



An Analytical Examination of English Translations of Idioms in Selected Verses of Surah Al-Ma'idah and Surah Al-Isra Based on Schleiermacher's Framework

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ABSTRACT

The language of the Qur'ān is highly eloquent and rich in rhetoric. Transferring features of languages from different origins is tricky. Although throughout history, scholars have made significant contributions to understanding Qur'ānic idioms, we still face challenges in conveying their meanings. There are language-specific idioms in Qur'ānic Arabic, reflecting Arab culture and environment. The fact that different cultures conceptualize reality in varying ways causes idioms to be shaped by cultural factors. This is why some translations of Qur'ānic idioms fail to convey their full depth of meaning. This article aims to investigate various interpretations and English translations of the idioms in the selected verses of Surahs Al-Isra and Al-Ma'idah. To this end, the translations of twelve prominent translators were compared. Considering the descriptive nature of the work, the researchers analyzed the methods used by the selected translators. The theoretical framework underpinning this study is the translation methods of Schleiermacher. Furthermore, the translations were analyzed and ranked based on Waddington's holistic model of translation quality assessment. Analysis reveals a spectrum of translational strategies, defying strict categorization within Schleiermacher's binary framework of 'naturalizing' and 'alienating' translation. A significant number of translations exhibit hybrid characteristics, displaying a preponderance towards either naturalization or alienation, yet failing to conform exclusively to either pole.

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1. Introduction

Often called the ‘Mother of Scriptures’ or the ‘Source of the Scriptures,’ the Holy Qur’ān is more than just a collection of religious prescriptions. Its text is an integral part of every prayer and act of worship for Muslims, and it is recited endlessly in all religious settings (Khaleghian, 2014, p. 59). Faiq states that the discourse of the Holy Qur’ān is a linguistic context characterized by syntactic, semantic, rhetorical, phonetic, and cultural features that distinguish it from other types of Arabic discourse. These features of the Holy Qur’ān have posed significant challenges for translators and translation theories (Faiq, 2004, p. 92). In other words, there are two types of Arabic: non-Qur’ānic Arabic and Qur’ānic Arabic. The Qur’ān has three main characteristics that have made it a holy book and distinct from other divine books:

- All the words and phrases of the Qur’ān are the words of God, stated by Him; for this reason, reading this book is considered an act of pure servitude and a means of drawing closer to Him.
- The Qur’ān is the book of guidance for all human beings, leading us to the straight path.
- The Qur’ān stands as Islam’s eternal miracle, validating the prophethood of the final Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him and his family).

However, we live in an era of globalization, where modern communication technology helps cultures around the world become more connected and accessible. Therefore, writers need to address a universal audience with universal features. This is what makes texts translatable across different languages and cultures. One reason for the difficulty in translating the Qur’ān is the presence of rhetorical styles in the source language (SL), which prevent the translator from fully capturing the rhetorical components and thus lead to confusion. For this reason, idioms should be studied in terms of their ideological, semantic, rhetorical, and cultural components, as omitting any of these aspects results in further ambiguity. Idioms are an important part of cultural heritage; they not only carry the information they express but also convey a pleasant impression. A good idiom often gives rise to endless associations of ideas and encourages readers to think deeply about the spirit it contains (Abdelaziz, 2018, pp. 146-147). Due to differences in customs, geography, history, religion, beliefs, etc., translating idioms involves conveying the characteristics of a particular speech community. Idioms serve as a powerful communicative tool. They are used in language to convey maximum meaning with a minimum of words. Language chunks like idioms aid fluency, making the language sound natural (Abdelaziz, 2018, pp. 137-138).

Pickthall stresses that the English translation of the Qur’ān “is not the Glorious Qur’ān, that inimitable symphony, the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy. It is only an attempt to present the meaning of the Qur’ān — and peradventure something of the charm in English. It can never take the place of the Qur’ān in Arabic, nor is it meant to do so” (Pickthall, 1999, Index, vii). Arberry (1973) stated that the Qur’ān is neither purely prose nor poetry; it uniquely blends elements of both. Consequently, a translator cannot replicate its form, as it is exclusive to the Qur’ān, combining features of prose and poetry while skillfully utilizing the nuances of the original language. Furthermore, the Qur’ān’s form is intricately intertwined with its content, making it impossible for form-focused or content-focused translations to fully capture its essence in either aspect (p. 134).

This work investigates the approaches proposed by Schleiermacher in the 17 translations of the selected Qur'ānic idiom and ranks them according to their ability to convey meaning, based on Waddington's holistic model. It finally offers two different translations of this Qur'ānic idiom that are fluent, clear, and understandable for the younger generation.

2. A review of the related works

Various studies have been conducted concerning Qur'ānic figures of speech, covering different aspects of this issue. Zolfaghari (2008) defined Kināya and explained the difference between Kināya, Ḍarb al-Mathal, Metonymy, and Metaphor. He provided the readers with criteria to distinguish between these figures of speech. Koorani (2012) investigated the strategies applied by Iranian lexicographers when translating proverbs and identified which strategy was most frequently used in bilingual English-Persian dictionaries, including Millennium and Pooya.

Badrani (2013) investigated the translation of Asa in the Glorious Qur'ān into English. He shows how translators have rendered it and, based on the accredited Qur'ānic interpretations, corrects the translations of the selected verses. Khaleghian (2014) investigated the possibility of transferring the sound devices of the Holy Qur'ān into English poetic and non-poetic translations. She limited the work to the sound devices of chapter 30 of the Holy Qur'ān. She selected three types of translations of the Holy Qur'ān: poetic translation, stylistic translation, and explanatory translation, done by Nikayin, Arberry, and Yusuf Ali, respectively. Aldahesh (2014), in his work (*Un)Translatability of the Qur'ān: A Theoretical Perspective*, provided a general overview of untranslatability as a key concept in the realm of translation studies and discussed, in detail, the question of the Qur'ān's untranslatability. Nasiri (2014) analyzed 16 Qur'ānic verses that contain Kināya. He also described the functions of this figure of speech in the Qur'ān.

Heidarzade (2016) studied fifty Qur'ānic proverbs and the rhetorical devices used in each proverb. Abdelaziz (2018) focuses mainly on the translation of Arabic idioms and proverbs into French, providing insight into the cross-cultural and cognitive linguistic processes of translation. He also examines the strategies used in translating idioms and proverbs from the novels of Tahar Wattar: *The Fisherman and the Palace*, *The Ace*, *The Earthquake*, and *A Mule's Wedding*. He sheds light on aspects of idioms and proverbs that may pose problems when translating between different language cultures.

