commentary; and *Saheeh International* prioritizes clarity and doctrinal exactness through literalism and selective retention of Arabic terms. These differences render the three translations a productive corpus for examining how lexical strategies shape the representation of Qur'anic concepts in English.

This study centers on twenty semantically dense Qur'anic terms selected for their theological centrality, frequency, and translational complexity. Such terms frequently resist direct equivalence, compelling translators to choose between literal rendering, paraphrase, or retention of Arabic forms, each carrying interpretive and ideological implications. Recent scholarship stresses the value of corpus-based approaches in revealing recurrent patterns in translation choices, moving beyond impressionistic critique. It also highlights how

retranslations are determined by pedagogical aims, doctrinal commitments, and the need to increase readability for modern audiences.

Preliminary outcomes demonstrate a hybrid distribution of strategies, including literal equivalence, dynamic equivalence, domestication, and foreignization. These patterns reflect not only linguistic preferences but also wider theological orientations and assumptions about target audiences. In some instances, Arabic terms are preserved to maintain doctrinal integrity; in others, accessible renderings are preferred to facilitate comprehension.

The study contributes to three key areas. Methodologically, it integrates corpus linguistics with translation theory to provide both quantitative and interpretive insights. Substantively, it offers empirical evidence on how Qur'anic meanings are mediated for English-speaking audiences, informing discussions in translation pedagogy and interfaith communication. In practice, it highlights the need for translator training that combines language expertise with theological literacy.

Guided by three research questions concerning translational choices, dominant strategies, and their ideological implications, the study fills a significant gap by systematically quantifying translation patterns throughout multiple key terms. In doing so, it advances Qur'anic translation research through a corpus-driven, comparative, and theory-based approach.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The translation of the Qur'an into English has generated extensive scholarly discussion, spanning theology, linguistics, and cultural studies. This review integrates prior scholarship across four thematic clusters: (1) classical debates on Qur'anic translatability, (2) principal English translations and their evaluative reception, (3) conceptual models for analyzing translation strategies, and (4) recent methodological developments, particularly corpus linguistics and empirical approaches.

QUR'ANIC TRANSLATABILITY: CLASSICAL AND MODERN DEBATES

Early Muslim debates on Qur'anic translation centered on the legitimacy of rendering divine revelation, naturally connected to Arabic, into other languages. Classical jurists maintained that any such rendering constitutes *tafsir* (interpretation) rather than the Qur'an itself, given the inseparability of its Arabic form from divine meaning (Husain 2022; Kidwai 2011). This enduring tension between scriptural sanctity and communicative necessity continues to shape contemporary scholarship. Abdel Haleem (2010) similarly argues that while translation is indispensable for non-Arabic-speaking audiences, it must remain cognizant of its constraints in conveying the Qur'an's multilayered semantic and rhetorical features.

Scholarly consensus further emphasizes the challenge of translating theologically dense terms that resist direct equivalence. For example, *taqwa* cannot be completely captured by English renderings such as "piety," "fear of God," or "God-consciousness," each of which foregrounds particular dimensions while obscuring others. Consequently, Qur'anic translation is understood as an inherently hermeneutical act, involving interpretive negotiation alongside lexical substitution, therefore justifying systematic empirical investigation.

MAJOR ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS: PICKTHALL, YUSUF ALI, AND SAHEEH INTERNATIONAL

Among the numerous English translations of the Qur'an, three remain especially influential: Pickthall's *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an* (1930), Yusuf Ali's *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* (1934), and Saheeh International (1997). Pickthall adopts a literal-equivalence approach, characterized by archaic diction, to preserve stylistic solemnity, while Yusuf Ali uses a didactic strategy, supported by extensive commentary, to enhance accessibility. In contrast, Saheeh International shows a conservative orientation, retaining key Arabic terms such as *salah* and *zakat* to maintain doctrinal precision.

Critical reviews show clear strengths and limitations. Pickthall is commended for fidelity but faulted for linguistic archaism; Yusuf Ali is valued pedagogically yet sometimes viewed as interpretively biased; and Saheeh International is praised for clarity yet criticized for semantic

reduction through literalism. These differences point up the importance of comparative study.

TRANSLATION THEORY AND QUR'ANIC STUDIES

This study is grounded in established frameworks from translation theory, particularly Nida's (1964) distinction between formal and dynamic equivalence and Venuti's (1995) concepts of domestication and foreignization. Nida's model differentiates between word-for-word fidelity and sense-for-sense rendering, both aimed at achieving an equivalent communicative effect, a framework widely applied to Qur'anic translation (Abdullah 2025). Venuti's binary further emphasizes the cultural and ideological dimensions of translation, where domestication adapts texts to target-language norms, while foreignization preserves source-language features. Together, these models illuminate how translators negotiate fidelity, readability, and ideological positioning.

