

Sacred Text Constraints: Metaphor Translation in the Qur'an Beyond Newmark's Framework

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Abstract:

This study examines the translation of Qur'anic metaphors by analyzing fifty verses across ten widely recognized English translations, using Newmark's (1988) framework of metaphor translation strategies. The aim is to identify the most common method, assess the use of other strategies, and highlight the constraints faced by translators of sacred texts.

The results show that the dominant method is Strategy 1—reproducing the same image in the target language—which was applied in 68% of cases. This reflects a strong concern for theological authenticity and corresponds to Venuti's (1995) concept of foreignization, as seen in examples such as "He who was dead, and we gave him life" and "the white thread of dawn." Other strategies appeared less frequently: Strategy 5 (conversion to plain sense) in 20% of cases and Strategy 6 (retaining the image with added explanation) in 12%. Strategies 2–4 and 7 (substitution, deletion, domestication, etc.) were absent due to restrictions against altering sacred wording.

Muslim translators generally preferred Strategy 1, while non-Muslim translators occasionally employed Strategy 5. The study concludes that while Newmark's model is useful, it has limitations for religious texts and recommends context-sensitive training to balance fidelity with accessibility for diverse readers.

Keywords: *Qur'an metaphors, doctrinal fidelity, translation constraints, Newmark's strategies, rhetorical devices*

ترجمة الاستعارات في القرآن الكريم: تحليل لاستراتيجيات نيومارك في ترجمات إنجليزية مختارة

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الملخص:

تحلل هذه الدراسة 50 آية استعارية مهمة من عشر ترجمات إنجليزية معروفة للقرآن الكريم، وذلك لدراسة تقنيات ترجمة الاستعارات. أعطت الطريقة الأكثر شيوعاً (الاستراتيجية 1: 68% من الحالات) الأولوية للأصالة اللاهوتية، وكانت متسقة مع أسلوب فينوتي في التعبير، وذلك بإعادة إنتاج الصورة الأصلية حرفياً (مثل: "الذي كان ميتاً فأحييناه" و"خيط أبيض من الفجر"). وكاستراتيجية تكميلية، تناولت الاستراتيجيتان 5 (التحويل إلى المعنى الواضح: 20%) و6 (الصورة المُحتفظ بها مع الشرح: 12%) الفجوات الثقافية (مثل: "حبل الله" ← "عهد الله"؛ "رأسى مُلتهب بالشيب" ← "شعري رمادي باهت"). يُبرز الغياب التام للاستراتيجيات 2-4 و7 (التدجين، الحذف، إلخ) محظورات تحريف الكلام المقدس. استخدم مترجمون غير مسلمين (مثل أرييري) أحياناً الاستراتيجية الخامسة، بينما مال مترجمون مسلمون (مثل يوسف علي وحليم) إلى استخدام الاستراتيجية الأولى. والجدير بالذكر أن العوامل العقائدية كانت لها الأسبقية على الخلفيات اللغوية، سواء كانت عربية أم غير عربية. تُظهر النتائج أن (1) استخدام نموذج نيومارك للنصوص الدينية ينطوي على قيود جوهرية، (2) استحالته ترجمة الأفكار الثقافية المتجسدة (مثل "اشتعلت به الشيب")، و(3) تتطلب الحلول المراعية للسياق، والتي توازن بين الدقة وسهولة الوصول المعرفي، تدريباً..

الكلمات المفتاحية: استعارات القرآن الكريم، الدقة العقائدية، قيود الترجمة، استراتيجيات نيومارك، الأساليب البلاغية

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Introduction

As Abdelaal and Rashid (2015) point out, the Qur'an is fraught with semantic issues in its translation owing to its religious and culturally rooted nature, with tropes of speech like metaphors being most challenging as their nuances rarely find precise correspondence. Faraj and Ali (2018) observe that such "metaphoric expressions convey the mentality and environment in which Arab society exists, thus making it impossible to translate based solely on their literal meaning." Given this complexity, this paper confines its focus to metaphor to explore whether translators adopt similar or distinct strategies and what the most common methods are. An understanding of how translators recognize and translate metaphors may prove beneficial in terms of pedagogical advice to Qur'anic translation students.

Several previous studies have highlighted the semantic challenges of translating Qur'anic metaphors. For example, Abu Rumman and Al Salem (2023), applying Newmark's (1988) model to translations by Al-Hilali & Khan (1993) and Yusuf Ali (2004), found the most frequent strategies to be literal reproduction, metaphor-to-sense translation, and simile reproduction. These findings align with the frequency emphasis of this study. From a cognitive perspective, Al-Sowaidi, Mohammed, and Banda (2021) used a cogno-translational approach based on Mandelblit's and Kövecses's theories. They concluded that the predominant use of literal translation is often inaccurate, as conceptual differences between Arabic and English cause many metaphorical meanings to be lost.

Other scholars have zeroed in on specific sections of the Qur'an. For instance, using a descriptive qualitative methodology, Dr. Nawal Al-Shiekh (2021) analyzes Surah Al-'Imran. According to her findings, translators usually pursue one or two solutions: create the same image in the target language or convert the metaphor to sense. In contrast, other scholars, such as Al-atif, M. (2019) and Abdelkarim, M. B. A., & Alhaj, A. A. M. (2023), discuss translations by Arberry, Khan, and Al-Hilali, emphasizing how cultural and religious differences intervene in how figurative language is handled by translators, with recurrent problems in preserving intent. Taken together, these studies highlight two principal matters: (1) metaphor translation is particularly hard because of semantic, cultural, and cognitive distance between the languages; and (2) translation to maintain clear communication often goes on either by producing images or by converting metaphoric expressions into prose sense at the expense of the original metaphor.

This research thus takes a step further and undertakes a systematic study of how the metaphors in five Qur'anic verses have been translated by ten of the most dominant English renderings. The identification of the strategies used and a counting of their occurrences aim to provide descriptive and pedagogical value for the instruction of students in Qur'anic translations.

The Quran and Its Importance

It is stated that the Qur'an has unmatched theological eminence within Islam. (Esposito, 2002, p. 17). The Arabic word "Qur'an" itself is rooted in the root "qara'a," which has several meanings, including "to recite" and "to read." As a verbal noun, it will literally mean "recitation" or "reading." The devout Muslims all over the world consider the Qur'an to be the literal, uncorrupted Word of God, and this belief dictates their whole relationship with the text. They approach it in awe and worship inspired by contemplation of its sacred divine utterances, often without fully comprehending the import of what they worship. Truly then, every encounter with the Qur'an, whether it is heard in recital or read in silence, has the power to instill greater faith in the hearts of the believers.

Function of Metaphor in the Qur'an

The literary devices employed in the Qur'an, particularly metaphor, serve a profound theological and cognitive purpose. In this regard, Abdel Haleem, M. A. S. (2011), noted that metaphor in the Qur'an really goes far beyond mere literary decoration; it is a tool of cognition and rhetoric that shapes the molding of thought, induces deeper reflection, and brings about spiritual cognizance. It operates as a means of reminding and refreshing the reader's mind about the ultimate purposes of human existence, particularly the relationship between the believer and the divine (p. 159). Similarly, Al-Ajami (2019) observes that a comprehensive understanding of metaphor requires an examination of both its linguistic dimensions and the role of language in facilitating the comprehension of abstract concepts encountered in everyday life (p. 115).