2.1. Translation strategies

Earlier in history, we see Jerome and Cicero's rejection of word-for-word translation in favor of sense-for-sense translation (Munday, 2016, p. 31). Based on Newmark's view, among various methods of translation, only semantic and communicative translation fulfill the two main aims of translation: first, accuracy, and second, economy. He suggests that semantic translation is more likely to be economical than communicative translation. Semantic translation is used for 'expressive' texts, while communicative translation is used for 'informative' and 'vocative' texts (Newmark, 1998). As Munday mentions, Julian House bases her model on comparative ST–TT analysis, leading to the assessment of translation quality by identifying 'mismatches' or 'errors' (House, 1997, p. 45). Schleiermacher considers only two paths open for the 'true' translator: the translator either leaves the writer in peace and moves the reader toward him, or leaves the reader in peace and moves the writer toward him (Schleiermacher 1813/2004: 49). Baker proposes the following strategies for translating idioms: 1. Using an idiom with similar meaning and form; 2. Using an idiom

with similar meaning but dissimilar form; 3. Paraphrasing, where the expression is often reduced to sense and translation loss occurs; 4. Omission, when the idiom has no close match and paraphrasing is either difficult or results in a clumsy style (Baker, 1992, pp. 72-78).

On the other hand, if the role of the translator is to reduce the gap between cultures, he should use a method that allows the target audience to understand the message in the same manner as the audience of the ST. Based on Newmark's view, among various methods of translation, only semantic and communicative translation fulfill the two main aims of translation: first, accuracy, and second, economy. He suggests that semantic translation is more economical than communicative translation. Semantic translation is used for 'expressive' texts, while communicative translation is used for 'informative' and 'vocative' texts (Newmark, 1998, p. 41). As Munday mentions, in House's definition of an overt translation, the TT is not represented as an original and is clearly not directed at the TT audience. On the other hand, a covert translation enjoys the status of an original ST in the target culture. The ST is not linked to its culture or audience; both the ST and TT address their respective receivers directly (Munday, 2016, p. 54).

Schleiermacher considers only two paths open for the 'true' translator: either the translator leaves the writer in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him, or the translator leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him. Schleiermacher calls the first method 'alienating' and the second 'naturalizing'. Baker proposes the following strategies for translating idioms: 1. Using an idiom of similar meaning and form, 2. Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form, 3. Paraphrasing, where the expression is often reduced to sense and translation loss occurs, 4. Omission, if the idiom has no close match and paraphrasing is either difficult or results in clumsy style (Baker, 1992, pp. 72-78). Examining the translation methods for the Qur'ān, we find two main approaches for translating Qur'ānic idioms: literal and free translations. In the first approach, the unit of translation is either a word or a sentence. In the second approach, the translator may focus on the meaning of the Qur'ānic utterances and their application in the target language or expound on the interpretations of the Qur'ānic idioms. If the translator opts for a TL-oriented translation, the reader of the translated text will understand the expression according to their own culture, which is quite different from its meaning in the source culture. In this method, the general meaning of the original text is reproduced, with fluency being much more important than fidelity.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

The unit of analysis in this study is the idiom. As this study is mainly interested in investigating the translation of idioms, the descriptive-comparative method is the most appropriate for analyzing and interpreting the way they are handled by the translators. Library study and manual idiom extraction techniques were also applied to conduct the study. This study is mainly interested in investigating the translation of idioms, so the descriptive-comparative method has been applied to analyze and interpret the way idioms are handled by the translators.

3.2. Theoretical framework

Schleiermacher's model of translation has been used as the theoretical framework of the study. Naturalization and Alienation are two translation extremes that he uses to analyze

translations both as product and process. To elaborate further, he considers only two paths open for the ‘true’ translator: Either the translator leaves the writer in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him, or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him (Schleiermacher 1813/2004: 49). Schleiermacher calls the first method ‘alienating’ and the second ‘naturalizing’. Waddington’s model of translation quality assessment (model C) has also been applied to evaluate the translations based on the accuracy of conveying the SL message and the fluency of expressing the message in the TL.

Table 1. The scale of holistic method C

Level	Accuracy of transfer ST content	Quality of expression in TL	Degree of task completion	Mark
Level 5	Complete transfer of ST information; only minor revision needed to reach professional standard.	Almost all the translation reads like a piece originally written in English. There may be minor lexical, grammatical or spelling errors.	Successful	9-10
Level 4	Almost complete transfer; there may be one or two insignificant inaccuracies; requires certain amount of revision to reach professional standard.	Large sections read like a piece originally written in English. There are a number of lexical, grammatical or spelling errors.	Almost completely successful	7-8
Level 3	Transfer of the general idea(s) but with a number of lapses in accuracy; needs considerable revision to reach professional standard	Certain parts read like a piece originally written in English, but others read like a translation. There are a considerable number of lexical grammatical or spelling errors	Adequate	5-6
Level 2	Transfer undermined by serious inaccuracies; thorough revision required to reach professional standard.	Almost the entire text reads like a translation; there are continual lexical, grammatical or spelling errors.	Inadequate	3-4
Level 1	Totally inadequate transfer of ST content; the translation is not worth revising.	The candidate reveals a total lack of ability to express himself adequately in English	Totally inadequate	1-2

4. Data analysis

4.1. Analysis of *Qur’ānic* idioms

Analysis of Translations of Qur’ānic Idioms (5:64). The following ayah (verse) has been analyzed.

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ غُلَّتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَلُعِنُوا بِمَا قَالُوا بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ

The verse clearly portrays an example of the Jews’ undue and improper words. According to historical evidence, during the time of Prophet David and Solomon, the Jews were at the

peak of their power and reigned over large parts of the world. Over time, they continued to hold power, though not the same as before, until the arrival of Islam. Prophet Muhammad's (Divine peace upon him and his Household) confrontation with their unlawful power weakened them. This was the time when the Jews, who had lost their power and position, mockingly said that God's hands are chained as He does not help us! (Makarim Shirazi, 1995, p. 449) discusses the Qur'ānic idiom in verse 17:29:

Table 2. English translations of the first ayah (17:29)