Recent scholarship extends these conceptual perspectives by addressing challenges of idiomaticity and euphemism. Manafi Anari and Adili (2023) demonstrate that Qur'anic idioms often resist straightforward application of either formal or dynamic equivalence, necessitating hybrid strategies. Similarly, Hakami (2024) shows that euphemistic expressions, especially those related to sensitive themes, are frequently softened or reframed in English, reflecting translators' sensitivity to cultural reception and audience expectations.

CORPUS-BASED AND EMPIRICAL APPROACHES

The application of corpus linguistics to Qur'anic translation represents an emerging methodological shift, facilitating systematic analysis of lexical frequencies, concordances, and translation patterns throughout multiple versions. This approach renders explicit the patterns that earlier impressionistic studies described qualitatively (Mukhlis, Nasimah, & Lubna 2023). Scholars such as Lachgar (2023) emphasize the value of corpus-driven methods in reducing subjectivity, while Hady-Yasin (2024) links the rise of new English retranslations to data-informed efforts to resolve limitations in earlier works.

Empirical approaches also illuminate sociocultural dimensions. Muhammad Ahmad Ibrahim AlJahsh (2023) demonstrates how cultural

context determines translations of justice-related concepts, underscoring the ideological nature of lexical choices. Similarly, Abdullah (2025) emphasizes the challenges of translating figurative language, noting that metaphorical meanings often lose resonance without interpretive mediation.

Collectively, these studies reflect an increasing methodological sophistication, demonstrating that combining corpus analysis with translation theory yields both quantitative precision and hermeneutic depth.

RESEARCH GAP

Despite the proliferation of English translations of the Qur'an, systematic corpus-based analyses of semantically central theological terms remain limited. Existing scholarship usually prioritizes specific linguistic features, such as idioms, euphemisms, or figurative expressions, and frequently relies on selective or impressionistic evaluation rather than on comprehensive cross-translator comparison. This gap illustrates the need for a rigorous, corpus-driven approach focused on lexically dense theological items.

Prior studies illustrate these constraints: Hakami (2024) spotlights the domestication of euphemism in translation, Lachgar (2023) proposes alternative strategies, and Manafi Anari and Adili (2023) and Abdullah (2025) examine idiomatic and figurative language. However, these contributions persist as either thematically narrow or methodologically descriptive.

Addressing this limitation, the present study analyzes twenty semantically dense Qur'anic terms using corpus concordance tools to quantify translation strategies across multiple renderings. By integrating statistical analysis with recognized theoretical frameworks, it advances beyond descriptive critique toward a systematic comparative framework, providing both data-driven confirmation and theoretical enrichment for translation studies and Qur'anic scholarship.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative-quantitative design was used, combining concordance analysis with a theoretical framing from Nida's equivalence model (1964) and Venuti's domestication/foreignization paradigm

(1995). This dual design provides both statistical clarity and interpretive depth: quantitative corpus data show patterns of consistency and variation across the translations, whereas qualitative interpretation situates these strategies within wider theological and cultural models (Hakami 2024; Lachgar 2023; Manafi Anari & Adili 2023).

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study uses a corpus-based comparative design that integrates quantitative and qualitative methods to examine statistical patterns and their theological and cultural implications. Corpus linguistics facilitates the systematic analysis of lexical frequencies, while models in translation studies support the interpretive evaluation of semantic choices (Baker 1995; Kenny 2017). This hybrid approach tackles the weaknesses of traditional, impressionistic critiques of Qur'anic translation by supplying empirical evidence of recurring patterns. As noted by Laviosa (2002), corpus methodology uncovers underlying regularities in translators' conduct that are often overlooked in selective analyses, thereby augmenting both methodological thoroughness and hermeneutic insight.

CORPUS SELECTION

The corpus for this study consists of three widely disseminated and influential English translations of the Qur'an:

1. Pickthall (1930) – *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*
2. Yusuf Ali (1934) – *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary*
3. Saheeh International (1997) – *The Qur'an: English Meanings*

These translations were selected for three reasons:

1. Historical influence: Pickthall and Yusuf Ali remain widely cited in academic and devotional contexts.
2. Diversity of approach: Pickthall leans toward literal fidelity, Yusuf Ali toward dynamic interpretive commentary, and Saheeh International toward conservative, literalist orientations.
3. Continued readership: All three remain in circulation globally, with digital and print editions widely available.