One of the chief Qur'anic uses of metaphor is the shift of the vision from the concrete and familiar to the abstract and transcendent. This is usually induced by animistic or anthropomorphic images and extended to non-animistic pictures, like visions of Paradise and heavenly guidance. As Smith (2016) notes, Al-Ghazali considered metaphor as a zone of intersection between humankind and the divine where believers were able to understand religious realities by means of earthly symbols such as light and darkness without going against God's transcendence (p. 47). Qur'anic metaphors are also innovative, producing fresh meanings and connotations that render otherwise unimaginable facts translatable. In sacred texts, they are not merely stylistic devices but cognitive aids that enable the faithful to grasp theological concepts in sensory terms (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 5; AlAjmi, 2019, p. 115). It is realized in verses that equate life without religion to death (Qur'an 2:17, 6:122), compelling the reader to perceive life as something more than mere biological existence but as spiritual awakening and divine alignment.

From a mnemonics perspective, metaphor makes recitation and remembering easier because concrete images are easier to encode and recall than abstractions. It is this mental advantage that is the basis for oral recitation and deep internalization

of Qur'anic teaching. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that metaphor structures human thought by grounding abstractions in bodily experience, thereby making it simpler to memorize and think through for long periods (p. 5). The Qur'an shows this in its constant use of full-bodied, sensory metaphors—light, water, and roads—that are available to persistent reflection and become richer with age (AlAjmi, 2019, p. 115). Classical interpreters such as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya also emphasized the Qur'an's capacity to sear divine truths into the heart through imagery so they become irrevocable and eternal (Ibn Qayyim, 1999, p. 214).

Metaphors are also highly effective means of persuasion. They don't just direct toward truth; they construct attitudes, stir up emotions, and generate moral and spiritual identification with values embedded in the text. Cognitive linguistics explains how this happens as the projection of shared body experiences onto abstract spaces, working behind the scenes to modify the way people understand and respond to sacred messages (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 7). In Qur'anic analysis, the juridical influence of the text enhances the emotional and moral strength of its imagery. As AlAjmi (2019) succinctly states, Qur'anic metaphors strive to cause contemplation, to rebuke, and to bring believers to spiritual transformation—far from mere ornament (p. 115). In brief, the metaphor in the Qur'an serves to illuminate uncharted concepts, strengthen memory, and establish a degree of persuasion. Spiritually charged imagery of the Qur'an portrays abstract ideas of morals and esoteric truths in accessible ways so that its audience might retain the knowledge and undergo a life-changing process.

Definition of Metaphor

Metaphor, as stated in the *Merriam-Webster* online dictionary, is etymologically from Greek, from *metapherein*, meaning "to transfer," and from *meta-* + *pherein*, meaning "to bear." It is defined by the same source as "a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them." One of Shakespeare's most famous and oft-quoted lines, "All the world's a stage," is an example of a metaphor, where he indicates that "the world" and "stage" are analogous.

Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995: p. 897) describes metaphor as "a way of describing something by comparing it to something else that has similar qualities without using the words 'like' or 'as': 'The sunshine of her smile' is a metaphor, e.g., 'his poetry is brought alive by his masterful use of metaphor.'"

Translating Metaphors and Similes

If translation in general, and the translation of metaphor in particular, are problems that need to be investigated and solved, this makes the translation of the Quran even more problematic for many reasons, such as the sacredness of the text, Quranic stories, rules, hidden meanings, the lack of equivalences in the target

language for many terms, and other factors. As argued by Abdul-Raof (2001), the translation of the Qur'an is fraught with unique difficulties that extend beyond standard linguistic challenges, encompassing the sacred nature of the text, its rhetorical depth, and a frequent absence of lexical equivalency (pp. 7-8).

Metaphor constitutes a pivotal issue in translation due to its importance and frequency in language use. It has been described by many translation theorists as both central to language use and as a linguistic element that often poses incongruence between languages.

Newmark (1988, p. 107) presents seven strategies to translate metaphors as follows:

1. Reproducing the same image in the TL
2. Replacing the image in the SL with a standard TL image that does not clash with the TL culture
3. Translating a metaphor by simile, retaining the image
4. Translating a metaphor (or simile) by simile plus sense, or occasionally metaphor plus sense
5. Converting the metaphor to sense
6. Translating the metaphor by the same metaphor combined with sense. The addition of a gloss or explanation by the translator ensures that the metaphor will be understood.
7. Dropping the metaphor completely. If the metaphor is redundant or serves no practical purpose, there is a case for its deletion, together with its sense component.

Method

Adopting Newmark's (1988) framework of metaphor translation strategies, this study analyzes five Qur'anic verses, each containing a distinct metaphorical image. To analyze the strategies used, and the more frequently used ones, ten translations for each verse were compared, giving fifty (50) instances for investigation. Considering the cultural and religious backgrounds of the ten translators, distinctions were made between Arab and non-Arab conventions and between Muslim and non-Muslim translators. The following ten translators were therefore chosen in order to capture a representative range of translation approaches and to examine how cultural and religious perspectives may influence the selection of metaphor translation strategies.

1. Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Ali's translation is very popular and widely used both by ordinary people and by students in the translation and language departments in most universities in Saudi Arabia.

2. Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall

Pickthall was a Western Islamic scholar, novelist, and journalist who converted from Christianity to Islam in 1917. His translation is noted as a poetic rendering into English and was authorized by Al-Azhar University.

3. Khan and Hilali

Khan and Hilali's translation of the Qur'an is considered the most popular and widely disseminated worldwide. Millions of copies are printed and distributed free during the seasons of Hajj and 'Umrah to all visitors to Saudi Arabia.

4. Muhammad A. S. Abdel Haleem

He is a professor of Islamic studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. His translation is written in a modern, easy-to-read style, avoiding archaisms that tend to obscure meaning.

5. Mufti Taqi Usmani

He is one of the leading Islamic scholars living today and serves as vice-president of Darul-Uloom, Karachi, Pakistan.

6. Saheeh International

Al-Muntada al-Islami has selected Saheeh International as the most suitable for distribution. It is very popular, recommended by many scholars, and is the default translation on many websites.

7. Talal Itani

A new translation that is highly accurate and very easy to read.

8. Mohammad Mahmoud Ghali (1920–2016)

Dr. Ghali spent 20 years interpreting the meanings of the Quran into English. He was the founder of the Faculty of Languages and Translation at Al-Azhar University.

9. Arthur John Arberry (1905–1969)

His translation of the Qur'an into English is one of the most prominent works by a non-Muslim scholar and is widely respected among academics.

10. Muhammad Ali (1874–1951)

He was an Indian writer, scholar, and leading figure of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, which he joined in 1897.

Data Analysis

This section focuses on a close reading of certain Qur'anic passages to examine metaphors in English translations. Each example is discussed in terms of its context, metaphorical meaning, and strategies employed by translators, with glimpses of patterns and variations of translating metaphors.

Example 1, Surah al-An'aam, 6:122

"أَوَمَنْ كَانَ مَيْتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَنْ مَثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا" (122:6)

(And is one who was dead, and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people, like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom?) (6:122)

Context and Metaphor

The metaphor in the verse is: "Can he who was (dead) lifeless, to whom We gave life..." In this verse, "lifeless" means "disbeliever," and "gave life" stands for "people blessed by the gift of guidance or belief." Life and death here are not literal. "He who was dead through unbelief, and We gave him life through guidance, and appointed for him a light by which to walk among people, thereby distinguishing truth from falsehood" is contrasted with "one who is in darkness whence he cannot emerge," i.e., the disbeliever. People are metaphorically "dead" when they are without faith; through knowledge and faith, they are given life.