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ غُلَّتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَلَعْنُوا بِمَا قَالُوا بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ		
1	Ahmed Ali	The Jews say: "Bound are the hands of God." Tied be their own hands, and damned may they be for saying what they say! In fact, both His hands are open wide
2	Ahmed Raza Khan	And the Jews said, 'Allah's hand is tied'; may their hands be tied – and they are accursed for saying so! In fact, both His hands* are free
3	Arberry	The Jews have said, 'God's hand is fettered.' Fettered are their hands, and they are cursed for what they have said. Nay, but His hands are outspread
4	Asad	And the Jews say, "God's hand is shackled!" It is their own hands that are shackled; and rejected [by God] are they because of this their assertion. Nay, but wide are His hands stretched out
5	Helali & Khan	The Jews say: "Allah's Hand is tied up (i.e. He does not give and spend of His Bounty)." Be their hands tied up and be they accursed for what they uttered. Nay, both His Hands are widely outstretched
6	Itani	The Jews say, 'God's hand is tied.' It is their hands that are tied, and they are cursed for what they say. In fact, His hands are outstretched
7	Pickthall	The Jews say: Allah's hand is fettered. Their hands are fettered and they are accursed for saying so. Nay, but both His hands are spread out wide in bounty
8	Qarai	The Jews say, 'Allah's hand is tied up.' Tied up be their hands, and cursed be they for what they say! No, His hands are wide open
9	Sahih international	And the Jews say, "The hand of Allah is chained." Chained are their hands, and cursed are they for what they say. Rather, both His hands are extended
10	Sarwar	The Jews have said, "God's hands are bound." May they themselves be handcuffed and condemned for what they have said! God's hands are free
11	Shakir	And the Jews say: The hand of Allah is tied up! Their hands shall be shackled and they shall be cursed for what they say. Nay, both His hands are spread out
12	Yusuf Ali	The Jews say: "Allah's hand is tied up." Be their hands tied up and be they accursed for the (blasphemy) they utter. Nay, both His hands are widely outstretched

Interpretational Analysis: According to Nimūni exegesis, although the heads of the Jews were the only ones to say that God's hands are chained, all the Jews agreed with such a statement. For this reason, the Qur'ān attributes this statement to all of them. That is why, at the beginning of the verse, God says: 'and the Jews said.' It should be noted that in the Arabic language, the term 'yad,' which means 'hand,' refers to two meanings: one is 'hand,' and the other is 'power, reign, bounty, sovereignty.' Since we mostly perform our primary tasks with our hands, this term is used to refer to other meanings as well (Makarim Shirazi, 1995, p. 449). According to the Aḥsan al-ḥadīth exegesis, the term 'yad' in this verse refers to God's great power. In this exegesis, it is mentioned that the phrase 'ghullat aydīhim' refers to calamities and lack of prosperity that the Jews will receive due to their false claim (Qurashi, 2012, p. 103). In the Kowthar exegesis, it is explained that the clause 'bal yadāhu mabsūtatan' embraces the concept that God's benevolence and mercy are permanent and last forever. Because these attributes are not separate from Him, He is the absolute benevolent one. The world is in need of God to continue existing, in the same way that it needs God for its creation (Jafari, 1999, p. 201).

Linguistic Analysis: The analysis has been displayed in tables 3 and 4.

Table 3. Translations employing the alienating method

مَبْسُوطَتَانِ	بَلْ	لُعِنُوا	عُلَّتْ	مَغْلُولَةٌ	يَدُ
open wide	In fact	damned	tied	bound	hand
wide open	nay	accursed	fettered	tied	
stretched out	Rather	cursed	shackled	tied up	
outstretched	No	rejected	chained	shackled	
free		condemned	hand-cuffed	chained	
outspread			tied up	fettered	
spread out					
Extended					

Table 4. Translations employing the naturalizing method

مَبْسُوطَتَانِ
spread out wide in bounty

In the first table, six key terms are defined, the meanings of which have posed challenges for translators. The first term is 'yad,' on which all translators agree. Although according to exegeses, this term refers to God's power, reign, and bounty, none of the translators have acknowledged this idiomatic meaning. Instead, all have translated it as 'hand.' Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE) defines 'shackled' as putting a shackle on someone, and 'tie' as fastening things together or holding them in a particular position (Longman, 2014). In the Almaany Dictionary, the term 'maghlūla' is defined as 'being bound to something' (Almaany, n.d.). The Hans Wehr Arabic-English Dictionary has suggested the verbs 'shackled' and 'fettered' as equivalents for this term. The next term, 'ghullat,' is derived from the same radical as 'maghlūla.' For this reason, the equivalents of these two terms are the same. The only difference between them is that they belong to two different parts of speech: 'maghlūla' is an adjective, while 'ghullat' is a verb (Cowan, 1976). The only distinct equivalent among those suggested for this verb by translators is the term 'handcuffed,' which the Longman Dictionary defines as 'to put handcuffs on someone' (Longman, 2014).

Regarding the next key term, ‘lu‘inū,’ five different equivalents have been proposed by the translators. Almaany Dictionary suggests the following equivalents for the simple form of this verb: ‘curse,’ ‘damn,’ ‘execrate,’ and ‘imprecate’ (Almaany, n.d.). Similarly, the Hans Wehr Dictionary offers the equivalents ‘curse,’ ‘damn,’ and ‘execrate’ (Cowan, 1976). To determine the most suitable equivalent among these options, we must consult the Longman Dictionary to understand the subtle differences between these synonyms. The definitions provided in the Longman Dictionary are as follows (Longman, 2014):

- **Curse:** To say or think bad things about someone or something because they have made you angry.
- **Accursed:** Used to express strong anger toward something.
- **Damn:** To condemn someone to Hell after death, often as a form of punishment.
- **Execrate:** To express strong disapproval or hatred for someone or something.
- **Condemn:** To impose a severe punishment after determining someone’s guilt in a crime.
- **Reject:** To refuse to show love or attention to someone.

The fourth key term is the preposition ‘**bal,**’ for which six different translations have been suggested. Almaany Dictionary defines it as ‘*but,*’ ‘*even,*’ ‘*however,*’ and ‘*yet*’ (Almaany, n.d.). Hans Wehr provides additional equivalents such as ‘*nay,*’ ‘*rather,*’ ‘*even,*’ ‘*but,*’ ‘*however,*’ and ‘*yet*’ (Cowan, 1976). According to Longman Dictionary, ‘*nay*’ is an old usage of saying ‘*no*’ (Longman, 2014). The last key term is ‘**mabsūṭātān,**’ for which eight different translations have been offered. Almaany Dictionary suggests the following equivalents: ‘*open,*’ ‘*stretched out,*’ ‘*unfolded,*’ and ‘*unrolled*’ (Almaany, n.d.). Hans Wehr Arabic-English Dictionary lists ‘*extended,*’ ‘*outstretched,*’ ‘*spread out,*’ ‘*flat,*’ ‘*open,*’ and ‘*extensive*’ as possible equivalents for this adjective (Cowan, 1976). To ensure the precise meaning, it is necessary to consult Longman Dictionary for these terms as well. A closer look at the table reveals that some translators have used different parts of speech for the same term, such as ‘*spread out*’ (past participle) and ‘*outspread*’ (adjective), or ‘*stretched out*’ and ‘*outstretched.*’ Others have offered the same term with inversion, such as ‘*wide open*’ and ‘*open wide.*’ To clarify, we can refer to Longman Dictionary for the following definitions:

- **Wide open:** Completely open.
- **Outstretched:** Stretched out to full length.
- **Spread out:** To cover a large area.
- **Extended:** Longer than expected or planned (Longman, 2014).