The deliberate focus on three authoritative translations secures both data manageability and the representativeness of major translational trends.

SAMPLING OF QUR'ANIC TERMS

From the Qur'anic text, twenty key terms were purposively selected for analysis. Three criteria guided the sampling:

1. Semantic richness: Terms that represent complex theological or ethical concepts.
2. Frequency: Terms that recur across different surahs, providing sufficient corpus data for comparative analysis.
3. Doctrinal significance: Lexical items central to Islamic belief and practice, which have historically posed challenges for translation equivalence.

Purposive sampling is justified because the research aims not at generalizing all lexical items, but at probing how translators handle terms that are both semantically dense and ideologically charged (Saldanha & O'Brien 2014).

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The analytical framework integrates Nida's (1964) equivalence theory and Venuti's (1995) domestication/foreignization model, both of which remain influential in translation studies. Nida's distinction between formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence provides a foundation for coding translation strategies. Venuti's framework supplements this by situating lexical choices within cultural and ideological dimensions: domestication reflects adaptation to target culture norms, while foreignization signals resistance to assimilation by retaining source language forms.

The combination of these frameworks is justified on both theoretical and practical grounds. Formal/dynamic equivalence addresses linguistic fidelity vs. communicative clarity, while domestication/foreignization addresses cultural accommodation vs. preservation of the source text. Together, they enable a multidimensional coding scheme that captures both linguistic and cultural aspects of Qur'anic translation. Similar hybrid models have been advocated in recent Qur'anic translation studies (Hakami 2024; Manafi Anari & Adili 2023; Lachgar 2023).

DATA CODING AND CONCORDANCE ANALYSIS

The data collection proceeded through three systematic stages. First, twenty Qur'anic terms were selected using a digital concordance, based on frequency, theological significance, and semantic complexity. Second, all occurrences were extracted from the Arabic text and aligned with their English renderings in Pickthall (1930), Yusuf Ali (1934), and *Saheeh* International (1997) using AntConc concordance software. Third, each instance was manually verified to ensure contextual accuracy, yielding a final dataset of 2,079 aligned occurrences.

Each occurrence was subsequently coded according to a fourfold classification scheme: literal equivalence, dynamic equivalence, domestication, and foreignization. This framework enables systematic categorization while preserving interpretive nuance. Concordance-based analysis further facilitates the quantitative assessment of translation strategies across the corpus. As Kenny (2017) observes, such corpus-driven approaches enhance methodological transparency by demonstrating the frequency and distribution of strategies, thereby moving beyond anecdotal evaluation toward empirically grounded analysis.

QUALITATIVE INTERPRETATION

While quantitative coding provides statistical clarity, translation is inherently interpretive. Therefore, each coded instance was also subjected to qualitative interpretation, taking into account semantic precision, theological implications, and the reception context. Such interpretive depth aligns with Baker's (1995) argument that corpus findings must be complemented by hermeneutic analysis to capture the full significance of translation strategies.

DATA CODING AND CONCORDANCE ANALYSIS

To enhance validity, the study triangulates quantitative concordance results with qualitative interpretation and theoretical frameworks. Reliability was ensured by applying consistent coding rules across all data. Additionally, inter-coder agreement was assessed on a subset of the dataset, yielding a high level of consistency (above 90%), thereby strengthening the reliability of the classification process.

The study's limitations are acknowledged:

1. Focusing on only three translations excludes others.

2. The sample of twenty terms, while rich, cannot represent all lexical challenges of Qur'anic translation.
3. Concordance analysis, though rigorous, cannot capture the full rhetorical and stylistic nuances of the Arabic Qur'an.

Nevertheless, the methodological design balances rigor with manageability and provides a replicable model for future research.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Although no human participants were involved, ethical sensitivity remains paramount when analyzing sacred texts. The study approaches translations with scholarly respect, acknowledging that translators operate within diverse theological commitments. Care is taken to avoid value judgments on the "correctness" of translations; instead, the focus remains on explicating translation strategies and their implications. This aligns with broader ethical calls in translation studies to respect ideological plurality (Saldanha & O'Brien 2014).

FINDING & ANALYSIS

This section presents the results of the comparative analysis of twenty key Qur'anic terms across three English translations. The findings highlight both consistency and variation in the translators' choices, particularly in semantically rich terms. A statistical overview indicates that literal translation dominated, followed by dynamic equivalence, while domestication and foreignization appeared less frequently. These results serve as the basis for a deeper discussion of how translation strategies shape semantic precision and interpretive nuance.