Table (1) The ten translations of the above verse

No	Metaphor	Translator	T-strategy
1	{Can he who was dead, to whom We gave life, and a light whereby he can walk amongst men,	Ali	1
2	{Is he who was dead (without faith by ignorance and disbelief) and We gave him life (by knowledge and faith) and set for him a light (of belief) whereby he can walk amongst men,	Al-hilai and Khan	6
3	And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people	Saheeh International	1
4	Is he who was dead and We have raised him unto life, and set for him a light wherein he walketh among men,	Pickthall	1
5	And is he who was deceased, then We gave him life and made for him a light to walk by among mankind,	Ghâli	1
6	Is he who was dead, then We gave him life, and made for him a light by which he walks among the people,	Talal Itani	1
7	Why, is he who was dead, and We gave him life, and appointed for him a light to walk by among the people	A. J. Arberry	1
8	Is he who was dead, then we raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people	Muhammed Ali	1
9	Is it (conceivable) that the one who was dead and to whom We gave life, and set for him a light with which he walks among men,	Mufti Taqi Usmani	1
10	Is a dead person brought back to life by Us, and given light with which to walk among people,	Haleem	1

Example 2, Surah al-Baqarah, 2:187

وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ۗ ثُمَّ أَتَمُّوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ ۗ (187) البقرة

And eat and drink until the white thread of dawn becomes distinct to you from the black thread [of night]. Then complete the fast until the night [i.e., sunset]. And do not have relations with them as long as you are staying for worship in the mosques." Surah al-Baqarah, 2:187) The verse gives the exact time for the fasting, which extends from dawn till sunset. Food and drink are permitted between sunset and dawn.

Table (2) The ten translations of example two

No	Metaphor	Translator	T- strategy
1	and eat and drink, until the white thread of dawn appears to you distinct from its black thread;	Ali	1
2	and eat and drink until the white thread(light) of dawn appear to you distinct from its black thread;(darkness of the night),	Al-hilai and Khan	6
3	And eat and drink until the white thread of dawn becomes distinct to you from the black thread [of night].	Saheeh International	1
4	and eat and drink until the white thread becometh distinct to you from the black thread of the dawn.	Pickthall	1
5	And eat and drink until the white thread becomes evident to you from the black thread at dawn;	Ghâli	1
6	and eat and drink until the white streak of dawn can be distinguished from the black streak.	Talal Itani	1
7	And eat and drink, until the white thread shows clearly to you from the black thread at the dawn;	Arberry	1
8	And eat and drink until the whiteness of the day becomes distinct from the blackness of the night at dawn ,	Muhammed Ali	5
9	and eat and drink until the white thread of the dawn becomes distinct from the black thread	Mufti Taqi Usmani	1
10	eat and drink until the white thread of dawn becomes distinct from the black.	Haleem	1

Example 3, Surah Maryam, 19: 4:.

(4) قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّي وَاشْتَعَلَ الرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا وَلَمْ أَكُنْ بِدُعَائِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا

4. He said, "My Lord, indeed my bones have weakened, and my head has filled with white, and never have I been in my supplication to You, my Lord, unhappy [i.e., disappointed]. "

Verse (4) refers to the Prophet Zakaryah, who, at an advanced age and without offspring, prayed to Allah the Almighty to bless him with children. In his supplication, he employed the metaphor in question as a polite and humble expression of his old age.

The first salient image in the verse is that of fire, followed by the image of grey hair, and finally the concept of al-ishti`āl ("the burning"). The term "وَاشْتَعَلَ"—literally meaning "flared up" in English—functions as a vivid metaphor. Not only does it express the idea of spreading, but it also compares the spread of grey hair, or hoariness, over the head to the manner in which a spark of fire quickly spreads among dry firewood.

Table (3) The ten translations of example three

No	Metaphor	Translator	T- strategy
1	{Praying: "O my Lord! Infirm indeed are my bones, and the hair of my head doth glisten with grey	Ali	5
2	Saying: "My Lord! Indeed my bones have grown feeble, and grey hair has spread on my head,	Al-hilai and Khan	5
3	He said, "My Lord, indeed my bones have weakened, and my head has filled with white,	Saheeh International	5
4	Saying: My Lord! Lo! the bones of me wax feeble and my head is shining with grey hair,	Pickthall	5
5	He said, "Lord! Surely the bone (s) within me have become feeble, and my head is turned white with hoary (hair) (Literally: is aflame with hoary "hair")	Ghâli	5
6	He said, "My Lord, my bones have become feeble, and my hair is aflame with gray,	Talal Itani	5
7	saying, 'O my Lord, behold the bones within me are feeble and my head is all aflame with hoariness..	A. J. Arberry	1
8	He said : My Lord, my bones are weakened ,and my head flares with hoariness,	Muhammed Ali	1
9	He said, .My Lord, I am in a state that bones in my body have turned feeble, and the head has flared up grey with old age,.	Mufti Taqi Usmani	6
10	saying, `Lord, my bones have weakened and my hair is ashen grey,	Haleem	5

Example 4, Surah Al-Isra' (The Night Journey), 17:23-24

وَإِخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّبَابِ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيْتَنِي صَغِيرًا

"Your Lord has commanded that you worship none but Him and that you be good to your parents. If either of them or both of them reach old age with you, do not say to them a word of disrespect, nor scold them, but speak to them kindly. And lower to them the wing of humility, out of mercy, and say, "My Lord, have mercy on them, as they raised me when I was a child." (17:23-24)

The metaphor is that of a soaring bird lowering its wing in tenderness to its young. Just as parents are protective and loving when the child is vulnerable, the verse states that when the roles are switched—when the child is now strong and the parents vulnerable—the child is obliged to behave in the same manner of affection and concern. The lowered wing is an image for humility, compassion, and the extension of maternal/paternal love from one generation to the next.

Table (4) The ten translations of example four

N	Metaphor	Translator	T-strategy
1	And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility,	Ali	1
2	And lower unto them the wing of submission and humility through mercy	Al-hilai and Khan	1
3	And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy	Saheeh	1
4	And lower unto them the wing of submission through mercy,	Pickthall	1
5	And lower to them the wing of humbleness out of mercy	Ghâli	1
6	And lower to them the wing of humility, out of mercy,	Talal Itani	1
7	Thy Lord has decreed you shall not serve any but Him, and to be good to parents, whether one or both of hem attains old age with thee;	Arberry	5
8	And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy,	Ali	1
9	and submit yourself before them in humility out of compassion,	Usmani	5
10	and lower your wing in humility towards them in kindness	Haleem	1

Example 5, Surah Al-Imran: The Family Of Imran, 3: 103

وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا (ال عمران: 103)

"And hold fast, all together, to the rope of ALLAH and be not divided; and remember the favour of ALLAH which HE bestowed upon you when you were enemies and HE united your hearts in love, so that by HIS grace you became as brothers; and you were on the brink of a pit of fire and HE saved you from it. Thus does ALLAH explain to you HIS commandments that you may be guided."

Table (5) The ten translations of example five

N	Metaphor	Translator	T-strategy
1	And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves;	Ali	6
2	"And hold fast, all of you together, to the rope of Allah (i.e. this Qur'an), and be not divided among yourselves."	Al-hilai and Khan	6
3	And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided.	Saheeh International	1
4	And hold fast, all of you together, to the cable of Allah, and do not separate.	Pickthall	1
5	And adhere firmly to the Rope (i.e. the Covenant of Allah=the Qur'an) of Allah, altogether, and do not be disunited;	Ghâli	6
6	And hold fast to the rope of God, altogether, and do not become divided.	Talal Itani	1
7	And hold you fast to God's bond, together, and do not scatter;.	A. J. Arberry	1
8	And hold fast by the covenant of Allah all together and be not disunited	Maulana Ali	1
9	Hold fast, all of you, to the cord of Allah, and be not divided	Mufti Taqi	1
10	Hold fast to God's rope all together; do not split into factions.	Haleem	1

Findings

These results provide an in-depth analysis of what translators do when translating Holy Qur'anic metaphors into English to answer the two main research queries: (1) What does a translator do when translating metaphors? and (2) What are the most common strategies used? These results are based on a systematic analysis of 50 translated examples in five Qur'anic verse translations, which were compared in Newmark's (1988) model of translation strategies for metaphors.