Structural Analysis: The analysis has been introduced in two categories as determined by the selected theoretical framework:

Translations Employing Alienating Method: When considering the structure of the translations, Arberry and Sarwar are the two translators who have opted to use the present perfect tense of the verb ‘say’ to refer to the quote. In contrast, Ahmed Raza Khan is the only

translator who has used the simple past form of the verb ‘say.’ All other translators have used the simple present form of ‘say’ to convey the statement of the Jews. Ahmed Ali, notably, is the only translator who adopts an archaic style in translating the direct speech ‘yadullah maghlūla’ by altering the word order. He places the verb at the beginning of the sentence, rendering it as ‘Bound are the hands of God’. Regarding the sentence ‘ghullat aydihim wa lu‘inū bimā qālū,’ Arberry, Asad, Itani, Pickthall, and Sahih International have used the simple present tense to refer to God’s response to the Jews. This structure is often used to indicate that a wish or statement has already been answered. Ahmed Raza Khan and Sarwar, on the other hand, have translated the second part of the verse using the modal ‘may,’ while the others have employed the verb ‘be’ to convey this statement from God. Furthermore, seven translators have used the possessive ‘of’ to refer to the hand of God, while ten translators have used the possessive ‘s’ to indicate ‘God’s hand’.

Translations Employing Naturalizing Method: The translation by Helali & Khan is the only one that includes additional clarification of the verse within brackets, providing an explanation in their own words. Pickthall also briefly refers to the connotation of the idiomatic verse, using the term ‘bounty’ in the phrase ‘spread out wide in bounty’. Ahmed Raza Khan, Helali & Khan, Itani, Qarai, Shakir, and Yusuf Ali are the translators who correctly use the native-like verb phrase ‘someone’s hands are tied’ to convey the meaning of the first part of the verse.

Assessing the Translations’ Quality: Ahmed Ali, Asad, Arberry, Pickthall, Sahih International, and Sarwar are the translators who have used the alienating method for translating this verse. In the case of this idiom, none of the translators have used the naturalizing method, meaning that all have preferred literal translations and disregarded the deeper layers of meaning behind the message. Ahmed Ali employs an archaic structure by placing the verb at the beginning, as in “bound are...” and “tied be...”. He also uses the unusual phrase “saying what they say” to remain as faithful as possible to the ST. However, in doing so, he sacrifices the fluency of his translation, making his text seem more like a direct translation than a natural rendering of the meaning. Sarwar is the only translator in this group who uses the term ‘free’ as an equivalent for ‘mabsūtātān’, suggesting that by using the phrase ‘God’s hands’, he is referring to God’s will power. However, he also uses ‘condemn’, which is not an accurate equivalent for ‘lu‘inū’. Arberry uses the archaic term ‘nay’, which is not plain English and may sound outdated to modern readers.

Asad has used the term ‘rejected’ as an equivalent for ‘lu‘inū’, which is not accurate according to Arabic-English dictionaries. A significant issue with Asad’s translation is that large sections sound unnatural in English due to his literal approach, such as “because of this their assertion” and “wide are His hands stretched out”. Pickthall, like Arberry, uses the archaic word ‘nay’. The key difference in Pickthall’s translation is his use of the phrase ‘wide in bounty’ as an equivalent for ‘mabsūtātān’. Here, Pickthall attempts to convey the message of the idiom, i.e., God’s free will. However, the term ‘bounty’ is not found in the original Arabic, and using it outside of a bracket may lead the reader to incorrectly ascribe it directly to God.

Sahih International also employs an archaic style, using inversion with ‘chained are...’. Qarai, Yusuf Ali, Shakir, Itani, Helali & Khan, and Ahmed Raza Khan have generally used the alienating method. Ahmed Raza Khan, similar to Sarwar, has used the distinctive equivalent ‘free’ to convey the message of the idiom—that is, God’s unlimited power. A noteworthy feature of his translation is his inclusion of an explanatory phrase inside brackets: ‘He does not give and spend of His bounty’. This phrase helps the reader grasp the

idiomatic message more clearly. Itani and Ahmed Raza Khan use 'in fact' as an equivalent for 'bal', while all other translators in this group opt for the archaic term 'nay'. Yusuf Ali, in an attempt to clarify the verse further, uses the term 'blasphemy' inside a bracket. This addition serves to clarify the meaning of the verse, adding an extra layer of interpretation.

Analysis of Translations of Qur'ānic Idioms (17:29)

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ

Moderation is a fundamental principle in Islam. Many verses in the Qur'ān encourage us to avoid extremes, and one of the most notable examples is the following verse. This verse is tied to a story with the following background: One day, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) was sitting in the mosque when a child approached him and said that his mother needed a shirt. Since the Prophet had no shirt other than the one he was wearing, he told the child to follow him home. There, Prophet Muhammad removed his garment and gave it to the child. It was at this moment that God revealed the following verse to warn against both stinginess and extravagance. (Ansari, 2003, p. 545).

Table 5. Translations of Qur'ānic idioms (17:29)

		وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ
1	Ahmed Ali	Do not be niggardly, nor extravagant
2	Ahmed Raza Khan	And do not keep your hand tied to your neck nor open it completely
3	Arberry	And keep not thy hand chained to thy neck, nor outspread it widespread altogether
4	Asad	And neither allow thy hand to remain shackled to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to the utmost limit [of thy capacity]
5	Helali & Khan	And let not your hand be tied (like a miser) to your neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach (like a spendthrift)
6	Itani	And do not keep your hand tied to your neck, nor spread it out fully
7	Pickthall	And let not thy hand be chained to thy neck nor open it with a complete opening
8	Qarai	Do not keep your hand chained to your neck, nor open it altogether
9	Sahih international	And do not make your hand [as] chained to your neck or extend it completely
10	Sarwar	Do not be stingy nor over generous
11	Shakir	And do not make your hand to be shackled to your neck nor stretch it forth to the utmost (limit) of its stretching forth
12	Yusuf Ali	Make not thy hand tied (like a niggard's) to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach

Interpretational Analysis: To conduct a more precise analysis, it is essential to consult prominent exegeses. According to these sources, the first idiomatic phrase in the verse refers to stinginess, or the unwillingness to spend money on others, while the second idiomatic phrase points to extravagance. Those who are extravagant open their hands so widely that, even in times of rain, not a single raindrop remains in their hands. The verse warns against

spending so excessively that nothing is left for oneself, leading to embarrassment before others. This idiom clearly cautions against going to extremes (Tabatabai, 1974, p. 114).