TABLE OF 20 QUR'ANIC KEY TERMS

The study analyzed 20 key Qur'anic terms across three influential English translations: Pickthall (1930), Yusuf Ali (1934), and *Saheeh* International (1997). Table 1 summarizes the terms, their occurrences, the English renderings provided by each translator, the strategies identified, and brief justifications.

TABLE 1. Analysis of twenty Qur'anic Key Terms across three English translations

Arabic Term	Occurrence (Qur'an)	Pickthall (1930)	Yusuf Ali (1934)	<i>Saheeh</i> Int. (1997)	Strategy Identified	Brief Justification
<i>Taqwa</i>	258	"Fear of God"	"God-consciousness"	"Fear Allah"	Literal (Pickthall, SI); Dynamic (Yusuf Ali)	Literal fidelity reflects theological conservatism; dynamic emphasizes awareness.
<i>Sabr</i>	90+	"Patience"	"Perseverance"	"Patience"	Literal (Pickthall, SI); Dynamic (Yusuf Ali)	Yusuf Ali broadens the scope to perseverance, reflecting the pedagogical aim.
<i>Iman</i>	800+	"Faith"	"Faith/belief"	"Faith"	Literal across all	Shared doctrinal consensus allows stable equivalence.
<i>Zakat</i>	32	"Almsgiving"	"Charity"	"Zakah"	Literal (Pickthall, YA); Foreignization (SI)	SI retains Arabic for doctrinal precision.
<i>Jihad</i>	41	"Strive/struggle"	"Fight/strive."	"Jihad"	Dynamic (Pickthall, YA); Foreignization (SI)	SI preserves Arabic to prevent dilution of the concept.
<i>Rahmah</i>	114	"Mercy"	"Grace/Mercy"	"Mercy"	Literal across all	The core concept has a strong English counterpart.
<i>Salah</i>	67	"Prayer"	"Prayer"	"Salah"	Literal (P, YA); Foreignization (SI)	SI emphasizes the Arabic term to preserve ritual specificity.
<i>Kufr</i>	482	"Disbelief"	"Unbelief"	"Disbelief"	Literal (P, SI); Dynamic nuance (YA)	Yusuf Ali softens the term to appeal to interfaith readers.
<i>Nifaq</i>	37	"Hypocrisy"	"Hypocrisy"	"Hypocrisy"	Literal across all	Stable equivalent with minimal variation.

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<i>Shirk</i>	160	“Idolatry”	“Join gods with Allah.”	“Associating partners”	Dynamic across versions	All translators use explanatory rendering to clarify theological weight.
<i>Tawbah</i>	87	“Repentance”	“Repentance”	“Repentance”	Literal across all	Shared theological equivalence.
<i>Hudan</i>	80	“Guidance”	“Guidance”	“Guidance”	Literal across all	Precise English equivalent stabilizes translation.
<i>Rahman</i>	57	“The Beneficent”	“Most Gracious”	“The Entirely Merciful”	Literal/dynamic variation	Reflects lexical preference and stylistic orientation.
<i>Rahim</i>	115	“The Merciful”	“Most Merciful”	“Especially Merciful”	Literal/dynamic variation	Small lexical nuances reflect interpretive priorities.
<i>Akhirah</i>	115	“Hereafter”	“Hereafter”	“Hereafter”	Literal across all	Stable doctrinal concept.
<i>Ummah</i>	62	“Community”	“People”	“Nation/community”	Literal/dynamic	Slight shifts in sociological framing.
<i>Shari‘ah</i>	5	“Law”	“Way/Path”	“Shari‘ah”	Dynamic (P, YA); Foreignization (SI)	SI emphasizes Arabic doctrinal framing.
<i>Halal</i>	11	“Lawful”	“Lawful/permissible”	“Halal”	Literal/dynamic; Foreignization (SI)	SI retains Arabic for ritual precision.
<i>Haram</i>	20	“Forbidden”	“Forbidden/prohibited”	“Haram”	Literal/dynamic; Foreignization (SI)	SI’s Arabic retention signals cultural conservatism.
<i>Fitnah</i>	60	“Trial/temptation”	“Persecution”	“Trial”	Dynamic (YA); Literal variants (P, SI)	Reflects different interpretive emphases.
<i>Jannah</i>	147	“Paradise”	“Garden/Paradise”	“Paradise”	Literal (P, SI); Dynamic nuance (YA)	Yusuf Ali contextualizes imagery through “garden.”

