



## A Comparative Analysis of the Techniques and Consistency of Translators in Rendering Qur'ānic Specific Cultural Items into English

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### ABSTRACT

The translation of cultural items from the Qur'ān and Islam can be challenging. This study investigated the strategies used by male and female translators to translate Qur'ānic cultural items, as well as the consistency of these strategies. The researchers first identified Qur'ānic cultural items from the preface to Ali Quli Qara'i's English translation of the Qur'ān. They then searched the Qur'ān for these items and extracted the verses that contained them. The researchers found that the most common strategy used to translate Qur'ānic cultural items was to replace them with a more general word. The second most common strategy was to paraphrase the item using a related word. None of the translators used the strategies of cultural substitution or illustration. The researchers also found that the three translators used similar strategies that were similar to other. Ali Quli Qara'i was the most consistent translator, using a single strategy in 82% of the cases. Tahereh Saffarzadeh was the second most consistent translator, using a single strategy in 80% of the cases. Muhammad Ahmed and Samira Ahmed were the least consistent translators, using a single strategy in 62% of the cases. The findings of this study suggest that there are a limited number of effective strategies for translating Qur'ānic cultural items. Translators are advised to be aware of these strategies and could use them consistently in order to produce accurate and faithful translations.

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## 1. Introduction

The importance of translation has long been overlooked by literary theorists, who have often marginalized the activity of translation studies as lowly and derivative. However, the emergence of translation studies as a new academic discipline in the 1980s and 1990s helped to challenge this view, as scholars began to explore the central themes of translation in relation to postcolonial studies, comparative literature, and world literature. In recent decades, the focus of translation studies has shifted significantly, as scholars have increasingly turned their attention to the political, cultural, and social implications of translation.

According to Baker (1998), translation studies is the academic field concerned with the study of translation, which includes literary and non-literary translation, different forms of oral interpretation, as well as dubbing and subtitling. It has developed rapidly in recent decades to include diverse topics, such as hybridity, post-colonialism, and globalization. Many eminent researchers from other domains are actively fostering its development by publishing works that address various facets of this complex topic.

For Karamanian (2003) the relationship between translation and culture is that the process of translation encompasses the transposition of thoughts initially expressed in one language by a specific social group into the appropriate expression of another social group. This intricate process involves cultural de-coding, followed by re-coding and ultimately encoding the intended message. She calls for a special consideration of cultural aspects of a text to be translated, rather than just taking into account the words written in that text. She concludes that the transcoding process should not only focus on linguistic transfer but also consider cultural transposition.

Most studies in this field have examined the techniques used by different translators of the Holy Qur'ān to render Qur'ānic cultural items (Valipoor, Heidari Tabrizi, & Chalak, 2019; Anari & Sanjarani, 2016, as cited in Almahasee et al., 2022). Anari and Sanjarani (2016, as cited in Almahasee et al., 2022) used Baker's model to investigate the translation of cultural-specific items (CSIs) in the Holy Qur'ān. They found that superordinate translation was the most common approach, while paraphrasing was the least used technique. Valipoor, Heidari Tabrizi, and Chalak (2019, as cited in Almahasee et al., 2022) examined the techniques used by Irving (1991) to translate cultural and social references in the second chapter of the Holy Qur'ān (i.e., Al-Baqarah). Their findings suggest that Irving used both domestication and foreignization strategies in the translation of Qur'ānic cultural and social references, with a notable preference for domestication, which was observed in nearly 80% of instances.

A review of the research in the field of the Qur'ān translation reveals that there has been little focus on the consistency with which translators adopt strategies for translating Qur'ānic cultural items from Arabic to English. This study therefore aims to determine the strategies used by male and female translators to translate Qur'ānic cultural items, and to examine the consistency with which translators use similar strategies in translating the same Qur'ānic cultural items based on Baker's (1992) model.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1. Culture*

The field of translation studies has expanded beyond linguistic boundaries to include the cultures of both the source and target languages. The term "culture" can be used to refer to a society's entire way of life, including its values, traditions, customs, educational institutions, familial and social structures, political and governmental hierarchy, and use of cutting-edge technology (Lado, 1968; Geertz, 1968). Alfred Louis Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (cited in Salehi, 2012) define culture as "the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values" (p. 181). Cultural systems can be seen as both the products of human activity and the determinants of future action. Larson (1984) defines culture as "a shared system of norms, assumptions, and practices that shape the individual and their community" (p. 14). Katan (1999) provides a common ground paradigm for defining culture in both written and spoken translation. She defines culture as "the sum of the values, beliefs, and assumptions that are shared by members of a particular community" (p. 2).

The field of translation studies has expanded beyond linguistic boundaries to include the cultures of both the source and target languages. The term "culture" can refer to the whole way of life of a society, encompassing its values, traditions, customs, educational institutions, family and social structures, political and governmental hierarchy, and use of advanced technology (Lado, 1968; Geertz, 1968). According to Alfred Louis Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (cited in Salehi, 2012), culture is the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts. The essential core of culture consists of conventional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values. Culture comprises patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior learned and transmitted through symbols (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). Cultural systems can be viewed, on one hand, as the products of action and, on the other hand, as the determinants of future action. Larson (1984) defines culture as a shared set of norms, assumptions, and practices that shape an individual and their community. Katan (1999) provides a common world view for describing culture in both written and oral translation.

According to Even-Zohar (2000), the concept of culture has two different aspects. He introduces two main notions in his key paper, "Culture Repertoire and the Wealth of Collective Entities", which he claims are widely used in the common and official discourse and in academic tradition. These notions are culture as products and culture as tools. He views culture as a reservoir of resources that confer social status and prestige when possessed. He also defines culture as a tool as a set of operational tools for the organization of life, both at the communal and individual levels. Moreover, he distinguishes between two types of culture as a tool, one of which he calls a passive tool, or the processes by which humans evaluate, interpret, and make sense of reality. This perspective is informed by the hermeneutic tradition, which sees the world as a collection of signs that need to be decoded to understand reality. The other type is active tools, also known as procedures, which enable individuals and groups to cope with and create almost any kind of situation.