Moderation is always advised, both in giving to the needy and in refraining from doing so. Excessive generosity can lead to rebuke and alienation from others (Makarim Shirazi, 1995, p. 90). The wealthy should spend within their means, and so should the poor (Ansari, 2003, p. 545). The first idiomatic phrase in this verse refers to a hand that keeps everything to itself, avoiding being open. In contrast, the second idiomatic phrase describes a hand that is so wide open that it cannot hold anything. Those whose hands are tied, unable to give to the poor, will find themselves unable to help, while those whose hands are always extended may find they have nothing left to meet their own needs (Mughniya, 2004, p. 71; Jafari, 1999, p. 283).

Linguistic Analysis. The analysis comes in the form of tables 6 and 7 as follows.

Table 6. Translations employing alienating method

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ	مَغْلُولَةً	تَبْسُطُهَا	كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ
Do not keep	shackled	Open	Completely
Keep not	chained	Outspread	Widespread altogether
Neither allow	tied	Stretch forth	To the utmost limit of thy capacity
Let not be		Spread out	with a complete opening
Do not make		Extend	to its utmost reach (like a spendthrift)
Make not			Fully
			to the utmost (limit) of its stretching forth
			Altogether

Table 7. Translations employing naturalizing method

مَغْلُولَةً إِلَى عُنُقِكَ	تَبْسُطُهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ
Niggardly	Extravagant
Stingy	
	Over generous

In the two tables above, the first step involves categorizing all twelve translations into two groups based on the translation method they employed. In the second step, various equivalents chosen for the key terms in the Qur'ānic verse are listed. According to the first table, which examines translations using the alienating method, four key terms are identified in this Qur'ānic verse. For the first key term, *maghlūla*, four different translations are provided: shackled, chained, and tied. According to the Longman Contemporary Dictionary, the term shackled is defined as placing a shackle on someone, which is synonymous with the verb chain. The term tie is defined as fastening things together or holding them in a particular position, and it is also closely related to fasten (Longman, 2014).

According to the Almaany Dictionary, the term maghlūla is defined as being bound to something, a general definition that encompasses all four of the English equivalents. However, if we were to choose the most appropriate translation, it would be beneficial to refer to the Hans Wehr Arabic-English Dictionary, which selects shackled and fettered as the equivalents for the Arabic term maghlūla (Cowan, 1976).

This Qur'ānic verse forbids us from going to extremes, expressing this prohibition through the verb 'ja'ala'. The two verbs 'do not keep' and 'keep not' are considered equivalent in meaning. Similarly, the verbs 'neither allow' and 'let not be' are used in a way that implies a presupposition in the verse. This could lead the reader to assume that the hands possess the willpower to choose their actions, and it is our responsibility not to let them act as they wish. As for the verbs 'do not make' and 'make not', the use of 'make' emphasizes our free choice in whether to keep our hands tied or not. According to the Almaany Dictionary, this Arabic term means to fix or set (Almaany, n.d.). The Hans Wehr Dictionary suggests the same equivalents for this verb form, which is classified as type 1 (Cowan, 1976).

The next Arabic key term is 'basaṭa', for which six different equivalents have been suggested. 'Outspread' is defined as spreading out flat or completely. 'Extend' means to stretch out a hand, while 'be stretched to the limit' refers to having just enough money or resources to meet one's needs. The Almaany Dictionary lists the following equivalents for the verb 'basaṭa': 'extent', 'outspread', 'outstretch', 'spread out', and 'stretch out' (Almaany, n.d.).

The Hans Wehr Dictionary offers similar equivalents for this verb form (type 1): 'spread out', 'stretch out', and 'extend'. The final key term is 'kul al-Baṣṭ', which is consistently translated as an adverb in all translations. This term has prompted different interpretations among translators. Some have rendered it as a single-term adverb, such as 'completely' or 'fully'. Others have used an adverbial phrase, such as 'to the utmost reach/limit/stretching' (Cowan, 1976). This phrase sounds more natural and, according to the Longman Dictionary, refers to the greatest amount or the most that can be done. Another adverbial phrase selected is 'widespread altogether' (Longman, 2014). There is also a more literal translation, 'with a complete opening', which may sound unnatural or cumbersome in the target language. Regarding the Arabic meaning of 'kul al-Baṣṭ', the Almaany Dictionary provides the following equivalents: 'expanse', 'extent', and 'stretch' (Almaany, n.d.). The Hans Wehr Arabic-English Dictionary suggests 'extension' and 'spreading' as equivalents (Cowan, 1976).

Looking at the second table, we see that three translators have used the naturalizing method of translation, offering three different renditions. All of them have used two adjectives as equivalents for the two parts of this idiomatic verse. Regarding the first translation, the term 'niggardly' is used to convey the idea of stinginess. According to the Longman Dictionary, 'niggardly' means unwilling to spend money or be generous (Longman, 2014). This word emphasizes reluctance to spend money. However, the verse does not only address those who are unwilling to be generous—it also speaks to those who do not spend money at all. To put it simply, some people spend money reluctantly, while others do not spend money at all, whether eagerly or unwillingly.

Another equivalent offered for the first idiomatic phrase in this Qur'ānic verse is 'stingy', which represents the primary denotative meaning of this concept. Both 'stingy' and 'niggardly' are considered synonyms in the Longman Dictionary (Longman, 2014). For the second idiomatic phrase, two equivalents are given: 'extravagant' and 'over-generous'. 'Extravagant' is defined as spending a lot of money, especially more than is necessary or more than one can afford. This definition is more comprehensive and includes the meanings of the other two terms.