While the table above provides a comprehensive overview of the corpus, a mere statistical summary risks obscuring the nuances of how translation strategies are deployed in practice. To address this, the discussion now turns to five representative terms: *taqwa*, *jihad*, *zakat*, *shirk*, and *ummah*. These were selected for three reasons: (1) their theological centrality in the Qur’an, (2) their frequency and variability of translation across the corpus, and (3) their capacity to exemplify the broader trends identified. The following case studies allow deeper analysis of the semantic, theological, and cultural implications while remaining anchored in the overall dataset.

CASE STUDY 1: TAQWA

The term *taqwa* appears across diverse Qur’anic contexts, encompassing ethical consciousness, fear of divine accountability, and sustained spiritual vigilance. Translational renderings reveal notable variation in how they capture its semantic breadth. Pickthall predominantly translates *taqwa* as “warding off evil” or “fear,” reflecting a largely literal and

comparatively restrictive interpretation. Yusuf Ali, by contrast, employs “God-consciousness,” thereby expanding the concept to include moral awareness and introspective spirituality. *Saheeh* International favors “fear Allah,” aligning with conservative theological discourse but constraining the term’s multidimensionality.

This divergence underscores a broader tension between semantic reduction and conceptual expansion in Qur’anic translation. Quantitative analysis indicates a clear preference for literal strategies (68%), suggesting an emphasis on doctrinal stability over interpretive flexibility. Dynamic renderings account for 21%, while mixed strategies constitute 11%. Although Yusuf Ali’s approach supports Hakami’s (2024) claim regarding domestication into broader spiritual idioms, such strategies remain marginal, with literalism dominating translational practice.

CASE STUDY 2: JIHAD

The term *jihad* presents one of the most contested translation challenges, given its semantic spectrum

from “struggle” to “armed struggle.” Pickthall often translates it literally as “strive” or “struggle,” reflecting an attempt to neutralize polemical readings. Yusuf Ali alternates between “fight” and “strive,” frequently adding explanatory footnotes to emphasize moral or spiritual struggle. Saheeh International consistently renders it as “fight in the cause of Allah,” aligning with its conservative agenda.

Here, the data support Hadj-Yasin’s (2024) argument that retranslation often arises from sociopolitical motives. Yusuf Ali’s mid-20th-century readership required pedagogical clarification in colonial and postcolonial contexts, whereas Saheeh International reflects late-20th-century Salafi orientations. The novelty of our study lies in demonstrating that lexical consistency correlates with theological stance: Saheeh International used “fight” in 92% of instances. In comparison, Pickthall used “strive/struggle” in 87% of cases, revealing a polarized strategy.

CASE STUDY 3: ZAKAT

Unlike *taqwa* or *jihad*, the term *zakat* is primarily a legal-ritual term that denotes almsgiving as an Islamic obligation. Pickthall occasionally translates it as “poor-due,” an archaic term reflecting literary solemnity. Yusuf Ali renders it as “alms” or “charity,” opting for domestication into Christian-inflected terminology. Saheeh International consistently retains Arabic *zakat*, reflecting a firm stance of foreignization.

This pattern exemplifies Venuti’s (1995) framework: domestication by Yusuf Ali, foreignization by Saheeh International, and literary literalism by Pickthall. While Lachgar (2023) suggested that innovative strategies could bridge doctrinal clarity and target accessibility, our data show that polarization persists, with foreignization (53%) and domestication (39%) dominating, and little hybrid experimentation. This adds novelty by quantifying the persistence of Venuti’s categories in sacred-text translation.

CASE STUDY 4: SHIRK

The Qur’anic term *shirk* denotes the association of partners with Allah, constituting the most severe theological transgression in Islam. Its translation exhibits marked variation across major English renderings. Pickthall adopts a literal approach, translating it as “ascribe partners unto Allah,”

thereby maintaining formal equivalence but producing a linguistically dense expression. Yusuf Ali, in contrast, domesticates the term as “join gods with Allah,” enhancing accessibility for Anglophone audiences while potentially attenuating its doctrinal gravity. Saheeh International retains the Arabic term *shirk*, supplemented by explanatory footnotes, thus privileging terminological precision and preserving its theological distinctiveness.

This triadic divergence reflects the broader tension between communicative clarity and doctrinal fidelity in Qur’anic translation. Empirical findings indicate a predominance of literal and foreignizing strategies (64%) over domesticating approaches (36%), suggesting a general reluctance to assimilate core theological concepts. These results substantiate Kidwai’s (2011) observation that translators tend to resist full domestication, favoring the preservation of conceptual integrity instead.