Language is a shared system of sounds and symbols by which people communicate. In modern societies, it is not uncommon to find a mixture of cultural traditions and linguistic varieties. Every culture has its own unique way of living, and every language is the suitable way to express that way of life. Language, in its broadest sense, stands as a metaphor for a

culture and its history. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is a prime example of the relationship between language and culture; it argues that language serves as a window into the social world. This theory suggests that language is a tool for both defining and describing experience. Newmark (1988), however, does not consider language to be a cultural feature or component, but he does acknowledge that languages contain a wide range of cultural deposits.

The two phenomena of language and culture are interrelated and mutually influential. Karamanian (2003), in an article titled “Translation and Culture”, highlights the importance of this connection. She defines culture as the three most significant aspects of human activity: the personal, in which we think and act as individuals; the collective, in which we operate within a social framework; and the expressive, in which society acts through its members. Without language, no other social institution can function, making it one of the three pillars on which civilization rests.

Translation is not only a linguistic activity, but also a cultural one. As Miremadi (1993) puts it, translation is a two-way process that involves incorporating elements of foreign cultures into one’s own. In other words, there is a process of exchange and interaction. The translator may convey high ideals or offer advancements and improvements to one culture through this process (Miremadi, 1993). Therefore, a translator has to be familiar with both the culture of the original text and the culture of the intended audience. As Ivir (1975) states, it is essential that the translator be competent in the target domain. He has to be knowledgeable about both the culture from which the message originated and the culture into which it is being transferred. According to Dostert (1955), translation is the transfer of meaning from one patterned set of symbols occurring in a certain culture into another set of patterned symbols from a different culture. Some have argued that translation is itself a cultural encounter, as it combines elements from two or more cultures. Toury (1978) defines translation as a form of action that invariably involves at least two languages and two cultural traditions. Therefore, this concept is crucial when considering the implications of translation.

Thriveni (2002), in her paper on “cultural aspects in translation”, emphasizes the importance of being well-versed in both cultures to achieve an accurate translation. She argues that translators must be fluent in two cultures in order to meet the demands of their profession, which are to capture the local flavor while still being accessible to readers outside of the target culture and language. One of the main objectives of literary translation is to assimilate the target-language reader into the sensitivities of the culture of the source-language text. Translation involves a process of cultural decoding, recoding, and encoding (Akbari, 2013). As civilizations are increasingly brought into closer contact with each other, we have to consider the cultural aspect of the text in translation. The aim of translation is to enrich the target language linguistically and culturally, and culture should be regarded as an integral part of the process. Every language has its own culture, so it is unlikely that one language can be replaced by another without also transferring some aspects of the source culture. A translator, on the other hand, serves as a bridge between the source culture and the target culture. As such, he formalizes the multicultural translation process. He views culture as a system of social stratification, with subgroups sharing commonalities in their beliefs, values, and methods of problem solving. Every aspect of culture depends on the same mental environment, and that environment is shaped by the system (Akbari, 2013).

## *2.2. Translatability or Untranslatability of the Holy Qur'ān*

The Glorious Qur'ān is the holy book of Islam, containing the exact words of God as revealed to Muhammad, son of Abdullah (an Arab and a descendant of Abraham), over the course of 23 years between 610 and 632 C.E. It is widely agreed that the Holy Qur'ān is the most authoritative of the three texts upon which the practice of Islam is based.

There are 114 suras (chapters) in the Noble Qur'ān, and each sura contains verses. Except for the brief sura Al-Fatiha, which is usually placed first in printed copies of the Glorious Qur'ān, the suras of the Glorious Qur'ān are named and arranged by length rather than chronology. So, with this one exception, the longer suras come first and the shorter ones last. The shortest sura is Al-Kauthar, which means “abundance” in Arabic; the longest is Al-Baqara, which means “cow” in Arabic. Muhammad (PBUH) received the Holy Qur'ān in two different cities: Mecca and Medina. The earlier ones are known as Makkan suras, while the later ones are known as Madinan suras (Qur'ān, English and Arabic, 1988). Since the revelation of the Holy Book, the translatability and untranslatability of the Glorious Qur'ān have been contentious issues. Religious scholars and translation experts have vigorously debated whether the Noble Qur'ān should be read in its original language or in translation. Abdul-Raof (2001) believes that the translation of the Noble Qur'ān is a major positive contribution to humanity and a magnificent promotion of cross-cultural understanding. Although the task is highly delicate and extremely difficult to undertake, it should be done. The Qur'ān is hard to translate, especially for native Arab speakers, because Arabic, like other languages, has multiple meanings for a single word, making translation challenging (Ruthven, 2006). Classical and contemporary Arabic use words differently, complicating this aspect; thus, even Qur'ānic verses that seem understandable to native Arab speakers accustomed to the current lexicon and usage may not reflect the original meaning. The original meaning of a Qur'ānic text would also depend on the historical circumstances surrounding the life of the prophet Muhammad and the early society from which it emerged. Investigating this context often requires a comprehensive knowledge of Hadith and Sirah, both of which are enormous and intricate writings. This adds a new element of uncertainty that cannot be addressed by any language translation standard. The result of the translation of the Qur'ān should be regarded as an interpretation of the meaning of the Holy Qur'ān (Abdul-Raof, 2001). Consequently, only the Arabic Qur'ān is the Qur'ān, while translations are only interpretations. Some scholars argue that since the Noble Qur'ān is unique in both form and content and because the miraculous nature of the Holy Qur'ān is manifested by the perfection of its Arabic language, it cannot be fully translated into any other language.