Structural Analysis: The analysis comes in two categories as specified by the selected theoretical framework:

Translations Employing ‘Alienating’ Method: In these translations, the translators prioritize the ST. Among the twelve translations, *Shakir*, *Sahih International*, *Qarai*, *Pickthall*, *Itani*, *Asad*, *Arberry* and *Ahmed Raza Khan* have employed the absolutely alienating method. They place the ST at the forefront of their translation, leaving it to the reader to infer the exact message and meaning of the verse from the co-text. By using this method, the translators emphasize the value of the ST, introduce foreign concepts and culture into the target language, and remain faithful to the sense and form of the original text. As a result, these translations may sound unfamiliar to the target reader, who may not fully grasp the meaning in the same way as the readers of the ST.

Translation methods that primarily rely on the ST have both strengths and weaknesses. One of their strengths is that they faithfully transfer the structure and vocabulary of the source language into the target language. For this reason, these methods are considered linguistically loyal to the ST. Additionally, such methods avoid excessive exposition and interpretation, as these could undermine the level of fidelity to the original text.

However, as mentioned earlier, these methods also have some weaknesses. They may result in incompatibility with the structural patterns of the target language, lead to ambiguous or even incorrect translations of idioms, and fail to capture the deeper layers of meaning in the Qur’ānic verses. As evident, the translators aim to transfer the idioms as they are understood in the source language, often without considering the fluency of the translation in the target language. While the importance and status of the Qur’ān as the ST are preserved, the message of the verse may not be conveyed as effectively as it would be to the source language readers. In this approach, both accuracy and fluency are sacrificed in favor of maintaining the structure of the idiom.

The translators mentioned above do not directly address the concepts of spending money or giving to others; instead, it is left to the readers to infer the intended meaning of these images. In contrast, such concepts are implicit in the Arabic idiom itself. This Arabic idiom directly conveys these ideas to the readers of the source language, referring specifically to the context within the source language. The translators have attempted to preserve the euphemistic nature of the idiom. While the individual words are accurately translated, when considering the definition of an idiom, it becomes clear that the overall meaning of the idiom is not simply the sum of the literal meanings of its words. Instead, all the vocabulary is translated literally, relying on the denotative meanings of the words in the translation.

Translations Employing ‘Naturalizing’ Method: Regarding this idiomatic Qur’ānic verse, Ahmed Ali, Sarwar, and Helali are the three translators who have used only two adjectives as equivalents for the two idiomatic phrases in the verse, resulting in a reduction of word count in the English translation. These translators did not use idiomatic expressions from the target language to translate the verse in the same way it appears in the source language. It can be concluded that Ahmed Ali, Sarwar and Helali employed the naturalizing method of translation. In other words, they prioritized the fluency of the translation, ensuring that the reader would be at ease. According to Schleiermacher, the translators aimed to ‘leave the reader in peace’ as much as possible, aligning the ST with the patterns of the target language.

Translations Employing ‘Almost Alienating’ Method: We cannot definitively say that all translations strictly follow one of the two methods without deviation; rather, it can be argued that there is no fixed approach for these translations. Some translators have combined both approaches, using one as the foundation of their translation and the other for interpretation. Others have adopted one of the extremes, either naturalizing or alienating. Yusuf Ali, Helali & Khan are among the translators who have produced an "almost alienating" translation. We refer to it as such because, while they place the ST at the forefront, they also incorporate some naturalizing equivalents in their translations.

Assessing the Translations’ Quality: Ahmed Raza Khan, Arberry, Asad, Itani, Pickthall, Qarai, and Shakir are the translators who have used the absolutely alienating method of translation. A common characteristic among these translators is that the message of the idiom may not be clear to readers from other cultures. In other words, the idiom is not rendered in a way that aligns with the reader's own language and cultural context. While the meaning of the idiom can be inferred from the translation, no equivalent idiom exists in the English language. The key difference among the translations using this method is that some translators have included additional clarifications through explanatory brackets to address any ambiguities, while others have left the idiomatic message uninterpreted. Arberry, for example, uses the archaic term ‘thy’ and adopts an old-fashioned style by inverting the verb phrase ‘keep not’ as an equivalent for ‘wa la taj‘al’. Additionally, ‘keep’ is not an exact equivalent for the Arabic verb ‘ja‘ala’. Arberry also introduces the unnecessary word ‘altogether’ to emphasize the idea of being overgenerous.

The main issue with the translations of Ahmed Raza Khan and Itani is that they leave the reader unaware of the deeper message from God embedded in the idiom. Like Arberry, they use the term ‘keep’ as an equivalent for ‘ja‘ala’, which is not an accurate match. However, their translations are straightforward and fluent for the target reader. Qarai’s translation is similar to those of these translators, with one key difference: Qarai does not emphasize the concept of overgenerosity and immoderation. Instead, he simply translates it as ‘nor open it altogether’.

Asad has used the verb ‘allow’, which is not an accurate equivalent for ‘ja‘ala’. He also employs the archaic term ‘thy’, which makes the translation sound less fluent. To convey the idea of overgenerosity, he uses the phrase ‘to the utmost limit of thy capacity’, which feels more like a translation than an original text. Similarly, Shakir uses the repetitive phrase ‘nor stretch it forth to the utmost limit of its stretching forth’ to emphasize the idea of overgenerosity. This repetition reduces the fluency of his translation, making it read as a translation rather than a natural text. Pickthall also uses the archaic term ‘thy’. His choice of the phrase ‘open it with complete opening’ makes the translation sound unfamiliar. Additionally, ‘let not’ is used as an equivalent for ‘ja‘ala’, which is not a precise match.

Regarding the translation of Sahih International, it should be noted that the grammatical structure ‘do not ... or’ could be replaced with a more natural structure, such as ‘neither ... nor’. Helali and Khan, and Yusuf Ali have employed a mostly alienating method. In Helali and Khan’s translation, ‘let not’ is not an accurate equivalent for ‘ja‘ala’, and the inversion in this structure gives the translation an archaic style. However, the use of the phrase ‘like a miser’ to convey stinginess and ‘like a spendthrift’ to convey overgenerosity makes the message clearer.

Yusuf Ali provides the reader with additional clarification by using the phrase ‘like a niggard’s’. He also uses the archaic vocabulary ‘thy’ and the archaic construction ‘make not’

which is not an accurate equivalent for 'ja'ala'. Ahmed Ali and Sarwar, on the other hand, have employed a fully naturalizing method. With this approach, the reader is not able to grasp the specific image depicted in the verse, as God used particular words to convey a message. The example God provided to illustrate generosity and stinginess is obscured. The denotative meanings of words such as 'hands', 'tied', 'open', and 'completely' are not conveyed due to the naturalizing translation, which focuses only on the message of the idiom. Although both translators have used the fully naturalizing method, their choice of vocabulary differs significantly.