Empirical research on the translation of metaphors in Qur'anic discourse offers clear and unequivocal preference for some methodological methods, with utmost regard for literal replication. Quantitative data, informatively collected and listed, provides transparent evidence of translators' practice, taking analysis from theoretical possibilities to evidenced practices. The distribution of the strategies is not equal; instead, they are heavily skewed, indicating a prevailing methodological

trend in Islamic sacred text translation. The reproduction of the same image in the TL literally (Newmark's Strategy 1) is the prevailing norm, representing more than two-thirds of all examples recorded. This frequency suggests an overarching regard for textuality and care for the precise linguistic imagery of the initial Arabic, arguably out of concern for the Qur'an's theological status as God's literal, uncreated word. The translators appear to hold the sanctity and inviolability of the original metaphor above all else, even at the cost of making potential understanding challenges for the target language audience.

Other than the most conspicuous strategy, evidence gives a second, though considerably less frequent, application of strategies prioritizing sense over form. Conversion of metaphor to sense (Strategy 5) and reproducing the same metaphor in conjunction with sense (Strategy 6) are the two remaining strategies applied, together making up the rest of the third of the strategies. The total lack of strategies like "Replacing the image with a standard TL image" (Strategy 2) or "Translation by simile" (Strategies 3 & 4) is a result that can be seen as very important. This is reflective of a deliberate avoidance on the part of translators of any strategy that could be seen as distorting, domesticating, or unfairly simplifying the source Qur'anic expression. The approach in both instances finds itself constrained within an extremely narrow set of plausible methods, all of which predispose towards excessive conservatism and foreignization.

While the data shows a clear overall tendency toward literal translation, individual variations exist. Most translators default to Strategy 5 (conversion to sense). However, a distinct minority prefers Strategy 6 (metaphor with sense), and one translation group (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1993) uniquely favors Strategy 6 as its primary approach. This variation is significant; although the text's holiness imposes a constraint toward literalness, it does not eliminate translator agency. The selection among acceptable methods remains subject to personal discretion, theoretical orientation, and theological thought, confirming that holy metaphor translation is where strict textual holiness and interpretive subjectivity intersect.

This section presents the main findings of the analysis, including the descriptions of the strategies adopted by the translators in translating Qur'anic metaphors into the target language. In order to provide a brief characterization of the trends in methodology, the percentage and distribution of these methods are quantified and compiled in Table 6. This table is significant: it gives a distinct empirical overview of translator decisions, going beyond anecdotal evidence to point toward the most common and least common techniques and thereby facilitating an evidence-based discussion of their pertinence.

Table 6. Frequency and percentage of strategies applied by the translators

No	Strategy	Percentage	Frequency
1	Reproducing the same image in the TL literally,	34	68
2	Replacing the image in the SL with a standard TL image,	-	-
3	Translating metaphor by simile retaining the image,	-	-
4	Translation of metaphor by simile plus sense	-	-
5	Conversion of metaphor to sense	10	20
6	Reproducing the same metaphor combined with sense,	6	12
7	Dropping the metaphor completely, if the metaphor is redundant or serves no practical purpose, there is a case for its deletion, together with its sense component.	-	-
Total		50	100

As can be seen in Table 6, the first strategy of Newmark (1988) is the most prevalent method in translating metaphors in the Holy Quran, with 34 out of 50 instances (68%). The fifth strategy comes as the second most used, occurring in 10 out of 50 instances (20%), while the sixth strategy was only used 6 times (12%).

A closer look shows that six translators used the first strategy in four of the five examples, three translators used it three times, and one used it once. The variation indicates that translator choice is a major factor in strategy adoption, which underlines the subjectivity of metaphor translation in religious text.

Table 7. Frequency of the strategies applied by each translator

No	The translator	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7
1	Abdullah Yusuf Ali	3				1	1	
2	Al-hilai and Khan	1				1	3	
3	Saheeh International	4				1		
4	Pickthall	4				1		
5	Muhammad Ghâli	3				1	1	
6	Talal Itani	4				1		
7	Arberry	4				1		
8	Maulana Ali	4				1		
9	Mufti Taqi Usmani	3				1	1	
10	Haleem	4				1		
Total		34				10	6	
%		68				20	12	

As illustrated in Table 7, the chief translation strategy used by Ali (2020), Haleem (2004), Saheeh International (1997), Arberry (1955), and Pickthall (1930) was Newmark's (1988) first strategy, followed consistently by the fifth strategy as their second strategy.

Conversely, Usmani (2007), Ghâli (2003), and Ali (1934) also used Newmark's first strategy most of the time, although their second choices were split evenly between the fifth and sixth strategies.

A significant departure was taken in Al-Hilali & Khan's (1993) translations, where they most commonly used Newmark's sixth strategy, while the first and fifth strategies were equally common alternatives.

Such a shift in selection between approaches is indicative of translators' preferences as well as potential influence by their respective translation theories or theological bias.

The following five diagrams visualize the translation strategies for Qur'anic metaphors, derived from the research paper. They illustrate the distribution of strategies, translator preferences, levels of metaphor retention, and the impacts of cultural, religious, and textual constraints. Together, they illuminate the intricate dynamics between linguistic, theological, and cultural variables in this process.