Manafī Anari (2001) argues that the Holy Qur'ān is a linguistically magnificent and eloquent text, exhibiting unique and remarkable traits that even the most notable rhetoricians of the time could not challenge. From both linguistic and theological perspectives, Anari (2003) claims that the Qur'ān is untranslatable. Linguistically, it contains rhetorical devices and poetic imagery that pose significant challenges for translation. Theologically, the Qur'ān is considered to be the word of Allah, and its divine presence is inevitably lost in translation. M. Pickthall, the first Muslim translator of the Qur'ān into English, acknowledges the challenges of translating the text and states that his translation is not the Blessed Qur'ān but rather an attempt to convey its content and appeal (Pickthall, 1996). He emphasizes that his work can never replace the Arabic Qur'ān and that he has no intention of doing so.

It is important to differentiate between the difficulties of translatability and translation legitimacy. Historically, translations of the Holy Qur'ān have been deemed invalid, and there is still a strong school of thought that claims that the Qur'ān cannot be translated, and that

current translations are not valid (Baker, 1992). The debate surrounding the legitimacy of Qur'ān translation is complex and multifaceted, with differing opinions and arguments.

### *2.3. Special Cultural Items of the Qur'ān and Their Translation*

Culturally specific elements pose translation challenges as they lack equivalents or distinct placements in the cultural system of the target reader, affecting their functions and meanings in the source text (Moradi & Sadeghi, 2014). Hatim and Mason (1990) note that translators are increasingly seen as cultural mediators rather than just linguistic brokers. Translators typically focus on either the source language or the target language. Culture-specific items (CSIs), according to Newmark (1988), are difficult to translate as they are inherently and uniquely tied to the culture in question and are connected to the context of a cultural tradition. When religious terminology is of target language concern, the language of other global faiths tends to be used, with the most common phrases becoming naturalized.

Baker suggests that non-equivalence at the word level may transfer into cultural equivalence in situations where there is a culturally distinct notion, a target language missing a superior, or a target language without a specific thing. Non-equivalence implies a difference between the two languages, resulting in the appearance of culturally specific items. This gap presents a significant challenge for translators and may render culturally specific items untranslatable. Therefore, translators must conduct a comprehensive examination of culturally specific items and possess language and cultural competence (Baker, 2011).

Historically, translating culturally unique elements has presented difficulties for translators as a possible source of inequivalence and untranslatability. Translation researchers recommend several approaches for dealing with culturally specific materials. Improper use of the translation method may result in a failure to convey the meaning of the source text to the readers of the target text (Abdi, 2019).

The religion practiced by members of a particular culture is one of the aspects that comprise that culture. Certainly, each religion contains unique beliefs and ideas that may not exist in other religions, and these ideas are articulated using certain linguistic elements in each language. The Noble Qur'ān introduced Islam to humanity, and as a result, the Holy Qur'ān contains several passages that represent unique Islamic principles that are exclusive to the faith of Islam. Throughout this research, these artifacts that are unique to the setting and culture of the Qur'ān are referred to as Qur'ān-specific cultural items (QSCIs). The Holy Qur'ān is filled with such phrases, each symbolizing a unique Islamic notion that does not exist in any language other than Arabic. These elements play a crucial part in transmitting the message of the Noble Qur'ān and are very complex.

The transfer of culturally unique elements from one language to another has long been a topic of contention among translation researchers. Translators have used numerous ways to manipulate these objects, but none have achieved the ultimate goal of producing a functional and semantically equivalent destination text. Several experts on the subject have recommended various ways of addressing these objects, although these tactics were only partly effective in resolving the issue. They have been of tremendous assistance to translators experiencing similar obstacles in their careers.

Aixelá (2009) divides culturally specific items (CSIs) into two primary groups: conservation and substitution, in an attempt to characterize all possible methods for

translating culturally specific language (CSLs). In his view, these two classes may be separated from one another by their respective conservatism and substitutivism, or the degree to which the original reference(s) are maintained or replaced with ones that are more conveniently located at the receiving pole. Along with Aixelá, linguists and scholars like Newmark, Pederson, and Baker provide a variety of methods that may be used to make the translation of culturally nuanced instances easier. Finally, considering the theoretical framework used in this research, we will limit ourselves to explaining Baker's method. Baker (1992) recommends the following eight strategies for translating culturally specific items (CSIs):

1. One of the strategies for translating terms that do not have a direct equivalent in the target language is to use a more general word or a superordinate term. This strategy involves replacing the source language term, with a word that belongs to a higher level of abstraction or a broader category. This method can be applied across different languages, as the semantic fields of words are not dependent on specific languages.

2. Another strategy for translating words that have a negative or too direct meaning in the target language is to use a more neutral or less expressive word. The translator may choose this strategy to provide a more objective or acceptable translation for the audience, or to avoid conveying the wrong expressive meaning, the author's feelings, or both. When this strategy is used, the translated word loses some of its expressive value. However, sometimes it is possible to preserve the expressive meaning by adding a modifier, as Baker (1992) suggests. This strategy is often used when translating political texts from one language to another.

3. Translation by cultural substitution: Professional translators use this method to convey the same message to their target audience by translating culturally specific items from the source language with expressions that have different meanings in the target culture but nonetheless have the same effect. Baker (2011) states that this method entails substituting a target-language item that does not have the same propositional meaning but is likely to have a comparable impression on the target reader for the culture-specific item or phrase.

4. Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation: This strategy is useful when the target term appears several times in the source text, and there is no direct equivalent in the target language. The term is copied word-for-word from the source text to the translated text, but the first time it appears in the translated text, it is followed by an explanation. This way, the readers will understand the term whenever it appears in the translated text. The loan word is enclosed in quotation marks in the translated text. Sometimes a loan word is used in a translation not because it has an exact counterpart in the target language, but because it sounds more modern, clever, and sophisticated in that language (Baker, 1992).

5. Translation by paraphrase using a related word: Paraphrasing is a kind of explanatory translation. Baker (2011) argues that paraphrasing has one advantage and two disadvantages. The benefit of paraphrasing is that it faithfully conveys the original meaning of the source text's vocabulary. The first drawback is that paraphrasing cannot communicate affective, emotional, or any type of associational meaning since it is not a single word. The second drawback is that paraphrasing sometimes involves rewriting many phrases rather than just one. This can be difficult and time-consuming.