5. Results

5.1. Results of the first ayah (5:64)

According to the Waddington's model of TQA, all the twelve translations can be ranked as follows:

Table 8. Ranking the twelve translations

Translator	Level of transfer of ST content and fluency of TL text	Task completion	Mark
Ahmed Raza Khan, Yusuf Ali, Helali &	Level 5	Successful	9
Shakir, Itani	Level 4	Almost completely successful	8
Pickthall	Level 4	Almost completely successful	7
Arberry Sahih international	Level 3	Adequate	6
Sarwar, Ahmed Ali, Asad	Level 3	Adequate	5

According to the table 8, four translators received a score of 9, two received a score of 8, one received a score of 7, two received a score of 6, and three received a score of 5. The scores are classified into three levels based on Waddington's model: five translations are rated at level 3, three translations are rated at level 4, and four translations are rated at level 5:

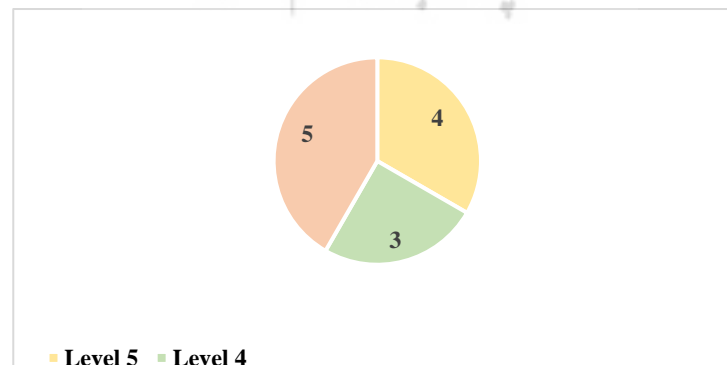


Figure 1. The quality level of the translations (5:64)

According to the main table, which includes the twelve translations, all of the translators have chosen the ‘absolutely alienating’ method of translation. Two parts of the verse required further explanation to convey the connotations hidden within it: ‘maghlūla’ and ‘mabsūtātān’. Regarding the term ‘mabsūtātān’, Pickthall was the only translator who addressed the hidden message of the verse at the end of his translation. In our suggested translation, this strength in Pickthall’s rendition has been retained to reflect this connotation. As for the term ‘maghlūla’, several English dictionaries were consulted, and three verb phrases conveying the notion of (in)capability were identified. One of these was both literally and interpretively compatible with the verse. In other words, a translation can be produced using both alienating and naturalizing methods, with both approaches supporting the same translation. This is because the Arabic idiom, as expressed by the Jews, has a corresponding expression in English that conveys the same message.

The English Idioms and Phrases Implying the Notion of (In)Capability

Somebody’s Hands Are Tied:

- **Merriam-Webster:** Used to say that someone is unable to act freely because something (such as a rule or law) prevents it (Merriam & Merriam, n.d.).
- **Cambridge Dictionary:** If your hands are tied, you are not free to behave in the way that you would like (Cambridge, n.d.).
- **Collins Dictionary:** If you say that your hands are tied, it means that something is preventing you from acting in the way that you want to (Forsyth, 2014).
- **Longman Activator:** If someone’s hands are tied, they cannot do what they want because of particular conditions or rules imposed by someone else (Longman, 2014).

Not in One’s Power to Do Something:

- **Collins Dictionary:** Not able or allowed to (Forsyth, 2014).
- **Longman Activator:** To be unable to do something because your job does not give you the authority or right to do it (Longman, 2014).

Not Be in a Position to Do Something / Be in No Position to Do Something:

- **Merriam-Webster:** Not able to (Merriam & Merriam, n.d.).
- **Cambridge Dictionary:** To be able to do something, usually because you have the necessary experience, authority, or money (Cambridge, n.d.).
- **Collins Dictionary:** Able to (Forsyth, 2014).
- **Longman Activator:** To not be able to do something because you do not have enough knowledge, money, or authority (Longman, 2014).

5.2. Results of the second ayah (17:29)

In this chapter, after listing the twelve translations of the Qur’ānic verse, three types of analysis were conducted: interpretational, linguistic, and structural. Next, each translation

was analyzed based on the method used, either the naturalizing or the alienating approach, as defined by Schleiermacher. Finally, all translations were evaluated and ranked according to Waddington's holistic model of translation quality assessment. The results are as in table 9.

Table 9. Results of the second ayah (17:29)

Translator	Level of transfer of original content and fluency of translated text	Task Completion	Mark
Sarwar, Helali & Khan, Ahmed Ali	Level 4	Almost completely successful	7
Itani, Asad, Yusuf Ali, Sahih international, Ahmed Raza Khan	Level 3	Adequate	6
Pickthall, Qarai, Shakir, Arberry	Level 3	Adequate	5

According to the table 9, three translators received a score of 7, five received a score of 6, and four received a score of 5. Following Waddington's model, it can be concluded that the quality of the translations for verse 17:29 falls into two levels: level 3 and level 4. However, most translators produced a level-3 translation, which is considered an adequate translation according to Waddington's framework.

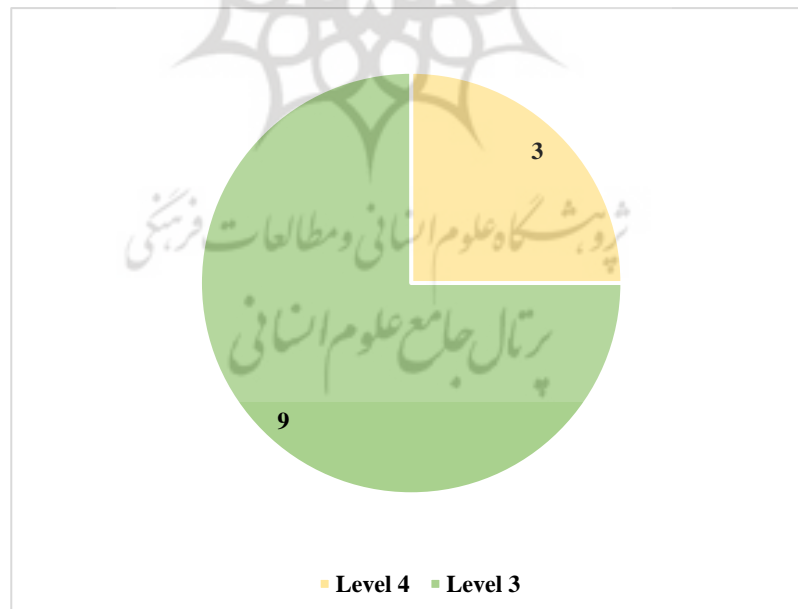


Figure 2. The quality level of the translations (17:29)