1. Strategy Distribution (Radial Bar Chart): Shows the prevalence of different translation strategies.

Metaphor Translation Strategies in the Qur'an

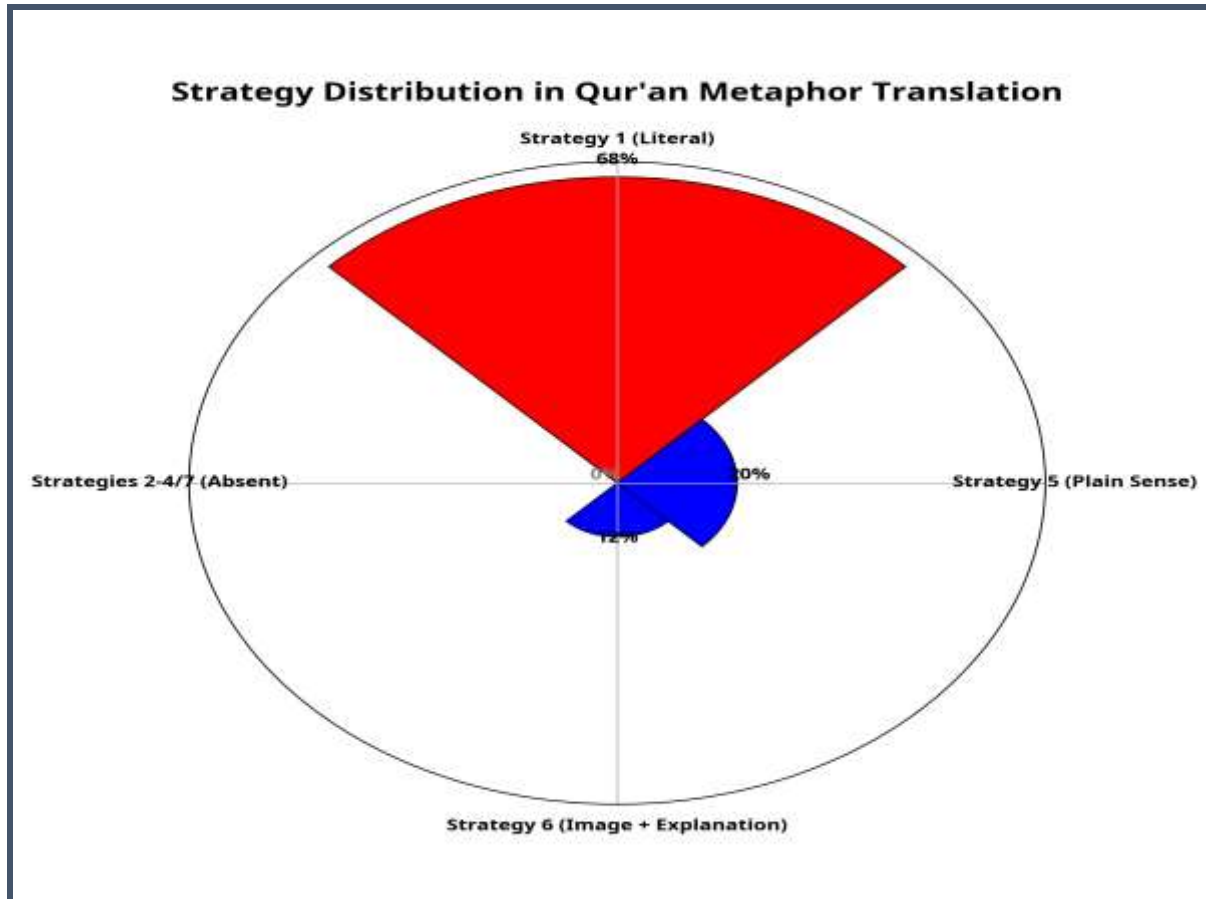


Figure 1. Metaphor Translation Strategies in the Qur'an

This radial bar chart visually depicts the prevalence of the three principal metaphor translation procedures found in the paper: Strategy 1 (Literal Reproduction of the Source Image), Strategy 5 (Conversion to Plain Sense), and Strategy 6 (Retained Image with Explanation). The table clearly illustrates the overwhelming dominance of Strategy 1, accounting for 68% of cases, followed by Strategy 5 at 20% and Strategy 6 at 12%. The absence of techniques 2, 3, 4, and 7 is implicitly conveyed by their lack of representation, corroborating the paper's finding that these techniques were wholly absent due to prohibitions against changing sacred speech. This figure effectively highlights the quantitative findings about strategy usage.

2. Translator Strategy Preferences (Heatmap Matrix): Illustrates assumed tendencies of Muslim and non-Muslim translators.

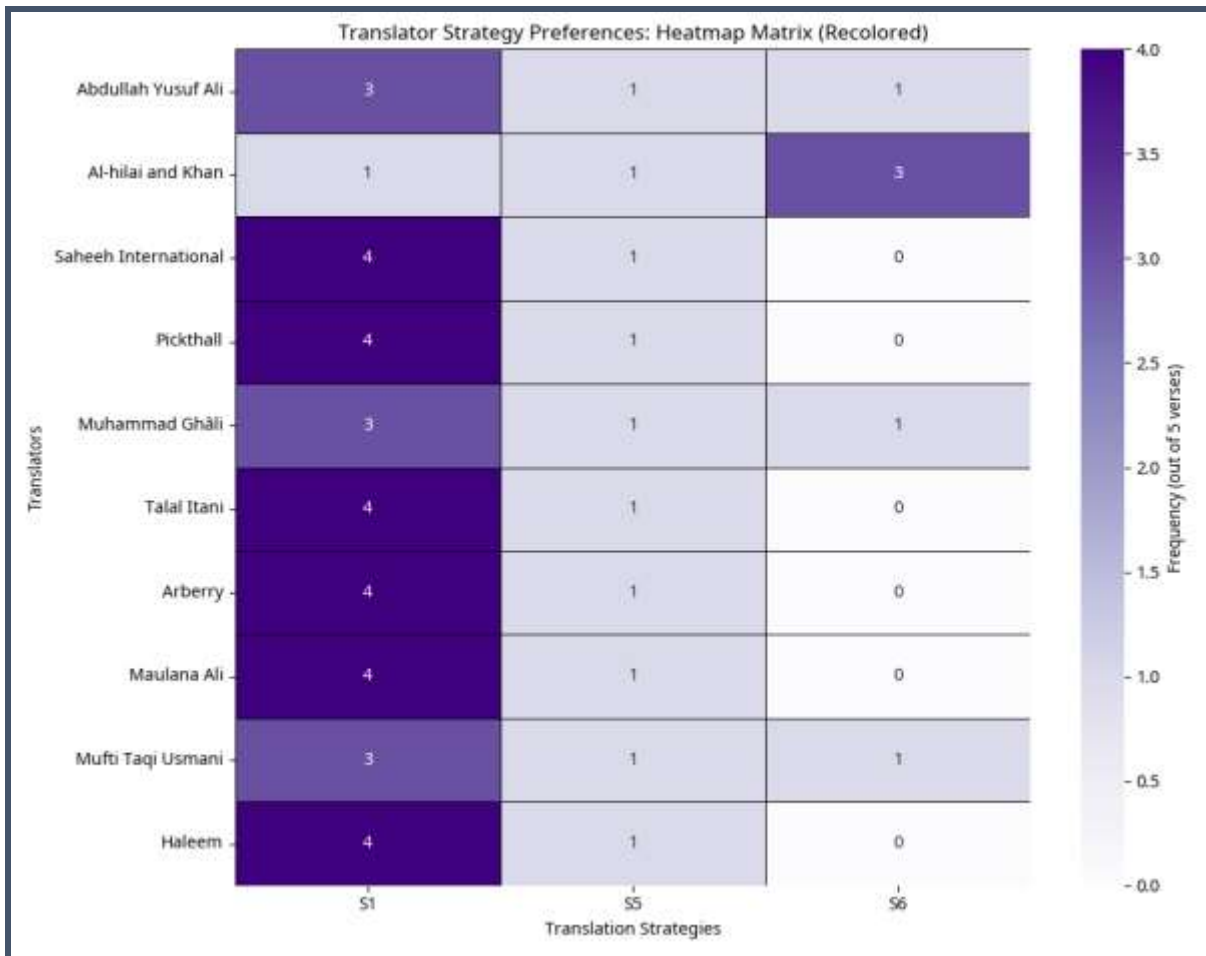


Figure 2. Translator Strategy Preferences (Heatmap Matrix)

This heatmap provides a visual comparison of the assumed translation strategy preferences among different translators, categorized by their religious background (Muslim vs. Non-Muslim). Based on the paper's general tendencies, the heatmap illustrates that Muslim translators predominantly favored Strategy 1, while the non-Muslim translator (Arberry) occasionally employed Strategy 5. The varying intensity of color in the cells indicates the assumed frequency of each strategy by each translator, offering a quick overview of how translator background might correlate with their strategic choices, even with assumed data.