6. Translation by paraphrase using unrelated words: Translation by paraphrase using unrelated words is the second type of paraphrase used in translation. This method is used when the term being translated is obscure, non-existent, or otherwise inexpressible in the target language. At this point, the translator may provide an explanation for the word's use or replace the word with an unrelated superordinate (Naghdi & Eslamieh, 2022).

7. Translation by omission: Translation by omission occurs when a piece of information that is in the source text (ST) is left out of the target text (TT). There are a number of reasons for omission; however, these three are the most common. First, the omission has no bearing on the intended meaning of the text. Second, it's best to avoid using any language that may be deemed objectionable by the intended readers. Third, we avoid using slang or other terms that might be offensive to our readers. Baker (2011) emphasizes that omission should be the last resort.

8. Translation by illustration: For the sake of clarity and brevity in the translated text, it is sometimes necessary to use an example to represent a physical reality for which no signifier exists in the target language. Because of its infrequent use, Baker (2011) lists it as the last technique for translating non-equivalent words at the word level.

### 3. Methodology

The present study addresses the translation of culture-specific items in the Qur'ān. The use of a parallel corpus in this study makes it an ideal space for descriptive research. A parallel corpus refers to a collection of texts that have been translated into multiple languages (Sinclair, 1995). Despite the availability of translations of Qur'ān-specific cultural elements by female translators, a few researchers have examined them, preferring translations provided by male translators. Furthermore, there is a lack of comparison between the strategies employed by male and female translators when translating these culture-specific terms. Consequently, the objectives of this study are twofold: first, to identify the strategies used by male and female translators to convey specific cultural items in the Holy Qur'ān and second, to explore how translators consistently use similar strategies in translating the same culture-specific items, based on Baker's (1992) model. To achieve these objectives, we analyzed two distinct translations by male and female translators, Tahereh Saffarzadeh and Ali Quli Qara'i, as well as a collaborative translation by a father and daughter, Muhammad Ahmed and Samira Ahmed.

Utilizing the notion of special cultural artifacts, culturally distinctive items encompass ideas that are exclusive to a specific culture. The Qur'ān contains a vast array of cultural items, and to narrow down the focus of this research, 50 cultural examples (Table 1) were selected, and every Qur'ānic verse containing these items was meticulously analyzed. In total, 494 verses were evaluated for each translator, resulting in a total of 1482 reviewed verses across all translators.

Table 1. Special cultural artifacts in the Qur'ān

No.	Special Cultural Items	No.	Special Cultural Items
1	وَ اتَّقُوا	26	نَذَرْتُ
2	بِكُفْرِهِمْ	27	تَوْبَةً
3	بِالْإِيمَانِ	28	يَتَوَكَّلْ



4	أَشْرَكُوا	29	مُؤْمِنِينَ
5	الْحَقِّ	30	كَافِرُونَ
6	بِالْبَاطِلِ	31	الزُّبُوَا
7	بِالْمَعْرُوفِ	32	إِسْرَافًا
8	الْمُنْكَرِ	33	الْمُطَهِّرِينَ
9	فِتْنَةً	34	بِالْقِسْطِ
10	الْغَيْبِ	35	وَلِيِّ
11	نُوحِيهِ	36	نَصِيرِ
12	ظَلَمْتُمْ	37	مَسْجِدًا
13	يُذَكِّرُ	38	لِكَاذِبُونَ
14	فَضْلُ	39	بِالصَّبْرِ
15	لِيُفْسِدُوا	40	يُطْئُونَ
16	صَدَقَةٍ	41	فِدْيَةٍ
17	حَجِّ	42	الْمَحِيضِ
18	صَوْمًا	43	شَهِيدًا
19	الصَّلَاةِ	44	الْفَحْشَاءِ
20	الزَّكَاةِ	45	قِضَاصِ
21	طُعْيَانِهِمْ	46	عَاهِدَ
22	يُتَّقُونَ	47	نِكَاحًا
23	مُخْلِصِينَ	48	شُعَائِرِ
24	حَلَالًا	49	مَكْرُوهًا
25	حَرَائِمَ	50	قَبِيلَةَ

The study gathered data using the “Jami' al-Tafasir” software, which contains all the surahs of the Holy Qur'an along with their translations in various languages worldwide. The collected information for each translator was organized separately, and the translation strategy for each culture-specific item was determined based on Baker's (1992) method. Baker's model categorizes translation strategies into eight groups: translation by a more general word (superordinate), translation by a more neutral or less expressive word, translation by cultural substitution, translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation, paraphrasing using a related word, paraphrasing using unrelated words, omission, and illustration. For each translator, the number and percentage of different strategies used in translating specific cultural items were calculated and presented in separate tables. To achieve the second part of the research goal, a separate table was created for each translator, which included specific cultural items from the Qur'an, the exact number of verses containing each item, and the number of different translation strategies used. This allowed for an examination of whether the translators consistently utilized similar strategies when translating the same culture-specific items from the Qur'an. In the subsequent analysis, particular attention was given to examples of the translation of culture-specific

items in the Qur'ānic verses. This should be note that culturally specific items are underlined in the verses and their translations.

### Surat Al-Baqarah (2:194)

الشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْحُرُمَاتِ قِصَاصٌ فَمَنْ عَدَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا عَدَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

Tahereh Saffarzadeh: “The Sacred Month for the Sacred Month, and for the prohibited things, there is a law of retaliation: Then, Whoever commits aggression against You, react you likewise against him [Retaliate in the same manner], and Fear from the disobedience of Allah's Commands, and know that Allah is The Supporter of the pious”

*The strategy: translation by a more general word (superordinate)*

Ali Quli Qara'i: “A sacred month for a sacred month, and all sanctities require retribution. So should anyone aggress against you, assail him in the manner he assailed you, and be wary of Allah, and know that Allah is with the God wary.”