The English Idioms and Phrases Implying the Notion of Stinginess and Extravagance

The idiomatic translation method has not been applied by the aforementioned translators. This method could have conveyed the form of the SL text to TL readers in a way that reflects

how it is perceived by SL readers. Considering the weaknesses in the previously mentioned translations, we have provided a selection of English idioms related to the notion of stinginess, along with their definitions from three prominent dictionaries: Merriam-Webster, Collins, and Cambridge Dictionary (Cambridge, n.d.; Forsyth, 2014; Merriam & Merriam, n.d.). These three dictionaries were chosen for their clear and distinct explanations of each idiom. Other dictionaries with similar definitions are not included here.

Hand to Mouth:

- **Merriam-Webster:** Having or providing nothing beyond basic necessities (Merriam & Merriam, n.d.).
- **Cambridge Dictionary:** Having only just enough money to live (Cambridge, n.d.).
- **Collins Dictionary:** A hand-to-mouth existence means having barely enough food or money to survive (Forsyth, 2014).
- **Longman Dictionary:** Living with just enough money and food to get by (Longman, 2014).

Close/Tight-Fisted:

- **Merriam-Webster:** Stingy; tight-fisted (Merriam & Merriam, n.d.).
- **Cambridge Dictionary:** Unwilling to spend money (Cambridge, n.d.).
- **Collins Dictionary:** Very careful with money; mean (Forsyth, 2014).
- **Longman Dictionary:** Not generous with money (Longman, 2014).

Money to Burn:

- **Merriam-Webster:** A large amount of money to spend (Merriam & Merriam, n.d.).
- **Cambridge Dictionary:** Spending a lot of money on unnecessary things (Cambridge, n.d.).
- **Collins Dictionary:** Having more money than one needs (Forsyth, 2014).
- **Longman Dictionary:** Having extra money to spend on non-essential items (Longman, 2014).

Upon reviewing the three idioms, the first two refer to the concept of stinginess, while the third relates to extravagance. Considering the linguistic characteristics of these English idioms, the second one ("close/tight-fisted") is the most suitable. It closely mirrors the Arabic idiom both in terms of the vocabulary used and the meanings provided by the dictionaries.

Suggestions for Translations. The following contains suggestions for translations to substituted the current works under study:

Suggestions for the translation of the verse 5:64

Having referred to the dictionaries, we observed that there were three main verb phrases that are compatible with meaning of the verse, by the use of which English native speakers imply the notion of (in) capability. Amongst these three, the verb phrase ‘someone’s hands are tied’ is the one that matches the verse both literally and interpretationally: ‘and the Jews said, ‘God’s hands are tied’, may their own hands be tied and be cursed for what they said; rather, His hands are open [in bounty]’. Since the native-used phrase ‘someone’s hands are tied’ is literally in line with the verse, so it could be argued that our suggested translation will be based on the both approaches at the same time. That is to say, either of the alienating and naturalizing methods of translations would lead to the same translation of this verse. Therefore, the only part of the verse that in need of further clarification is the term ‘mabsūṭātān’, for which the bracket ‘[in bounty]’ was included in our suggested translation, as Pickthall has done.

Suggestions for the translation of the verse 17:29

Concerning the marks and analyses, the following translations are offered:

First Suggestion. Based on the points of strength available in the three translations applying naturalizing method, we can suggest the following translation for this Qur’ānic verse: ‘Do not be close-fisted nor extravagant’ This translation includes both the vocabularies and structure that the best-rated translations have used while opting for the English idiom which is closer to the Arabic idiom in term of meaning and words.

Second Suggestion. Regarding those translations that have selected the alienating method of translation, a translation which is linguistically loyal to the SL is also suggested: ‘And do not make your hand tied to your neck (like a miser), nor overextend it (like an extravagant)’.

6. Conclusion

Idioms, in any language, serve as cultural and historical entities whose underlying meanings must be conveyed in their entirety within the context of the target language. The more deeply rooted an idiom is in the source language, the more challenging it becomes to translate it accurately into the target language. The difficulty arises from the idiom's cultural significance and figurative meaning, as idioms rarely convey their literal sense. Therefore, capturing the rhetorical aspects of these idioms in the target language is a key challenge in translation. However, the advantage of translation into the target language is that it results in a product that makes sense within the linguistic and cultural norms of the target language. The downside, however, is that this approach might deprive the reader of insights into a foreign culture and the practices of its people.

Foreignizing the ST idioms, or translating them faithfully, allows the reader to access a different worldview. The translator bears the responsibility of transferring the cultural heritage of the SL to the target language audience. Domesticating ST idioms, on the other hand, is only feasible when there is a significant overlap between the cultures, and the situations described in the idioms can be reproduced in the target culture. The difficulty increases when idioms are specific to a particular speech community and reflect that community’s unique mindset. Advocates of this method argue that translation should emphasize what is universal, fostering cross-cultural understanding rather than separating

cultures through a strict, literal translation. Ultimately, the translation of idioms should aim to evoke a similar stylistic effect in the target language reader as the original idioms do for the SL reader. When translating idioms, it is essential to convey the underlying message of the phrase. To achieve this, a 'thought-for-thought' translation approach is often recommended. Regarding Schleiermacher's methods of translation, he identifies two extreme approaches: the 'absolutely alienating' and the 'absolutely naturalizing' methods. While he does not explicitly refer to the concept of absoluteness, he does not consider translations that fall between these extremes, which may adopt a combination of both methods.

Upon reviewing the analyses of the five Qur'ānic verses in question, it becomes apparent that some translations fall into this overlooked middle ground. These translations blend elements of both methods: some parts are translated using the naturalizing approach, while other parts follow the alienating method. Consequently, the translation ends up being a mix of both approaches. In such cases, the translation can be categorized as either 'almost naturalizing' or 'almost alienating.' If the majority of the verse is translated using the naturalizing method, it can be said to follow the 'almost naturalizing' approach. The reverse applies for 'almost alienating.' It is important to note that not all translations fit neatly into one of the two categories Schleiermacher proposed. Some translations fall somewhere in between, being neither 'absolutely alienating' nor 'absolutely naturalizing,' but rather predominantly naturalizing or predominantly alienating.

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