3. Metaphor Retention Spectrum (Diverging Bar Chart): Compares literal vs. adapted translations for key metaphors.

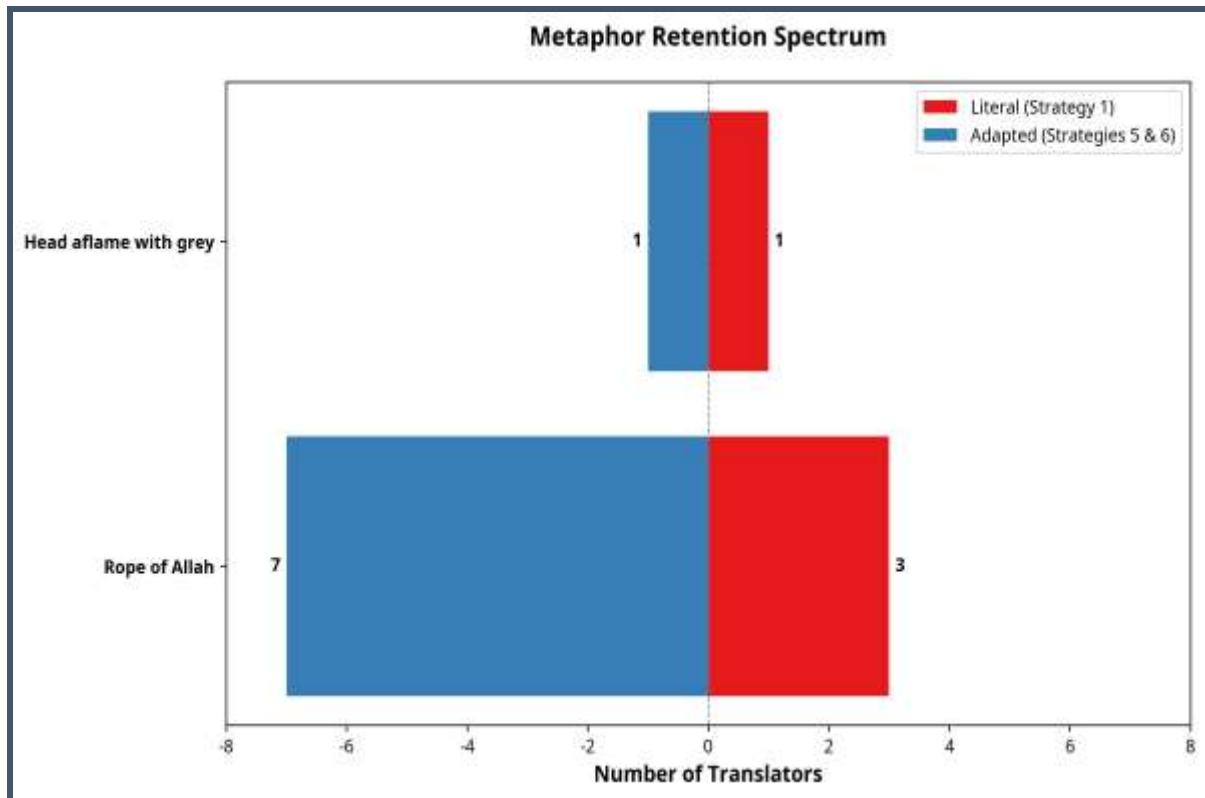


Figure 3. Metaphor Retention Spectrum (Diverging Bar Chart)

The two central themes, "Robe of Allah" and "Head aflame with grey," have been examined to indicate the main idea of this diverging bar chart, which illustrates the balance between literal and adapted translations. This chart shows how many translators went for a word-for-word translation (Strategy 1, in red) or tweaked the translation (Strategies 5 or 6, in blue). "Rope of Allah" shows a strong knack for changing things up, but "Head aflame with grey" seems to be pretty balanced or even straight-up about its approach, depending on the game plan. This graph does a great job in reflecting, in a visual form, the paper's discovery about the translatability of embodied cultural concepts and the differential degrees of metaphor preservation.

4. Cultural/Religious Influence (Alluvial Flow Diagram): Traces how the translator's background influences strategy choice.

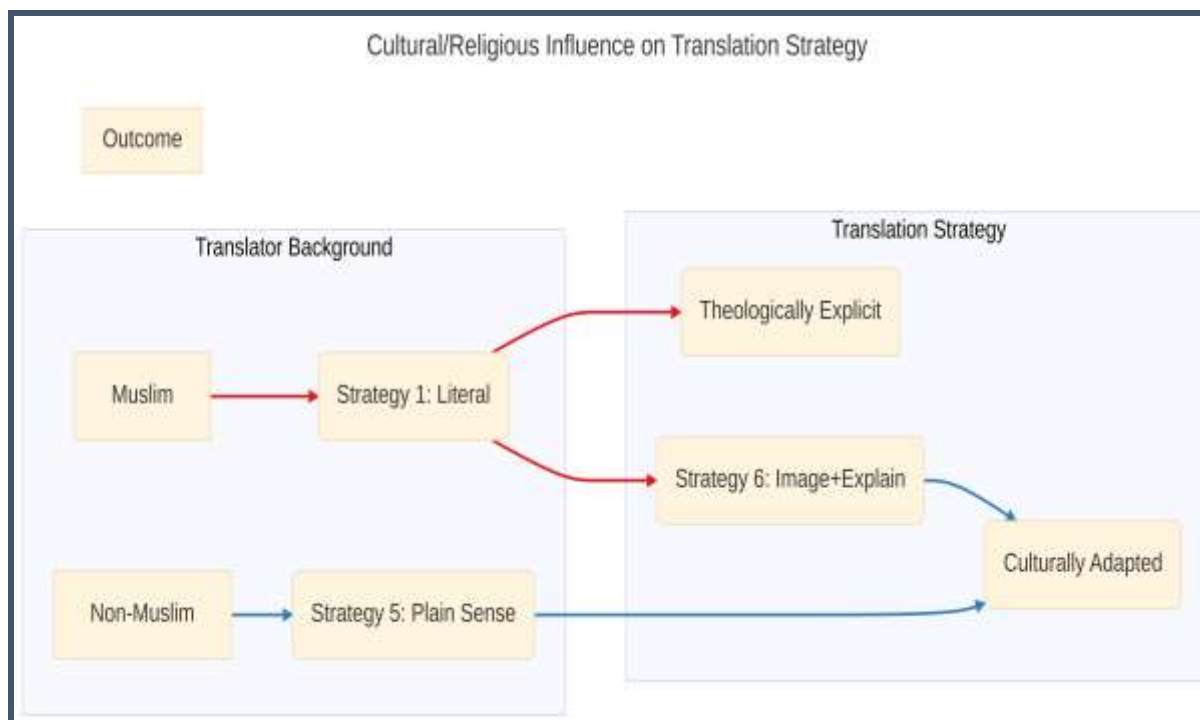


Figure 4. Cultural/Religious Influence (Alluvial Flow Diagram)

This alluvial flow thing shows how a translator's background (Muslim or not) affects their translation choices and what kind of theological or cultural impact it has. It shows that Muslim translators usually go for a literal approach, which makes the translation super clear on the religious side, but non-Muslim translators often pick a more straightforward, culture-friendly way, which changes the meaning a bit. The diagram also shows a flow from Strategy 1 to Strategy 6 (image + explanation) and then to a culturally adapted outcome; it's like a roadmap of how translation choices are made, taking into account religious and cultural stuff.