*The strategy: translation by a more general word (superordinate)*

Muhammad Ahmed and Samira Ahmed: “The month, the forbidden/respected/sacred, with the month, the forbidden/ respected/ sacred, and the God's ordered prohibitions (are) equal revenge, so who transgressed/ violated on you, so transgress/violate (revenge) on him with similar/equal (to) what he transgressed on you, and fear and obey God and know that God (is) with the fearing and obeying.”

*The strategy: translation by a more general word (superordinate)*

### Surat Al-A'raf (7:156)

وَ أَكْتُبُ لَنَا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِنَّا هُنَا وَإِلَيْكَ قَالِ عَذَابِي أُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ أَشَاءُ وَ رَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَسَأَكْتُبُهَا لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ وَ يُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِنَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

Tahereh Saffarzadeh: “[Mussa said:] "O, our Creator and Nurturer! Ordain for us in this world what is Good and in the Hereafter as well. We Have been guided to You." Allah Declared: "I shall afflict with My Chastisement whom I decide entitled; And My Grace embraces all things, so I shall Ordain it exclusively for those Who are pious and pay alms and Believe in Our Signs”

*The strategy: translation by a more general word (superordinate)*

Ali Quli Qara'i: “And appoint goodness for us in this world and the Hereafter, for indeed we have come back to You. Said He, ‘I visit My punishment on whomever I wish, but My mercy embraces all things. Soon I shall appoint it for those who are God wary and give the zakat and those who believe in Our signs’.”

*The strategy: translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation*

Muhammad Ahmed and Samira Ahmed: “And decree for us in this the present world goodness and in the end (other life), we have, we repented/guided to You. He said: ‘My torture, I strike/mark who I will/want with it, and My mercy extended/enriches every thing, so I will decree to those who fear and obey, and give/bring the charity/purification and those who, they are with Our verses/evidences believing’.”

*The strategy: translation by paraphrase using a related word*

### Surat Al-An'am (6:26)

بَلْ بَدَأْتَهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يُخْفُونَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَ لَوْ رُدُّوا لَعَادُوا لِمَا نُهُوا عَنْهُ وَ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ

Tahereh Saffarzadeh: “[They say so because] It has been Visualized to them what they Concealed [of their evil deeds] before; And if they were sent back, they would Certainly commit the very same things That they were forbidden; and most Certainly they are liars”

*The strategy: translation by a more general word (superordinate)*

Ali Quli Qara'i: “Rather, now has become evident to them what they used to hide before. But were they to be sent back they would revert to what they were forbidden, and they are indeed liars.”

*The strategy: translation by a more general word (superordinate)*

Muhammad Ahmed and Samira Ahmed: “But/rather it appeared to them what they were hiding from before, and even if they were returned they would have returned (repeated) to what they were forbidden prevented from it, and that they truly are lying/denying/falsifying (E).”

*The strategy: translation by paraphrase using a related word*

### Surat Yunus (10:87)

وَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ وَ أَخِيهِ أَنْ تَبَوَّءَا لِقَوْمِكُمَا بِمِصْرَ بَيْوتًا وَ اجْعَلُوا بُيُوتَكُمْ قِبْلَةً وَ اتَّقُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَ بَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

Tahereh Saffarzadeh: “And We revealed to Musa and his Brother [stating]: ‘Appoint houses for Your people in Egypt and make your Houses a place for worship; and Establish prayer and give glad-tidings to The believers’.”

*The strategy used: translation by paraphrase using a related word*

Ali Quli Qara'i: “We revealed to Moses and his brother [saying], ‘Settle your people in the city, and let your houses face each other, and maintain the prayer, and give good news to the faithful’.”

*The strategy: translation by paraphrase using unrelated words*

Muhammad Ahmed and Samira Ahmed: “And We inspired/transmitted to Moses and his brother that you (B) reside/establish houses/homes to your (B)'s nation by a city/border/region/Egypt, and make your houses/homes direction, and keep up the prayers, and announce good news (to) the believers.”

*The strategy: translation by a more general word (superordinate)*

**Surat Al-Isra (17:38)**

كُلُّ ذَلِكَ كَانَ سَيِّئُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ مَكْرُوهًا

Tahereh Saffarzadeh: “All of these which are mentioned are Bad and therefore hateful in the Sight of Your Creator and Nurturer”

*The strategy: translation by a more neutral/less expressive word*

Ali Quli Qara'i: “The evil of all these is detestable to your Lord.”

*The strategy: translation by a more general word (superordinate)*

Muhammad Ahmed and Samira Ahmed: “All (of) that its bad/evil/harm was/is at God hated.”

*The strategy: translation by paraphrase using a related word*

#### **4. Result and Discussion**

This research has two main objectives. We initially analyzed the frequency and proportion of each translation method used by the translators when dealing with culture-specific items of the Qur'ān.

Figure 1. presents the results of the analysis of translations provided by Tahereh Saffarzadeh, with respect to culturally specific items in the Holy Qur'ān. The translations have been carried out using a diverse range of strategies. The most commonly used strategy is translation by a more general word (superordinate), accounting for 93.72% of the translations. Conversely, the least frequently employed strategies include translation by a more neutral or less expressive word, translation by a loan word or loan word plus explanation, and translation by paraphrase using unrelated words, each used only 0.20% of the time. The second and third most frequently used strategies are translation by paraphrase using a related word (5.06%) and translation by omission (0.60%), respectively. Notably, the translator did not utilize the strategies of “translation by cultural substitution” or “translation by illustration” to translate certain culturally specific items in the Qur'ān.