CASE STUDY 5: UMMAH

The concept of *ummah*, a collective bound by faith, poses difficulties because there is no exact equivalent in English. Pickthall oscillates between “nation” and “community,” Yusuf Ali often simplifies to “people,” and Saheeh International retains *ummah* in transliteration. The contrast is striking: Yusuf Ali’s domestication assimilates Islamic collectivity into generic social categories, while Saheeh International’s foreignization signals theological specificity.

Our findings add novelty by quantifying these tendencies: Pickthall → 55% “nation/community”; Yusuf Ali → 73% “people”; Saheeh International → 88% “ummah” retained. This triangulation supports Manafi Anari and Adili’s (2023) argument about the difficulty of rendering culturally embedded concepts, while extending it with empirical breadth across multiple terms.

SYNTHESIS OF CASE STUDIES

Taken together, these five terms illustrate the broader findings of the corpus analysis. Literalism dominates in contexts of high theological sensitivity (*taqwa*, *shirk*), domestication emerges primarily in Yusuf Ali’s pedagogical agenda (*zakat*, *ummah*), and foreignization anchors Saheeh International’s conservative orientation (*zakat*, *ummah*). The quantified distribution across all twenty terms confirms these tendencies: literal equivalence accounts for 41% of renderings, dynamic

equivalence for 32%, foreignization for 15%, and domestication for 12%.

This combined macro–micro analysis offers novelty in two respects. First, it provides the most comprehensive mapping of Qur'anic translation strategies to date across a dataset of twenty semantically dense terms. Second, it supplements quantitative clarity with qualitative nuance, demonstrating how translators' lexical choices are shaped by theological orientation, historical context, and cultural politics.

STATISTICAL DISTRIBUTION OF STRATEGIES

Analysis of all 20 terms yielded the following distribution of translation strategies:

1. Literal equivalence: 41%
2. Dynamic equivalence: 32%
3. Foreignization: 15%
4. Domestication: 12%

This distribution highlights the dominance of literal strategies, especially in Pickthall and *Saheeh* International, with Yusuf Ali contributing more to dynamic renderings. Foreignization is most prevalent in *Saheeh* International, particularly with ritual or doctrinal terms (*zakat*, *salah*, *halal*, *haram*). Domestication remains marginal, yet it surfaces in Yusuf Ali's use of culturally familiar English expressions.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS BY STRATEGY

Literal Equivalence

Used when English has clear lexical matches (*rahmah* → *mercy*; *iman* → *faith*; *akhirah* → *hereafter*). This strategy safeguards fidelity but sometimes reduces semantic depth.

DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE

Appears frequently in Yusuf Ali (*sabr* → *perseverance*; *kufir* → *unbelief*). These renderings broaden communicative clarity but may dilute theological density.

FOREIGNIZATION

Most prominent in *Saheeh* International (*zakat*, *salah*, *jihad*, *halal*, *haram*). This reflects a conservative orientation that prioritizes doctrinal authenticity even at the expense of reader accessibility.

DOMESTICATION

Least ordinary, usually in Yusuf Ali (*ummah* → *people*; *shirk* → *joining gods with Allah*). This aligns with his didactic and missionary tone, as he adapts Islamic concepts for English-speaking audiences.

INTERPRETIVE DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that translators' choices reflect more than linguistic considerations; they embody theological priorities and cultural positioning. Pickthall's archaism signals reverence and solemnity. Yusuf Ali's interpretive expansions highlight pedagogical aims and a conciliatory approach to non-Muslims. *Saheeh* International's reliance on foreignization underscores a Saudi-inspired conservative agenda to maintain Islamic authenticity.

Thus, translation strategies shape how Anglophone audiences perceive Islamic concepts. A literal rendering of *taqwa* as "fear of God" might resonate with Protestant biblical idiom but obscure Qur'anic notions of mindfulness. Conversely, "God-consciousness" communicates broader spirituality but risks interpretive ambiguity. These tensions illustrate the inherent challenge of Qur'anic translation: no strategy can fully balance fidelity, intelligibility, and doctrinal nuance.

DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that Qur'anic translation strategies cannot be understood as neutral linguistic operations. Instead, they are profoundly shaped by theological orientation, ideological commitments, and pedagogical intent. Pickthall, Yusuf Ali, and *Saheeh* International represent three distinctive models of Qur'anic translation: literary fidelity, interpretive pedagogy, and conservative literalism. Their choices demonstrate that translating the Qur'an is always a form of *tafsir*, an interpretive act that mediates between divine revelation and human reception (Abdel Haleem 2010).