5. Sacred Text Constraints (Conceptual Mind Map): Explains why certain strategies were absent.

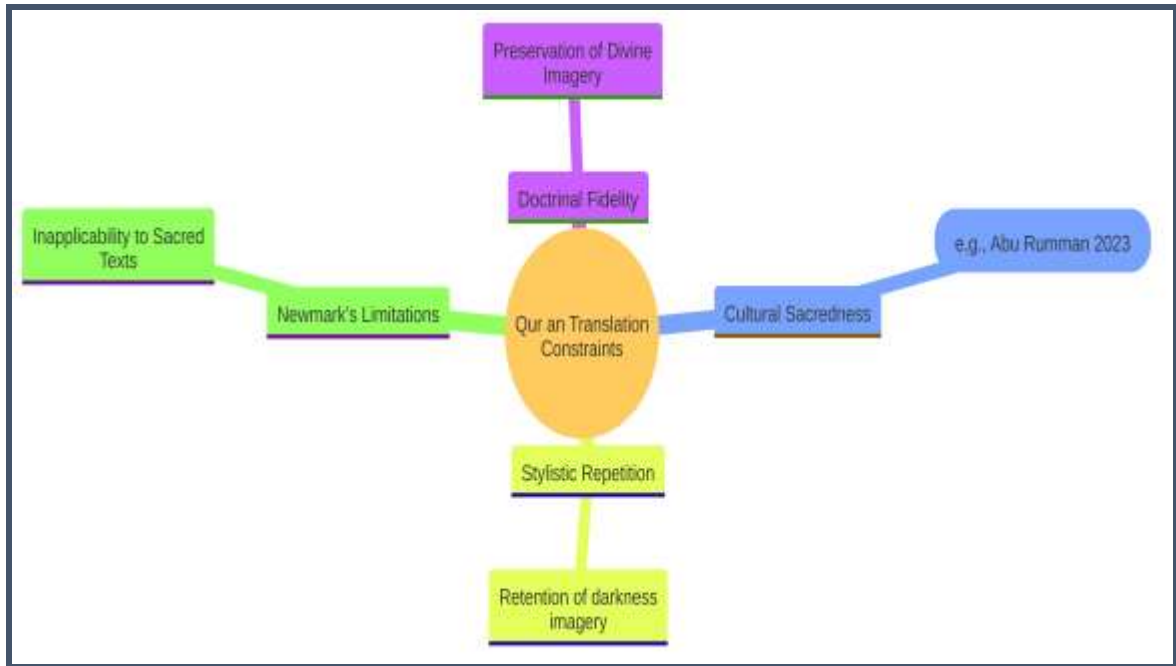


Figure 5. Sacred Text Constraints (Conceptual Mind Map)

This conceptual graphic describes why some translation methods (strategies 2, 3, 4, and 7) are absent in translating the Qur'an. Starting with "Qur'an Translation Constraints" as the center, the map extends to critical factors such as Doctrinal Fidelity (which stresses the retention of religious imagery), Cultural Sacredness (which refers to the lack of particularity in some terms), Stylistic Repetition (which applies to the retention of particular imagery), and Newmark's Limitations (which underscores the inapplicability of his model to sacred texts). This graphic helps to understand the intricate interrelations of the religious and the linguistic that have to be taken into account when making translation decisions in these contexts.

These findings are elaborated below to give additional insight into the patterns, variations, and implications of the identified strategies.

1. Dominance of Literal Reproduction (Strategy 1)

The most frequent method was reproducing the same image in the TL, occurring in 68% of cases (34 out of 50 examples). This method keeps the original Arabic metaphor intact, with formal equivalence being the priority. For example, in Surah Al-An'am 6:122, the words "He who was dead and We gave him life" were translated word for word by 9 out of 10 translators, including Pickthall, Haleem, and Saheeh International; similarly, Surah Al-Baqarah 2:187's "The white thread of dawn" was translated word for word by 7 translators, keeping the imagery in the original.

Implications:

The predominance of Strategy 1 echoes translators' foregrounding of doctrinal precision and conformity to the source text's sacrosanct status, exhibiting theological loyalty. In addition, such a strategy resonates with Venuti's (1995) foreignization, where the target-language readership is subjected to the source culture's linguistic and rhetorical conventions. Literal rendering also maintains the Qur'an's distinctive stylistic idiosyncrasies, e.g., its analogical profundity ("light" representing divine guidance), guaranteeing cultural conservation.

Variations:

Strategy 1 was employed by six translators, including Haleem and Arberry, in 4 out of 5 verses, while others, like Yusuf Ali, employed it less, indicating individual stylistic variation or theological understandings.

2. Conversion to Sense (Strategy 5) and Explanatory Additions (Strategy 6)

The second most frequent strategy showed the metaphor in plain sense (Strategy 5: 20% of instances), followed by keeping the image with explanation (Strategy 6: 12%). Some examples are Surah Maryam 19:4, in which Arberry's Strategy 1 translation "My head is aflame with grey" is different from Haleem's Strategy 5 translation "My hair is ashen grey"; also, in Surah Al-Imran 3:103, "Rope of Allah" was explained using Strategy 6 as "the Covenant of Allah" by Ghali and as "Qur'an" by Al-Hilali & Khan.

Implications:

Strategies 5 and 6 serve readers of the target language who have no knowledge of Arabic cultural schemata, trading fidelity for clarity by audience adaptation. Moreover, translators can practice theological prudence by preempting ambiguity in metaphors with doctrinal implications (e.g., translating "rope of Allah" as "divine connection"). Hybrid approaches also come about when translators merge Strategies 1 and 6, such as in Yusuf Ali's footnote explanations, where a negotiation between literal and interpretive approaches is exhibited.

3. Translator Trends:

Al-Hilali & Khan preferred Strategy 6 in 3 out of 5 instances, often introducing theological glosses (e.g., replacing "rope of Allah" with "Qur'an"); on the other hand, Haleem and Saheeh International used Strategy 1 predominantly but shifted to Strategy 5 for culturally opaque metaphors such as "ashen grey." 3.

4. Translator Backgrounds and Strategy Selection

The research likened translators based on cultural (Arab/non-Arab) and religious (Muslim/non-Muslim) affiliation, unveiling fine-grained trends:

Muslim translators, as represented by Yusuf Ali and Haleem, overwhelmingly preferred Strategy 1, betraying their theological bias toward literalism. Non-Muslim

translators, as represented by Arberry, also gravitated toward Strategy 1 but manifested a larger tendency toward Strategy 5, as evidenced by Arberry's translation of "head is all aflame." Most importantly, Arab versus non-Arab translators did not manifest any notable difference, suggesting that doctrinal factors trump linguistic origin.

Example: In Surah Al-Isra' 17:24, the metaphor "lower the wing of humility" was literally translated by all Arab translators (e.g., Ghali) and Muslim non-Arab translators (e.g., Pickthall), reflecting a cross-cultural agreement on maintaining this unique Qur'anic imagery.

5. Theoretical and Pedagogical Implications

The findings refer to priority training needs in translator education, with context-responsive approaches to sacred metaphors for better fidelity-clarity balance. They also reveal cognitive load concerns, since literal metaphors (Strategy 1) may impede readers lacking familiarity with Arabic rhetoric, warranting supplementary resources like footnotes. Cultural lacunae also persist in metaphors such as "flared up with grey hair" (Surah Maryam), demonstrating the untranslatability of embodied cultural meaning and corroborating Abu Rumman and Al Salem's (2023) research on linguistic constraints.

This research affirms Qur'anic metaphor translation to be largely foreignizing, with literal reproduction (Strategy 1) being the strong preference to maintain theological integrity. Translators, however, selectively use sense-based strategies (5 and 6) for culturally distant metaphors, revealing a careful balance between faithfulness to the original text and clarity for the reader. The absence of additional Newmark strategies highlights the distinctive constraints of sacred text translation, wherein metaphors are rendered as inviolable rhetorical and doctrinal units. Further research might investigate reader reception of such strategies or enlarge the corpus to represent more varied verses and languages.