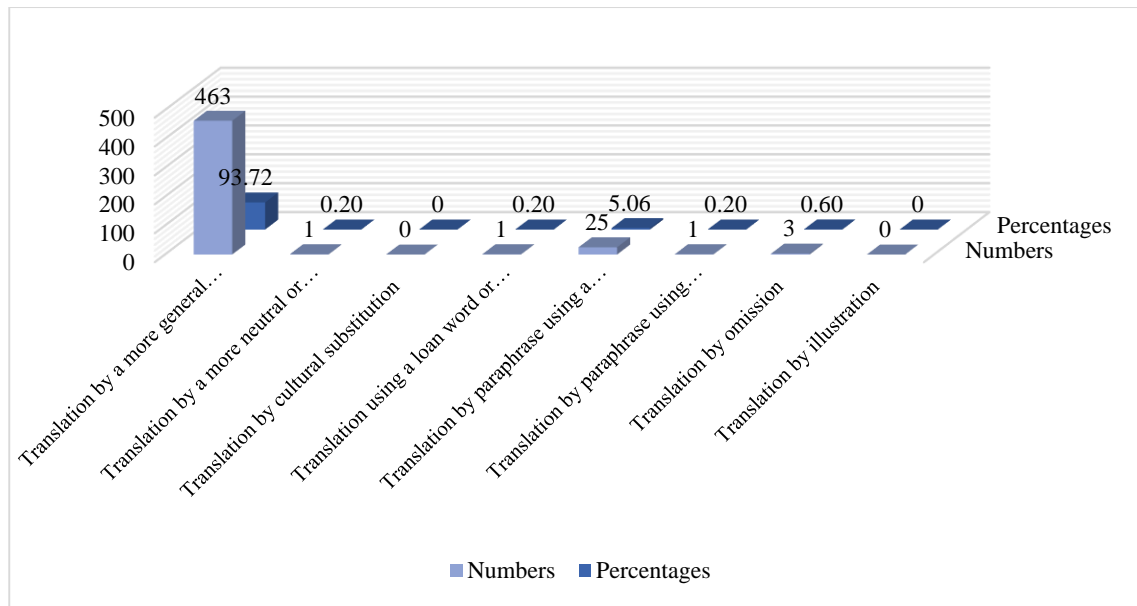


Figure 1. The number and percentage of using translation strategies by Tahereh Saffarzadeh

Figure 2. presents the results of the analysis of the translation strategies implemented by Ali Quli Qara’i in translating culture-specific items in the Holy Qur’ān. The most frequently utilized strategy was translation by a more general word (superordinate), accounting for 88.86% of all cases. On the other hand, translation by paraphrase using unrelated words and translation by omission were the least common strategies, accounting for only 0.20% of cases each. The second and third most frequently used strategies were translation by paraphrase using a related word (5.66%) and translation by a loan word or a loan word plus explanation (5.06%), respectively. Notably, the translator did not employ certain translation strategies, including translation by a more neutral or less expressive word, translation by cultural substitution, and translation by illustration.

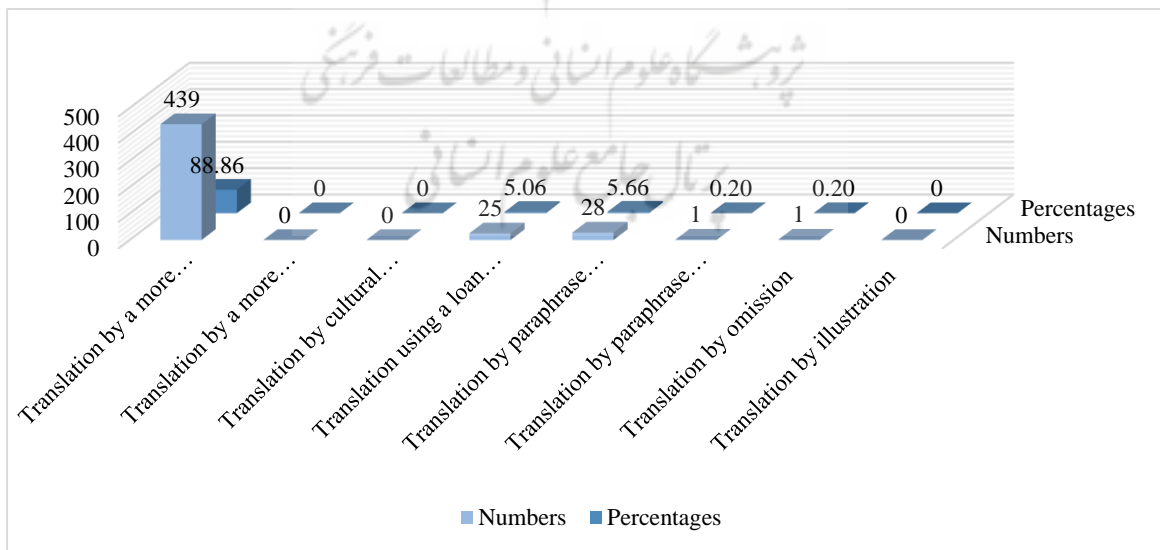


Figure 2. The number and percentage of using translation strategies by Ali Quli Qara’i