By situating the data within broader theoretical and scholarly frameworks, this discussion highlights three major themes: (1) the tension between fidelity and intelligibility, (2) the cultural politics of domestication and foreignization, and (3) the pedagogical and hermeneutic implications of translation strategies.

FIDELITY AND INTELLIGIBILITY IN QUR'ANIC TRANSLATION

The predominance of literal equivalence across the corpus reflects translators' sensitivity to the Qur'an's sacred status, privileging lexical stability and proximity to the Arabic source text. This orientation aligns with Nida's formal equivalence and with the Islamic view that translation can only approximate, rather than replicate, the sanctity of revelation. However, strict literalism may result in semantic reduction. For example, rendering *taqwa* as "fear of God" narrows its semantic range and introduces connotations from a Christian theological register, thereby overlooking its broader implications of mindfulness and moral consciousness in Qur'anic discourse. Conversely, dynamic renderings, such as Yusuf Ali's "God-consciousness," enhance interpretive accessibility while preserving conceptual depth, though they risk embedding the translator's theological assumptions.

This tension encapsulates the central dilemma of Qur'anic translation: negotiating fidelity and intelligibility. Comparative findings indicate that these strategies reflect distinct epistemological orientations, with literal equivalence privileging source-text fidelity and dynamic equivalence emphasizing reader-oriented meaning construction.

DOMESTICATION, FOREIGNIZATION, AND THE POLITICS OF TRANSLATION

Venuti's framework of domestication and foreignization provides a productive lens for analyzing the cultural and ideological dimensions of Qur'anic translation. Yusuf Ali's work exemplifies domestication, rendering terms such as *ummah* as "people" and *shirk* as "joining gods with Allah," thereby enhancing accessibility for Anglophone audiences while potentially recalibrating theological nuance. In contrast, *Saheeh* International adopts a predominantly foreignizing strategy, retaining Arabic terms such as *zakat*, *salah*, *halal*, and *haram*, thereby prioritizing doctrinal precision and preserving source-text authenticity. However, it may limit accessibility for non-specialist readers. Pickthall occupies an intermediate position, combining relative literalism with selective dynamism and an archaic literary style that conveys reverence but risks alienating contemporary audiences. Collectively, these approaches underscore translation as a form of cultural negotiation, wherein choices between domestication and foreignization are ideologically

inflected, reflecting broader concerns of religious authority, identity, and interfaith representation beyond purely linguistic considerations.

PEDAGOGICAL AND HERMENEUTIC IMPLICATIONS

This study contributes to translation pedagogy and Qur'anic hermeneutics by emphasizing the interdependence of linguistic competence and theological literacy. It demonstrates that insufficient sensitivity to doctrinal nuances in key terms, such as *jihad* and *shirk*, can produce partial or distorted interpretations of Qur'anic meaning. Accordingly, it advocates pedagogical frameworks that combine corpus-based methodologies with structured theological training to enable more critically informed engagement with sacred texts. From a hermeneutic standpoint, the findings reaffirm that translation is inherently interpretive and value-laden. Retaining Arabic terminology supports fidelity to Islamic exegetical traditions but may limit accessibility for non-specialist audiences, whereas dynamic or domesticated strategies enhance readability yet risk semantic reduction. These choices carry ideological implications, shaping theological understanding and influencing broader discourses, including interfaith dialogue and policy debates. Empirically, the study corroborates and extends prior research by demonstrating, through corpus analysis, that literal equivalence predominates (41%), particularly among translators such as *Saheeh* International.

COMPARATIVE INSIGHTS FROM BIBLICAL TRANSLATION STUDIES

Translation of sacred texts has long grappled with the balance between fidelity and intelligibility. Eugene Nida's (1964) *dynamic equivalence* was initially developed in the context of Bible translation to make the Gospel accessible to diverse linguistic communities. However, in Qur'anic translation, the application of Nida's model is far more contested. While Bible translators often embrace paraphrase to prioritize communicative clarity, Muslim scholars have consistently emphasized the sacred inimitability of Qur'anic Arabic, leading to greater reluctance toward dynamic renderings (Abdel Haleem 2010).

The findings of this study demonstrate that while Yusuf Ali occasionally aligns with Nida's communicative model, the overall dominance of literal and foreignizing strategies among Qur'an

translators illustrates a fundamental divergence from Christian translation traditions. This suggests that Qur'anic translation is not only a linguistic act but also a theological negotiation of *how far translation can go* without encroaching on the sanctity of revelation. By situating the Qur'an within broader debates in translation studies, this research highlights the asymmetry between biblical and Qur'anic translation practices, thereby expanding the theoretical reach of equivalence models.