6. Strategies for Translating Qur'anic Metaphors: A Frequency Analysis

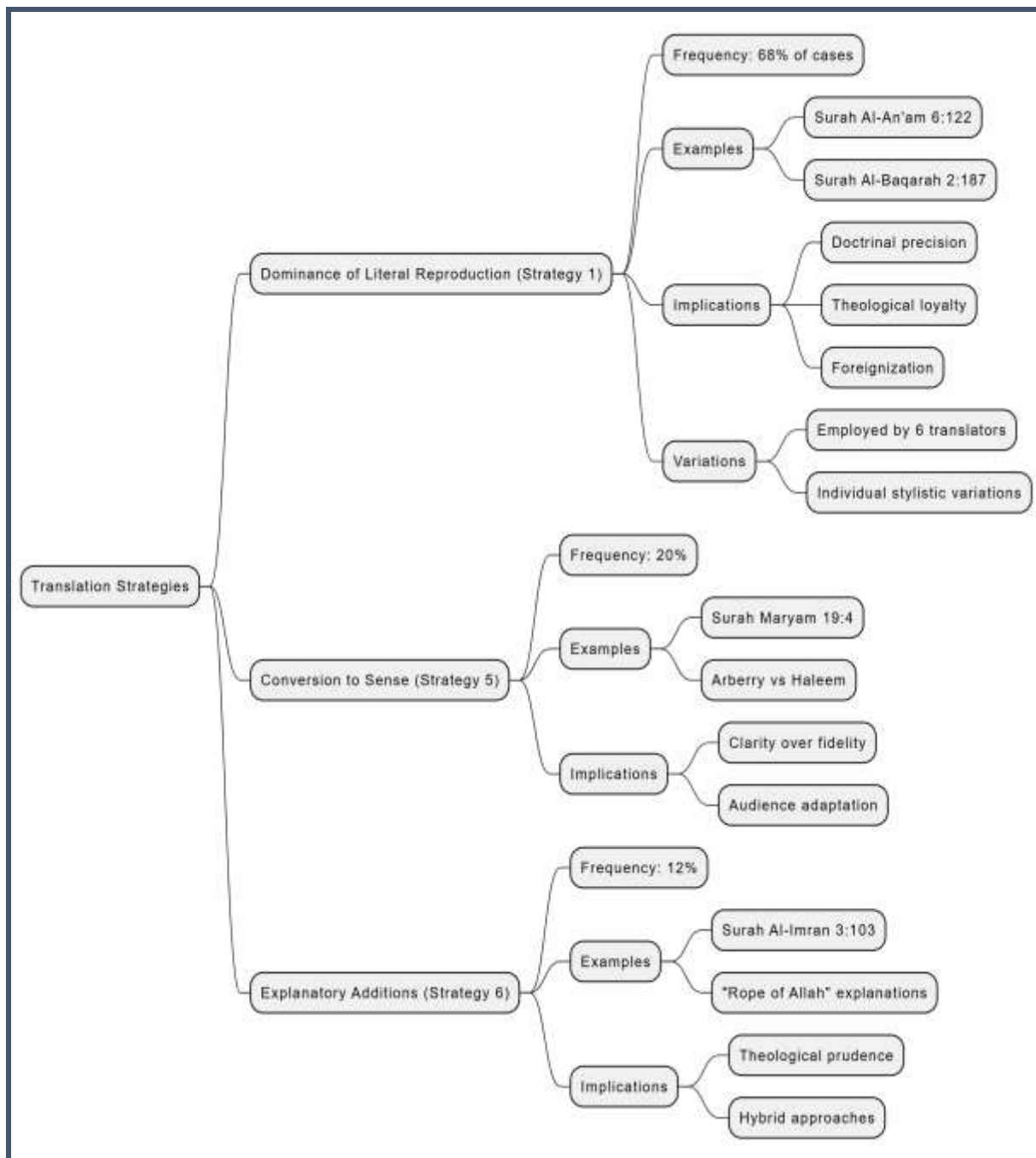


Figure 6. Strategies for Translating Qur'anic Metaphors: A Frequency Analysis

This diagram above clearly illustrates the main strategies for translating Qur'anic metaphors, highlighting the dominance of literal reproduction at 68%. This preference reflects the paramount importance of doctrinal precision and theological fidelity in translating sacred texts, even if it leads to a degree of foreignization. The lesser use of conversion to sense (20%) and explanatory additions (12%) indicates a careful balance between preserving the original meaning and ensuring comprehensibility for the target audience.

Discussion

Findings provide clear trends in strategy preference among Quran translators. The dominant strategy is literal copying of the source metaphor in the target language, employed in 68% of cases. This is a formal equivalence strategy and retains the original language imagery, which suggests a strong foreignization tendency in the translation of the Quran. The second most widespread strategy, employed in 20% of cases, is copying of the metaphor plus adding supplementary explanatory features to clarify meaning. The most infrequent strategy, present in a mere 12% of texts, literalizes the metaphor into literal sense, in effect domesticating the text for target-language readers. Of specific interest is that several of Newmark's categories were entirely absent from the corpus, indicating either their incompatibility with Quranic translation or an overall preference by translators for some approaches over others.

These results have significant implications both for translation studies and Quranic scholarship. The strong preference for literal metaphor imitation suggests that translators of the Quran prize theological correctness and textual faithfulness more than readability or cultural adjustment. Perhaps it is because the book is religious, and even minimal changes can be read as doctrinal errors. Moreover, the minimal use of sense-based methods suggests that translators go to some trouble to rule out interpretations that would be reductionist or theologically risky. The study also poses meaningful questions about the role of translator ideology, audience expectation, and historical context in such patterns. Future research may be able to generalize this study by employing a larger sample of verses, examining translation into more languages, or studying reader reception of other metaphor translation methods.

Overall, this study illustrates the complex interplay between linguistic theory and religious practice in Quranic translation. These findings not only validate some of Newmark's structure but also reveal its weakness when applied to translating sacred scriptures. By examining these translation patterns, this research offers important guidance to translators, Islamic scholars, and linguists who face the complex challenge of conveying metaphors of the divine across languages and cultures.

Conclusion

Metaphor is a basic cognitive and linguistic process that creates religious language through conceptual blending and cultural embedding. In the Holy Quran, metaphors play very important roles. They help to convey theological concepts. They add rhetorical strength. They sustain cultural schemata. Rendering the divine metaphors presents unique challenges that operate in the space of equivalence among languages, transposition between cultures, and theological fidelity. As the

Quran is a sacred book, translators are not only translating metaphors but also translating from one language to another with doctrinal sensitivities and audience expectations in mind; translating metaphors, thus, becomes a complex task.

This study tries to address two primary research questions: First, what are the strategies used by translators in translating Holy Quran metaphors into English? Second, the most frequent strategies deployed, and why they are used by translators. Through these questions, the study aims to enable a more general discussion on the translation of holy texts as well as throw empirical light on everyday use of translation theory. The study is particularly grounded on Newmark's (1988) division of translation approaches to metaphors, on which there is the analytical model for studying translator decisions.

Methodologically, the research applies a corpus-based approach, contrasting five strictly selected Quranic texts with prominent metaphors in ten various English translations. The chosen texts cover a wide thematic ground, from theological to moral and eschatological discussion, in an attempt at providing a representative selection of the use of metaphor within the Quran. The translations selected for review belong to classical and contemporary works that include those by Pickthall (1930), Yusuf Ali (1934), Haleem (2004), and Sahih International (1997). Such diversity enables comparison on chronological and ideological planes so as to surface any shifts that may have occurred in translation norms over time.

Recommendations

The corpus-based approach of the book offers a reproducible model for such inquiry across other religious traditions of translation and illuminates current scholarly discussions regarding the interrelation of language, culture, and religion.

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