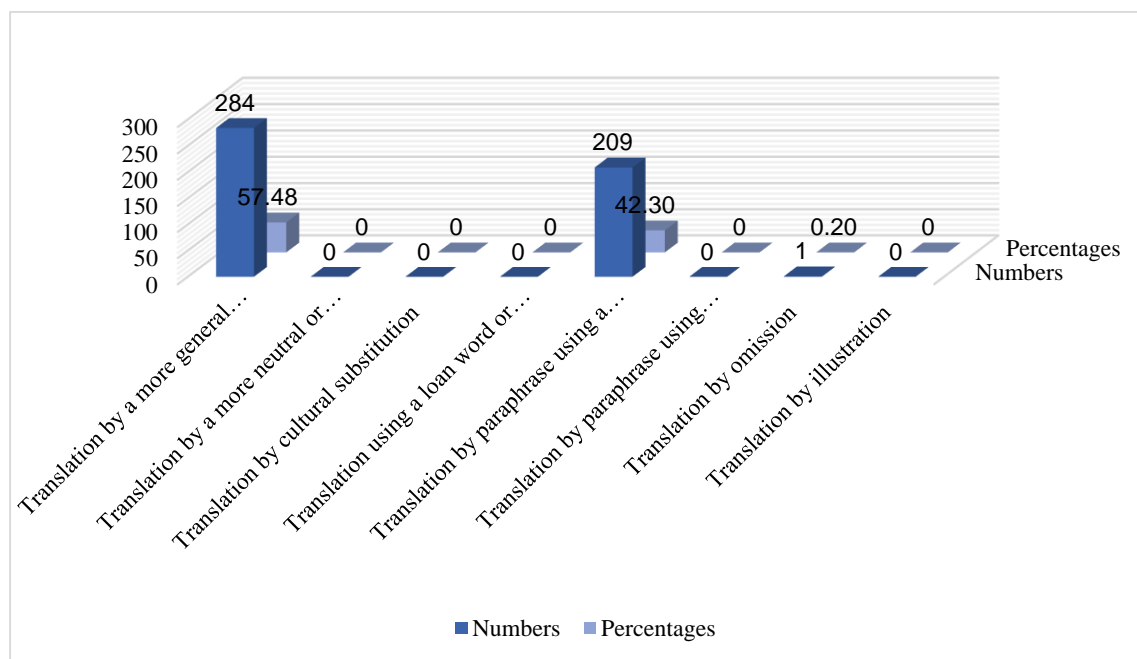


Figure 3. The number and percentage of using translation strategies by Muhammad Ahmed and Samira Ahmed

One interesting finding in the research on the translations made by Muhammad Ahmed and Samira Ahmed, a father-daughter team, is that only three of the eight potential translation strategies were employed to translate certain cultural elements of the Qur'ān (Figure 3). Correspondingly, they have not benefited from strategies such as translation by a more neutral or less expressive word, translation by cultural substitution, translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation, translation by paraphrase using unrelated words, translation by omission, and translation by illustration. In the conclusion, depending on the percentage of strategies used by these translators, translation by a more general word (superordinate) ranks first with 57.48%, translation by paraphrase using a related word ranks second with 42.30%, and translation by omission ranks third with 0.20%.

The second objective of the study analyzes the extent to which translators have consistently employed similar techniques when translating the same particular cultural items of the Qur'ān based on Baker's model.

Table 2 shows that Tahereh Saffarzadeh used more than one strategy to translate 10 different cultural cases of the Qur'ān, which comprised 20% of the total translation of these cases. Therefore, this translator was consistent in translating 40 different culturally specific cases of the Qur'ān by applying the same strategy to each of them, which accounted for 80% of the total translation of these items.

Table 2. The consistency of translation strategies for culture-specific items in the Holy Qur'an by Tahereh Saffarzadeh

Special cultural items	Number of different types of strategies used in translation	Total number of verses of these words in the Qur'an	Special cultural items	Number of different types of strategies used in translation	Total number of verses of these words in the Qur'an
وَ اتَّقُوا	1	38	نَذَرْتُ	1	2
يَكْفُرْهُمْ	1	5	تَوْبَةً	1	2
بِالْإِيمَانِ	1	5	يَتَوَكَّلْ	1	3
أَشْرَكُوا	2	12	مُؤْمِنِينَ	1	30
الْحَقِّ	2	66	كَافِرُونَ	1	15
بِالْبَاطِلِ	1	9	الزُّبُرَا	1	2
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ	2	19	إِسْرَافًا	1	1
الْمُنْكَرِ	2	11	الْمُطَهَّرِينَ	1	1
فِتْنَةً	2	11	بِالْقِسْطِ	2	14
الْغَيْبِ	1	28	وَلِي	1	11
تُوجِيهِ	1	2	نَصِيرِ	1	9
ظَلَمْتُمْ	1	2	مَسْجِدًا	1	2
يُذَكِّرْ	1	2	لَكَاذِبُونَ	1	9
فَضْلُ	1	6	بِالصَّبْرِ	1	4
لِيُفْسِدُوا	1	1	يُظُنُّونَ	1	5
صَدَقَةٍ	2	2	فِدْيَةٍ	1	2
حَجِّ	1	2	الْمَحِيضِ	1	2
صَوْمًا	1	1	شَهِيدًا	1	19
الصَّلَاةِ	1	58	الْفَحْشَاءِ	1	4
الرِّكَاتِ	1	24	قِضَاصٍ	1	2
طُعْيَانِهِمْ	1	5	غَاهَدَ	1	2
يُنْفِقُونَ	2	20	بِنِكَاحٍ	1	2
مُخْلِصِينَ	1	7	شُعَائِرِ	2	4
حَلَالًا	1	5	مَكْرُوهًا	1	1
حَرَامًا	1	2	قَبِيلَةٍ	2	3

As Table 3 indicates, Ali Quli Qara'i employed more than one technique for nine cultural cases of the Qur'an, which constituted 18% of the total number of such cases. This translator adopted the same approach for the same cultural cases of the Qur'an, which represented 82% of the entire translation of these cases in 41 different cultural contexts.