SOUTHEAST ASIAN RECEPTION AND PEDAGOGICAL CONTEXTS

A further dimension often overlooked in global Qur'an translation studies is the regional reception of translations, particularly in Southeast Asia. In Malaysia and Indonesia, where English functions as a second or foreign language, Yusuf Ali's translation remains widely circulated due to its explanatory style and pedagogical accessibility. His domesticated renderings of terms such as *ummah* ("people") or *zakat* ("alms") resonate with readers who encounter English Qur'an translations as study aids rather than devotional replacements.

By contrast, Saheeh International is increasingly popular among Salafi-oriented communities in the region, reflecting the appeal of foreignization and transliteration strategies that align with doctrinal conservatism. Pickthall, though historically influential, has less currency among younger readers due to its archaic style. These reception patterns confirm that translation strategies are not abstract choices but pragmatic responses to local pedagogical and ideological needs.

Novelty arises here in the study's attention to context: previous scholarship often analyzed translation strategies in isolation, whereas this research demonstrates how strategies intersect with regional readerships and pedagogical environments.

GLOBAL VS LOCAL IMPLICATIONS OF TRANSLATION STRATEGIES

The global circulation of English Qur'an translations positions them as key mediators of Islam in interfaith dialogue and comparative theology. Domestication strategies, such as Yusuf Ali's rendering of *jihad* as "strive" or "struggle," facilitate cross-cultural understanding but risk diluting doctrinal precision. Foreignization, exemplified by Saheeh International's retention of terms such as *salah* and *shirk*, safeguards authenticity but erects barriers

for non-Muslim readers unfamiliar with Islamic terminology.

This tension mirrors broader debates in translation ethics: should translators prioritize the target audience's accessibility or the source culture's integrity (Venuti 1995). The novelty of this study lies in grounding these theoretical debates in empirical evidence, demonstrating how these strategies operate across a corpus of 20 semantically central terms. The patterns uncovered demonstrate that Qur'an translation is never value-neutral; it carries implications for pedagogy, interfaith relations, and even political discourse, particularly in post-9/11 contexts where terms like *jihad* are hotly contested (Hadj-Yasin 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that translation strategies for the Qur'an are influenced by linguistic factors, theological orientation, cultural context, and pedagogical objectives. By integrating corpus-based quantitative analysis with qualitative interpretation, the research elucidates how translators navigate meaning across linguistic and doctrinal boundaries.

Four principal patterns are identified. First, literal equivalence predominates, particularly in Pickthall and Saheeh International, reflecting a strong commitment to fidelity to the Arabic source and caution regarding interpretive expansion. Second, dynamic equivalence is most apparent in Yusuf Ali, whose pedagogical aims result in paraphrasing or elaboration for communicative clarity. Third, foreignization is prominent in Saheeh International, which retains Arabic terms such as *salah*, *zakat*, *halal*, and *haram* to ensure doctrinal precision. Fourth, domestication, though least common, is employed by Yusuf Ali to align Qur'anic concepts with culturally familiar frameworks for Anglophone audiences. Collectively, these patterns underscore the persistent tension between fidelity and intelligibility. Literal renderings maintain proximity to the Arabic but risk semantic reduction; dynamic strategies enhance accessibility but may introduce interpretive bias. Foreignization preserves authenticity yet restricts accessibility, while domestication broadens comprehension at the potential cost of conceptual dilution.

The study recommends that future research be expanded both diachronically and cross-culturally. Examining additional translations across historical periods and regions, as well as conducting

reception studies involving both Muslim and non-Muslim readers, would enhance understanding of how Qur'anic terminology is interpreted. Interdisciplinary methodologies incorporating corpus stylistics, cognitive linguistics, and digital humanities, including natural language processing and machine learning, could facilitate analysis of larger datasets and multiple languages. Ultimately, the findings emphasize that Qur'anic translation is an interpretive, context-dependent practice, and systematic analysis can clarify how translators mediate between divine revelation and human comprehension.

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENT (AI) GENERATED TEXT DECLARATION

This article has used artificial intelligence (AI), specifically ChatGPT by OpenAI, as a support tool for drafting and content review. All facts have been re-verified by the author to ensure accuracy and contextual relevance.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest that might influence the work.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This study did not involve human or animal subjects. All data used were obtained from publicly accessible sources and did not include any personally identifiable information. Ethical approval was therefore not required.

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