Table 3. The consistency of translation strategies for culture-specific items in the Holy Qur'an by Ali Quli Qara'i

special cultural items	Number of different types of strategies used in translation	Total number of verses of these words in the Qur'an	special cultural items	Number of different types of strategies used in translation	Total number of verses of these words in the Qur'an
وَ اتَّقُوا	1	38	تَدْرُثُ	1	2
يَكْفُرْهُمْ	1	5	تَوْبَةً	1	2
بِالْإِيمَانِ	1	5	يَتَوَكَّلْ	1	3
أَشْرَكُوا	2	12	مُؤْمِنِينَ	1	30
الْحَقِّ	2	66	كَافِرُونَ	1	15
بِالْبَاطِلِ	1	9	الزُّبُرَا	1	2
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ	2	19	إِسْرَافًا	1	1
الْمُنْكَرِ	2	11	الْمُظْهِرِينَ	1	1
فِتْنَةً	1	11	بِالْقِسْطِ	2	14
الْغَيْبِ	1	28	وَلِيٍّ	1	11
تُوجِيهِ	1	2	نَصِيرٍ	1	9
ظَلَمْتُمْ	1	2	مَسْجِدًا	2	2
يُذَكِّرُ	1	2	لَكَادِبُونَ	2	9
فَضْلُ	1	6	بِالصَّبْرِ	1	4
لِيُفْسِدُوا	1	1	يَطَّوْنُ	1	5
صَدَقَةٍ	1	2	فِدْيَةٍ	1	2
حَجٍّ	2	2	الْمَحِيضِ	1	2
صَوْمًا	1	1	شَهِيدًا	1	19
الصَّلَاةِ	1	58	الْفَحْشَاءِ	1	4
الزَّكَاةِ	1	24	قِضَاصٍ	1	2
طُعْيَانِهِمْ	1	5	عَاهِدًا	1	2
يُنْفِقُونَ	1	20	نِكَاحًا	1	2
مُخْلِصِينَ	1	7	شُعَائِرٍ	1	4
حَلَالًا	1	5	مَكْرُوهًا	1	1
حَرَامًا	1	2	قِبْلَةً	2	3

Table 4 illustrates that Muhammad Ahmed and Samira Ahmed applied more than one strategy to translate 19 different culture-specific items of the Qur'an, which amounted to 38% of all such items. These translators kept consistency by using the same strategy for the same culture-specific items of the Qur'an, which covered 62% of the overall translation of these items in 31 different cultural contexts.



Table 4. The consistency of translation strategies for culture-specific items in the Holy Qur'an by Muhammad Ahmed and Samira Ahmed

special cultural items	Number of different types of strategies used in translation	Total number of verses of these words in the Qur'an	special cultural items	Number of different types of strategies used in translation	Total number of verses of these words in the Qur'an
وَ اتَّقُوا	1	38	نَذَرْتُ	1	2
يَكْفُرْهُمْ	1	5	تَوْبَةً	1	2
بِالْإِيمَانِ	2	5	يَتَوَكَّلْ	1	3
أَشْرَكُوا	2	12	مُؤْمِنِينَ	2	30
الْحَقِّ	3	66	كَافِرُونَ	1	15
بِالْبَاطِلِ	1	9	الزُّبُوَا	1	2
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ	2	19	إِسْرَافًا	1	1
الْمُنْكَرِ	2	11	الْمُطَهَّرِينَ	1	1
فِتْنَةً	2	11	بِالْقِسْطِ	1	14
الْغَيْبِ	2	28	وَلِي	2	11
تُوجِيهِ	1	2	نَصِيرِ	2	9
ظَلَمْتُمْ	1	2	مَسْجِدًا	2	2
يُذَكِّرْ	2	2	لَكَذِبُونَ	1	9
فَضْلُ	1	6	بِالصَّبْرِ	1	4
لِيُفْسِدُوا	1	1	يُظُنُّونَ	2	5
صَدَقَةٍ	1	2	فِدْيَةٍ	1	2
حَجِّ	1	2	الْمَحِيضِ	1	2
صَوْمًا	1	1	شَهِيدًا	2	19
الصَّلَاةِ	1	58	الْفَحْشَاءِ	1	4
الزَّكَاةِ	2	24	قِصَاصٍ	2	2
طُعْيَانِهِمْ	2	5	عَاهِدًا	2	2
يُنْفِقُونَ	1	20	بِكَاحًا	1	2
مُخْلِصِينَ	1	7	شُعَائِرِ	1	4
حَلَالًا	1	5	مَكْرُوهًا	1	1
حَرَامًا	1	2	قِبْلَةً	2	3

## 5. Conclusion

This study is a descriptive analysis of three prominent English translations of the Holy Qur'an, focusing on the strategies used by the translators to render Qur'an-specific cultural

items. The scope of this study is limited to some suras of the Qur'ān and their corresponding translations by three different translators. One of the challenges faced by the researcher was to identify the items that were suitable for the study. Due to the sensitive nature of religious texts, especially the Qur'ān, and the risks involved in handling them, the researcher was mindful of this sensitivity throughout the project. The main objective of this study is to evaluate the techniques employed by male and female translators in translating particular cultural terms of the Qur'ān, as well as their consistency in applying similar strategies when translating cultural items. The data analysis presented in this study can be succinctly summarized as follows. When examining the data from all three translators, disregarding their gender or approach, it becomes evident that employing a broader term (superordinate) emerged as the most commonly employed method for translating the cultural aspects within the Qur'ān.

Translation by paraphrase using a related word was the second most common method for translating culturally specific items of the Qur'ān for all three translators. None of the translators employed the procedures known as “translation by cultural substitution” and “translation by illustration” throughout their translations. Other techniques, such as translation by a more neutral or less expressive word, translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation, translation by paraphrase using unrelated words, and translation by omission, varied in their frequency of use by each translator. All three translators used similar and consistent strategies when translating the same cultural terms from the Qur'ān. Ali Quli Qara'i with 82%, Tahereh Saffarzadeh with 80%, and Muhammad Ahmed and Samira Ahmed with 62% ranked first, second, and third, respectively, in terms of stability in adopting comparable techniques in translating culturally distinct items of the same Qur'ān.

Translating the Qur'ān is a very important and sensitive task demanding a high level of awareness of the meaning of the holy verses. Therefore, the translator should analyze every aspect of the various translations of the Holy Qur'ān. Some possible areas for further research are as follows:

- Analyzing the techniques used by translators to render the metaphorical expressions in the Qur'ān
- Examining the methods employed by translators to render the idiomatic expressions in the Qur'ān
- Using a different theoretical framework than Baker's model, which was adopted in this study, to conduct similar research
- Expanding the scope of the study from word level to phrase level, and investigating the strategies used by translators to render the Qur'ān-specific items at this level.

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